

Mayor announces BRT launch

12 August 2009

Statement by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, at the media briefing launch of Phase 1A of the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system and the announcement of the Public Transport Summit, Metropolitan Centre, Mayoral Palour, Braamfontein – Johannesburg

Speaker of Council: Clr Nkele Ntingane

Chief Whip of Council: Clr Nonceba Molwele

MMC for Transportation: Rehana Moosajee

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

City Manager: Mr Mavela Dlamini

Managers and Officials of Council

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, it is a mere three hundred and two (302) days before the first ball is kicked at the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament.

We are all aware of the fact that Johannesburg is an important stakeholder in the four-week soccer spectacular. From the opening ceremony to mark the beginning of Africa's first World Cup to the blowing of the final whistle at Soccer City the names South Africa, Africa, Gauteng and Johannesburg will be repeated and heard across the globe.

One of the challenges that arise in relation to the World Cup is transport. The City of Johannesburg is required to and has a responsibility to ensure a safe, secure and affordable public transport system for residents and visitors to all the match venues. We will use the pressure that comes with the 2010 World Cup to build a world class transport system for all.

We need a public transport system that is fast, efficient, secure, affordable and environmentally-friendly. We need a world-class public transport system for a world-class African City! The BRT Rea Vaya, is part of this overall effort.

The 30th of August 2009 will indeed be a major milestone for the City of Johannesburg. This is the day that Phase 1A of Rea Vaya – the first BRT system in South Africa – will officially start operating.

Rea Vaya, one of the City of Johannesburg's 2010 legacy projects, truly represents a new chapter in the history of public transport.

The journey that led us to this day has been one of tireless commitment and determination by the City, our partners and the citizens and residents of Johannesburg.

In saying this, I wish to express our sincere gratitude and pay tribute to the following people:

President Jacob Zuma, who played a pivotal role in ensuring the initiation of a more inclusive process.

All the citizens who participated in the public consultation processes.

The affected communities along the Phase 1A route who became involved and attended meetings.

The taxi industry representatives who have travelled with us on the Rea Vaya journey. Those who travelled with us to Bogota, Perreira and other places to study successful BRT systems. All the committed partners including Putco and Metrobus.

Both the national and provincial governments, who have supported and provided us with the necessary resources.

The Johannesburg Development Agency, for the speedy delivery of innovative and world-class infrastructure.

The more than 3000 men and women, (construction workers) who worked tirelessly to complete the infrastructure.

The Johannesburg Roads Agency who assisted with electronic signs and traffic signals.

The City's Transportation Department and BRT project team, including Bob Stanway our retired BRT project manager, for their foresight, management and planning.

The MMC for Transport, Rehana Moosajee, and her colleagues in the BRT Mayoral Sub-Committee and the Section 79 for their supervision.

I can confidently say that, we are now ready to go, Rea Vaya! This coming weekend, two significant events will take place to kick off this new phase.

The first is the Public Transport Summit that will take place on Saturday, 15th of August 2009, at the Nasrec Expo Centre. The aim of the Summit is to share information, consider issues, discuss and deepen our understanding on Rea Vaya. We are expecting approximately 1 000 community leaders who will come with various experiences and insights to enrich the Summit.

The second big event is our Fun Day and official bus unveiling, which will take place on the 16th of August 2009. Communities along the route are invited to join us at Thokoza Park to find out more about Rea Vaya, to experience one of the brand-new Rea Vaya buses and simply to enjoy a day of great entertainment with some of the county's top musicians.

Furthermore, in preparation for the opening of Rea Vaya we are starting to close the dedicated lanes. Only the BRT buses will be allowed to use these lanes. We appeal to the public to co-operate with us in this regard. Let's get used to the reduction in road space and start using public transport! JMPD will be out in full force to enforce this new system.

I am happy to announce that on the 30th of August 2009, we will be celebrating the first day of BRT operation. The residents and citizens of Johannesburg are invited to share this historic moment by taking a ride on Rea Vaya free of charge!

When Rea Vaya starts operating it will be with a starter service that will gradually be built up to a full Phase 1A service over the next six months.

We have included more information on the starter service in the media packs.

We are introducing this starter service while we are finalising negotiations with the taxi industry to establish a Bus Operating Company that will ultimately own and manage Rea Vaya. An interim company Special Purpose of Vehicle (SPV) has been established to act on behalf of the affected taxi operators and to manage Rea Vaya until negotiations are finalised.

At the same time I am pleased to announce that the first negotiation session of Phase 1A taxi operators started on the 5th August 2009. Operators from nine out of the ten affected associations were present at the negotiations meeting. The door remains open for all those who wish to become

part of this important process. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the negotiations well.

On the negotiations, it is also important to say the following: That in the City we have always known the fact that although a lot of work has been done, that the negotiations will in many ways signal a critical moment in the process. This is why we have spent significant amount of energy and time identifying a relevant mechanism and personnel to help manage this process. These negotiations are being chaired and facilitated by a very experienced team including Charles Nupen, Tefo Raditipole and Pete Harris. Our view is that the necessary preparations have been done and the negotiations have the best chance of succeeding.

I would also like to indicate that we are making good progress in recruiting new staff for the BRT business unit. By the 01st of September 2009, we will have in place a new BRT Project Manager as well as other senior staff members.

In conclusion, this project is very complex and holds a great promise to transform the transport industry. What we need more than ever before is a partnership that is committed to improve the quality of life of all our people.

Thank you