

Shift to public transport needed to avoid constant gridlock in the future

Our cities will be in constant gridlock within a decade unless we succeed in doubling the market share of public transport in each country by 2025, warns keynote speakers at the African Union of Public Transport (UATP) Workshop on Best Practice in Africa.



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The opening session of the UATP Workshop, hosted by Transport for Cape Town, the City of Cape Town's transport authority, was attended by at least 230 delegates from Africa, Switzerland, France and Singapore this morning, 20 October 2015. The delegates will, over the course of three days, participate in various case-study sessions, study tours, workshops and round-table discussions which will culminate in a best practice blueprint for Africa based on the lessons learned during these sessions.

'Africa is experiencing the most rapid urbanisation in the world, with surveys indicating that up to 60% of our residents will be living in cities by 2050. TCT will show off a number of the projects that we have pioneered and will, at the same time, learn from the delegates from other countries. The clock is ticking for all of us and we are racing against a tide of impatience and frustration. Our residents have high expectations from us - they want affordable and seamless access to opportunities - and we all have to move ahead with a greater sense of urgency in our endeavour to build liveable cities,' said the City's Mayoral Committee Member: Transport for Cape Town, Councillor Brett Herron.

Public transport must become the mode of choice

Jack van der Merwe, UATP President, said during the opening session that public transport is a social service and an essential service. "Public transport is not something that should make money. In fact, the most efficient public transport in the world is subsidised," said Van der Merwe.

By 2025 and due to urbanisation, there will be at least 6,2 billion private motorised trips annually in major cities across the world, leading to even more pollution and congestion. The UITP, the international organisation for public transport authorities and operators, policy decision-makers, scientific institutes and the public transport suppliers, foresees that traffic congestion will soon bring cities to a standstill unless the market share of public transport is doubled in each country by 2025.

'The cities that cannot make this shift will not survive in future. Public transport is for everyone and it must become the public mode of choice by being efficient and integrated,' said Van der Merwe.

Transit-oriented development

Speakers also noted that transit-oriented development is an essential ingredient for public transport to be sustainable and to prevent urban sprawl - meaning the cities of the future are obliged to increase the number of households per hectare. New office blocks must be situated near attractive public transport stations, the timetables of buses and trains must be coordinated, and there must be integrated tariffs and ticketing across the modes.

'We expect the workshop to be solutions-oriented and we are looking forward to the days ahead,' said Herron.

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