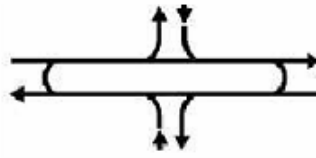


**Pierre Joubert**



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2019-10-30

To The Editors, sister newspapers  
The Weekend Post  
The Herald

Dear Sirs:

Please publish this at your earliest opportunity

### **Municipality given 2 weeks, R3bn could bankrupt the City**

Re Treasury now claiming R3bn from the city for the failed IPTS (Weekend Post October 19), to be paid back in two weeks.

The R3bn spent over 12 years has many chapters and many players. It cannot be lumped into one basket and then claimed back from NMB, as if it was their mad idea.

Time dims memories. Neither the authors of the article nor Treasury deputy Malijeng Ngqaleni, seem to realise or acknowledge that the IPTS was forced on the metro by Government as part of the FIFA 2010 SWC hosting package. That should be the NMBs first line of defence

However, unfortunately for the metro, those assigned to manage the project did not object. They never had it so good, all those millions on offer without asking.

Not one of those many Engineers and Consultants assigned to the Planning, who stood to benefit big time from the project, stood back and said is this thing really going to work. Which is a moral obligation of any thinking person and which is written up in the Codes of Practice for Professional Engineers. They all failed in that, and continued to do so even after the project could not get off the ground.

Under Regulation the ultimate responsibility of Professional Engineers is to the Public, not the Client who pays their fees. They are responsible to ensure buildings do not collapse and kill people, and that projects are viable. They cannot condone short cutting costs, and if they should see a project may not work, it is their job to advise the client. Same applies to Officials

and Politicians. Playing dumb is soft corruption. No money has changed hands, but the stage has been set.

The IPTS came out of the Public Transport Action Plan (PTAP) approved by Cabinet in April 2007. It was a one size fits all formula for public transport upgrade centred around Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) that was to be applied to all cities around the country. A Thinly Veiled objective was to scale down the taxi fleet. It was to debut at the 2010 SWC "to make the trip to the stadium on match day easy and comfortable for all ". As it would be a permanent reminder of the SWC hosting honour, it was branded a Legacy Project.

No one could argue against such a Noble Intention, despite ultimate responsibility, and the rest is history.

Re one size fits all, many people could see this thing was not fitting properly into NMB, but protests fell on deaf ears. Technically what the PTAP ignored was that there are different ways to build a BRT. There are two basic choices, "Direct Service" or "Trunk Feeder". Trunk Feeder suits very large metros but is not intended for those the size of NMB. So that was bad choice No1. The second was placing the doors facing the centre of the road, which only suits closed systems, but that decision was also forced on the metro, who had the option to not accept but took it lying down.

Then there was the Thinly Veiled objective, which became the Achilles Heel of the project. The likely reason Direct Service was not offered in the PTAP was that Trunk Feeder more strongly forces the taxis into a subservient role. None of the initiators expected the push back from taxis that came to disrupt implementation.

After the busses did not run, as the subsequent chapters played out, players none the less continued to throw good money after bad, pandering to the Noble Objective. Nobody ever said enough is enough, including Treasury, DOT, the ever present Consultants, ECSA, Politicians, and Officials. In the background was Public Protector, NPA and the Hawks, who showed themselves to have no fangs while the gun was still smoking.

Every-one hid behind the Noble Objective, even when major questions were asked, like "Where is the Money" Herald 2014-09-00. In March 2019 Attorney David le Roux admitted involvement "How we looted the IPTS" Herald March 11 2019. We heard no more

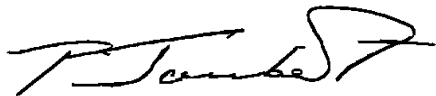
In the front of the the pack was Treasury, who runs the grant system under the Division Of Revenue Act, They made noises to stop it, but did not try very hard. Minister Gordham threatened to with-hold, but always relented. The money has gone in many directions, a bit for the real IPTS, much of it wasteful on over specification, and a lot unaccounted for. Soft corruption turned hard. Minister Nene 2014-10 ordered the Deloitte Inquiry, but instead of Treasury taking control of the findings, gave it to the Metro Executive, who did nothing because they were implicated. It later reached the Hawks and there it still sits.

Minister Gordham sent a team to NMB to investigate, the outcome of which was the book by Crispian Olver, How to Steal a City. He fingered a lot of people but his recommendations are still in the bottom drawer. He left NMB for fear of his life

The annual Conditional Grant became a thing the Metro could not do without, reinforcing questions about where it was going. Remarks by ANC regional spokes person Siviwe Ngaba that the work this money was meant to do was that of assisting the poor, does not sound like it has anything to do with public transport

When the DA briefly came to power, they knew the project was a disaster. They had the opportunity then of dumping it. They could have blamed it on the ANC, which would have been totally acceptable in political style. But either through the noble objective, or through the glow of the golden egg, they also ran with the ball. Former Mayor Trollip prided himself for getting the Stanford corridor to run, but not without bribing a small wing of the taxi industry with millions. Not a very prudent step for one who should practice frugal fiscal integrity and who punts clean governance. He should have stayed on in Council to help rescue the Metro from the R3bn take back threat. Too late now or saved by the gong

So how to deal with this, it is clear from the foregoing that the NMB does not stand alone in the responsibility for loss. There should be a Zondo type inquiry for Division of Blame, and then as much recoupment as possible should be attempted from the entities who caused the loss. But please do not expect the Ratepayers to foot the bill



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It's cheaper to change things on paper than in the hard, said my old boss