

## Go-ahead for R5m taxi payout

The Nelson Mandela Bay council yesterday gave the go-ahead for the city to pay the R5.5-million owed to the taxi industry for the 59 vehicles in storage. This, according to acting city manager Johann Mettler, was an important step to getting the 25 articulated Integrated Public Transport System (IPTS) buses back on the road.



Mike Gerhardt via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The deal, which taxi bosses were party to, followed a series of meetings between Laphum'ilanga Transport Services and city officials in recent weeks in a bid to resolve the stalemate over a monthly subsidy previously paid to them by the municipality. The 59 taxis were taken off the Summerstrand route in 2013 to make way for the bus system.

### Some taxis reported to not be in working condition

In transport portfolio committee meetings last year, it was reported that some of the vehicles that were put in storage were in such a shoddy condition they had to be towed. The industry denied this.

At yesterday's council meeting, the DA and ANC locked horns over the R5.5-million payment, with the former saying the city should not be held to ransom and forced to pay.

DA councillor Morne Steyn said: "The payments are not due to the taxi operators; we should not be held at ransom. "The DA will not stand by and let the public purse be abused in this manner."

Jonathan Lawack (DA) said the municipality was turning a blind eye to the fact that about 45 taxis were reported to have not been in working condition.

## **Closing the chapter**

ANC councillor Zukile Jodwana said the matter was long overdue and that the chapter had to be closed.

Balu Naran (ANC) said: "This matter has been coming for about three years. We need to move on this matter.

"It seems the DA is scared that the project is going to start in the next few months."

COPE councillor Khwezi Ntshanyana said they were happy that the national Treasury and Department of Transport had both agreed to support the payment.

In Mettler's report to the council, he recommended that the R5.5-million be a "full and final payment" to the 59 taxi owners and ambassadors. "The owners of the minibus taxis must remove their vehicles from the municipal storage in their current condition and at their own cost," Mettler recommended.

When put to a vote, the majority "with the DA opposed" agreed that the money be paid.

*Source: Herald*

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