

Transport needs to shift to a higher gear

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SA's public transport system is lagging behind in offering digital services to commuters, and could encourage more users if it focused on the "social" aspects of improved technology, Autopax acting CEO Bongani Kupe said on Thursday, 3 November 2016.



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Kupe was addressing a Transport Special Interest Group forum in Pretoria.

In September, Vodacom entered into a R1bn, 15-year strategic partnership with the Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa) to monetise Prasa's existing telecommunication assets. This followed a decision by the Treasury to appoint Vodacom as the mobile operator across government.

Under that deal Vodacom will link Prasa's existing 900km fibre network which it is leasing, with its own network. This is expected to allow other government departments and entities access to the rail operator's information technology infrastructure. Autopax, which runs Translux and City to City, is fully owned by Prasa.

"Unless you are able to digitise, address the social aspects, you are not going to be able to attract more customers," Kupe said on Thursday.

Players in the industry needed to focus more on the shifting market dynamics, CEO of transport consultancy David Frost said.

Kupe said Prasa and Autopax are looking at social demands from passengers, not just the technological efficiencies.

New technologies and new services, such as the application-based taxi service Uber, are redefining integrated transport planning in terms of need.

These rapid changes are expected to continue, for example with driverless cars or buses, with most major vehicle manufacturers expected to roll out autonomous or semiautonomous vehicles between 2017 and 2025.

Transport systems are becoming more "data-centric", said Frost, requiring a huge focus on integrated technology systems that are scalable.

"As long as we continue to be device-centred or vehiclecentred, we are never going to deliver the service required to commuters," he said, adding: "We have to start thinking about the data, rather than just the systems."

Source: Business Day

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