

Pilot running of IPTS a cover-up

Only a judicial inquiry can resolve the future of IPTS (1)

REGARDING Brian Hayward's article, "Bay's delayed R1-billion public transport service on the move at last" (2012-05-14), it seems there is a huge sigh of relief that the buses will soon be running.

However, as stated by Hayward, this is merely a last ditch attempt to rescue national funding for further extension of the bus lanes, after a blunt ultimatum was issued to the metro. At a recent indaba at St Francis Bay it was agreed with the taxi industry that a pilot route would be selected and trial runs would commence at the end of June.

While walking on eggs, the metro and its host of consultants who built the failed infrastructure have since burnt the midnight oil to establish the said pilot route/s. It will be a black Christmas for consultants, who have become reliant on the long term phasing of the IPTS, and the 15% standard consultation fee structure, if further funding is withdrawn.

In this situation, the proposed pilot running is therefore mere damage control and a show, which at the same time serves to cover up the main underlying problems.

Why then such a problem, why pilot routes, why not just drive the new buses down the BRT lanes built for the purpose – Govan Mbeki Avenue, Theale, Fettes, Harrower and Kempston roads? Why not just baptise the Khulani corridor with new full scheduled services?

After all, in these roads is lying infrastructure of R1-billion placed there for the giant buses to run on. Why not just use them as planned?

The truth is the installed infrastructure is the result of a wild orgy of reckless expenditure and hurried planning, with a host of outstanding details, using money that was available under the 2010 Fifa mantle. No-one is sure whether the giant buses will be able to make the turns without getting stuck; the detailed workings of bus stops and modal transfers for buses with doors on the wrong side was not finalized during the big spend; and claims to routes by existing operators is still a sensitive issue.

In statements made at the St Francis indaba, the metro acknowledged that the infrastructure had flaws. It was also confirmed that the infrastructure directorate is appointing (still another) consultant for remodeling the idle infrastructure.

According to The Herald of May 14, the mayor has stated that an IPTS specialist will be appointed to head the IPTS. It is not clear if this will be the same person, but whether or not these appointments will be the solution remains to be seen.

They continue to be in the hands of the metro, which is as conscious of its loss of face through the failure of the system as it is of seeking a solution. The retention of consultants, who headed the disaster and who will not admit defeat by recusing themselves, will only defer a solution.

Demands for an independent judicial inquiry into alleged wasteful expenditure during the lead-up to 2010 have been sidestepped. DA transport spokesman Ian Ollis's recent calls and Deputy Transport Minister Jeremy Cronin's recent statement that the government must get involved hold out the most promise.

These initiatives should be canvassed, to push for an independent judicial inquiry to lay bare the failure by the planners, before new appointments and a new start can be made.

(1) sub headline by author