

Passing the bus

 By [Chris Barry](#)

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In respect of the Johannesburg bus rapid transit (BRT) system, could someone please inform the public as to what is actually going on?

My understanding is that there is some kind of impediment to its implementation. Or is there another reason as to why all the completed BRT routes in the Johannesburg Metro appear to be left dormant?

As things stand, the entire project has just become an even greater impediment to the local transit system because of the amount of space taken up by all the channelling and rerouting it requires. While these lanes remain dormant, traffic congestion has only become worse.

It seems as if the only motorists benefitting from the BRT routes are our local taxi drivers, who have taken to using them as short cuts to get ahead in traffic. Even the bollards that have been erected to thwart the taxi drivers now only serve as an obstacle course for them.

Metrobus millions

This got me thinking about bus companies around Joburg and I cannot understand why this city continues to operate Metrobus. If ever one needed a shining paragon of just how poorly government entities are run, one would need to look no further.

The appearance of the Metrobuses is shocking, to say the least. The sheer number of broken down buses is also a tell-tale indicator of exactly how poor the maintenance is of the fleet. Yet if the figures to the Johannesburg Metropolitan Bus Services Annual Report for 2011/12, the City of Joburg is wasting millions and millions on it every year.

.	2012	2011
Revenue	R421 million	R397 million
Profit/(Loss)	(R45 million)	(R12 million)
Subsidy	R294 million	R292 million

According to the figures in the report, despite a subsidy of R294 million, the Metrobus service made a deficit of R45 million. Are my eyes deceiving me?

Privatisation potential

For the 2011/12 financial year, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Bus Services recorded annual expenditure of over R466 million.

This essentially means that should the Metrobus system be privatised, in a single stroke it would save the Johannesburg council a minimum of R466 million.

If the current politicians need to continue to be "involved" - no problem. Tell them it has to be viable within a year, as the equity can't be worth much (with less than R1 million in the bank according to the report).

Privatise it, close it or sell it to existing management. Better still - sell it to accredited taxi owners. Just do something about it because, in its current form, Metrobus is just a leech on public finance and the City of Joburg simply can't afford it.

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