

The minibus taxi industry and the City of Cape Town's Integrated Rapid Transit (IRT) system



Exciting changes are underway in Cape Town's public transport sector and there are lots of questions about the role of the minibus taxi industry within this. Here are some of the answers.

Who will be given formal opportunities to participate in the IRT?

The City of Cape Town wants to offer public transport operators, on routes directly affected by the proposed IRT system, the opportunity to participate and share in this new public transport system.

'Directly affected operators' are those whose services it is proposed will be replaced and upgraded by the IRT, namely minibus taxis and scheduled buses in the Phase 1A area. They will be expected to give up their current rights in return for shares in the companies contracted to operate the new system or receive compensation. The operators will form the core of these companies.

specialised services such as contract bus services, metered taxis and shuttles (such as airport shuttles) will continue to operate outside of the IRT service. The intention is not to incorporate these kinds of services into the IRT system, and operators' rights to operate these services will continue. The City will engage these operators regarding the possible impact of the IRT on their operations.

If I am operating a taxi without a current valid licence, can I be part of the new system?

Yes, in principle, each association will decide whether they will include operators without a legal licence. This process will not affect the rights of operators from other associations. The City will engage with all the affected associations to finalise this process.



What is the Integrated Rapid Transit system?

The IRT is a way of ensuring that all modes of public transport work together and have priority over private transport. A major part of this is a bus rapid transit system (BRT) – a fast, modern road-based system.

Cape Town is unique. The City is developing a system for local conditions. However, experiences from elsewhere are used as a guide, looking at good examples from many parts of the world, including Latin America, Africa, Asia, North America and Australia.

The IRT should provide Capetonians with a regular, frequent, fast and reliable mode of public transport.

What will happen to recapped vehicles?

The City will discuss this issue with the minibus taxi industry to find appropriate solutions. Options for existing vehicles include:

- Continuing to use recap vehicles on unaffected routes
- Using recap vehicles as feeders in the new system
- Establishing a trade-in programme for recap vehicles
- Using recap vehicles for other markets, such as hotel shuttles.

How did the City decide on Phase 1A?

As a host city for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the City of Cape Town has signed an agreement with FIFA to provide transport services between the airport, the city centre and the Green Point stadium area. Phase 1A includes these areas but also focuses on delivering quality public transport to the West Coast. This includes some of the communities with the most pressing mobility needs, like Mamre, Atlantis, Doornbach, Du Noon and the Joe Slovo informal settlement, near Milnerton. This West Coast area currently experiences very high levels of traffic congestion.

What will the system mean for passengers?

The service will run for far longer – during the day, into the evening and at weekends and will be regular, frequent and reliable. Once the full system is in place, people will be able to travel around the city to visit friends and family, shopping centres and places of leisure, and tourists will be able to get around easily.

The aim is to have easy access between the system and other ways of getting around, such as walking, cycling, metered taxis and park-and-ride facilities.

Where is the money for this project coming from?

The system is being paid for jointly by national government and the City of Cape Town. All three spheres of government, including the Western Cape Provincial Government, are committed to transforming public transport in Cape Town. Much of the funding of Phase 1A is being made available to meet Cape Town's requirements for hosting the 2010 World Cup.



How can I get more information?

You can get more information by visiting the City of Cape Town's website at www.capetown.gov.za/irt.





How will the taxi industry be integrated into the IRT system?

The City envisages the existing minibus taxi and bus industries playing a leading role in the new system, by forming companies that will be contracted to operate the IRT system's vehicles. These vehicles will include minibuses and buses of different sizes, whichever size will be optimum from an operational and financial point of view. The City is also assisting the taxi industry in the process of forming these companies.

These companies will get secure, long-term contracts extending over 10 to 12 years. In that time the companies will develop experience and expertise as IRT operators and will be well positioned to bid for the renewal of the contracts.

These operating companies will operate both the feeder routes and the trunk routes of the new system. In the first phase the City has proposed two contracts for the geographical area, which the operating companies will run. Only the operating companies will be allowed to operate on the IRT routes in the new area.

Due to the system being rolled out in phases the rest of the existing minibus taxi industry and bus industry will still provide services in the city, but their services will be gradually reduced as the IRT system is rolled out. For example, some of the services coming into the Phase 1A from elsewhere in the city will remain in operation until such services are fully covered by the expanding IRT. Phase 1 affects only about 10% of the existing bus and taxi services.

One of the key benefits of rolling the system out in phases is that it gives the existing public transport industry an opportunity to observe the new system and its benefits for themselves, and most importantly for commuters.



What are the benefits for drivers and other employees?

Full-time workers in the affected taxi and bus industry will have preferential access to jobs in the new system. One of the main aims of the IRT is to substantially improve the work environment for those currently employed. Many of the current drivers and staff are without employment benefits such as leave, sick leave, health care, maternity benefits and pensions. The new system will provide these benefits as well as safer working conditions, a stable salary and regular working hours while enhancing professionalism and career development.



How is the City going to deal with groups within the taxi industry that are not yet convinced by the IRT plans?

The City of Cape Town is open to engagement with any part of the industry that is interested in engagement and is not using threats or violence to promote their views. However, where groups use violence, the City and government will respond appropriately to protect the City's citizens and assets.

It appears that many of those groups within the taxi industry who are opposed to the IRT plans have not allowed themselves to be fully informed of the proposed IRT system, and are basing their views on perceptions that are not based on fact. Every effort is and will be made to present the factual information to the broader industry and especially to these groups.

Is the rest of the industry engaging with the City?

The IRT Phase 1A is proceeding with the part of the industry that is willing to engage in the process. The City has been engaging with the leadership of the industry. They generally have an open mind to the concept, subject to the negotiations with the directly affected taxi operators.

The City has also launched an outreach programme with the minibus taxi industry. Only through substantive and meaningful engagement with the industry it is possible to build trust to achieve the objectives of the system. The City of Cape Town wants to plan a new transport system in partnership with those parts of the existing and affected industry who are interested in working with the City.

Will taxis and buses still be operating in the area?

Once a given phase of the IRT has been implemented, existing taxis and scheduled bus services will continue to operate on the remaining routes, that is those not directly replaced by the IRT Phase 1A. Direct competition with the IRT will be discouraged. However, different kinds of services will continue to operate. Only IRT vehicles will be allowed to operate in the dedicated lanes along trunk routes.

Who will be employed in the new system? Will I be excluded if I currently drive a taxi that doesn't have a permit?

No, associations will provide the City with a register of current fulltime drivers and other workers, irrespective of whether they are working on licensed vehicles or not. They will be given preference in future employment in the new system.

The minibus taxi and scheduled bus industries will play a leading role in the new Integrated Rapid Transit (IRT) system as employees, operators and shareholders of the new system.

The City is working to increase overall employment in the public transport sector. In the new IRT System there will be opportunities for employment as drivers as well as other fulltime jobs, such as in maintenance, customer service and security. Employment is expected to grow because of the emphasis on customer safety and quality of services, such as that the system will run for longer hours every day. Also, although there will be fewer vehicles than at the moment, there will be multiple shifts for drivers.

Another aim of the IRT system is to substantially improve the work environment for employees. Many of the current drivers and staff are without employment benefits such as leave, medical aid, maternity benefits and pensions. The new system will provide these benefits as well as safer working conditions, a stable salary and regular working hours while enhancing professionalism and career development.

Will the City own the vehicles?

No. The operators will own the vehicles and take responsibility for their maintenance and care.

How will the operators afford the vehicles?

The City will contribute at least 50% of the cost of the vehicles as a form of capital subsidy to get the system started.

Does the City of Cape Town aim to take business away from the minibus taxi industry?

No. The City of Cape Town wants to increase the market for minibus taxi operators and make the operators more profitable. By getting more people out of cars and onto public transport there will be more business for public transport operators.

Is the City engaging the minibus taxi industry?

The new Integrated Rapid Transit (IRT) system offers substantial advantages to the minibus taxi industry and scheduled bus industry affected by the implementation of the system.

The City of Cape Town has been engaging with the minibus taxi industry and bus industry about the new IRT system since November 2008, and continues to do so.

The City has been meeting on a weekly basis with minibus taxi and bus industries affected by Phase 1A to ensure these industries are at the heart of the IRT. By engaging with the City on its proposals the affected operators and associations have been able to shape the project in many areas. This includes the selection of routes, vehicle specifications, and the structure of the business plan. Through this engagement the associations have changed the structure of the project significantly.