

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2022

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Public Works on its oversight visit to the George Integrated Transport Network (Go George) and the Government Motor Transport Regional Hub on Wednesday 18 May 2022 as follows:

Delegation

The delegation consisted of the following Members:

America, D (Chairperson) (DA)
Van der Westhuizen, AP (DA)
Mvimbi, LL (ANC)

The Procedural Officer, Mr J Coetzee, and Ms N Mshumpela, Committee Assistant, accompanied the delegation.

1. George Integrated Transport Network (Go George)

1.1 Introduction and background

Section 114(2)(b)(i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, mandates provincial legislatures to provide for mechanisms to maintain oversight over the provincial executive authority in the province. Flowing from a resolution of the Standing Committee on Transport and Public Works, the Committee undertook an oversight visit to the George Integrated Public Transport Network (GIPTN), also referred as the Go George Project.

Go George is a scheduled public bus service in the City of George that aims to provide a first-class public transport service that is reliable, affordable, safe, convenient, accessible, and that contributes to a better quality of life for all.

The GIPTN focused on full inclusion and transformation of the local minibus-taxi industry in George with a Vehicle Operating Company (VOC) wholly owned and operated by local operators to deliver the new scheduled bus service in terms of a contract.

Through an intergovernmental initiative between the Municipality of George, the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works, the national Department of Transport and the local taxi and bus operators from the George area, this project came about and is funded through the Western Cape Public Transport Operations Grant, as well as the national government through the Public Transport Network Grant.

The Go George bus service celebrated six years of service to the George community in December 2020.

1.2 Overview of the visit

The Committee visited the Go George depot and was briefed on the status of the rollout of Phase 4A to the community of Thembalethu after which the Committee was taken on a tour of the Phase 4A route.

1.3 Key issues discussed

The project commenced during 2007 and was initially initiated by the Western Cape Government and the Municipality of George later joined as a partner. There were four stakeholders involved, which were identified as affected parties by the government, ie Uncedo, George Huurmotor Vereniging (GHV), George Taxi Owners' Front (GTOF) and Louis Bus Services.

The actual negotiation process started in 2011 during which all aspects regarding the long-term contract (12 years) were negotiated and, during this period, the company George Link (Pty) Ltd was formed. Some of the aspects included compensation, formation of the company, bus ownership, funding of pre-operational cost, contract rates, service to be operated, including phased rollout, training of staff and the presence of full-time advisors etc.

The successful implementation of phases 1, 2, 3 and 4B has allowed the Go George bus service to transport over four million residents in George and currently covers 70% of the households in George. Services are expected to be rolled out to the additional areas around George. The current focus is on the expansion and rollout of Phase 4A of the Go George service to Thembalethu.

This expanded service is expected to increase the average weekday passenger trips from 15 600 to almost 24 000, with more than 80% of households estimated to be within 500 metres of a Go George bus stop. It was agreed that the rollout of Phase 4A must be achieved before the end of 2022.

1.4 Concerns

It was highlighted that there are still a number of illegal taxis on the GIPTN route and a number of attacks on the busses were aimed at the bus drivers, which could have very bad consequences if a driver were injured. Safety and security remain a major concern for the successful rollout of Phase 4A.

Vandalism of the Go George infrastructure is a serious concern as it affects the quality of the service experience of the passengers and detracts from the mission of delivering a dignified and safe public transport service and associated amenities.

The repair of damaged bus windows has cost the George Public Transport Network (GIPTN) an estimated R965 000 in 2021 and the cost of replacing infrastructure and branding damaged by vandals is astronomic.

1.5 Resolution

The Committee RESOLVED that it would monitor the rollout of Phase 4A, as well as the operations of GIPTN regularly.

1.6 Acknowledgements

The Chairperson thanked the Department, the George Municipality and the directors of George Link for availing themselves to address the Committee.

2. Government Motor Transport Regional Hub

2.1 Introduction and background

The Government Motor Transport (GMT) Regional Hub in George was opened on Monday 10 August 2020. GMT is a trading entity operating under the auspices of the Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW). One of the reasons why George was chosen is because, together with other neighbouring municipalities, it is poised to be the next metropolitan area in the Western Cape.

It will service both the provincial and national departments and will also increase the response time for the Department of Health as some of their vehicles are kept there.

2.2 Overview of the visit

The Committee visited the GMT Depot and was briefed on its purpose, which is to provide a cost-effective fleet management service to provincial and national departments, as well as other government entities in the Western Cape. One of GMT's key strategic thrusts is to establish strategically located regional vehicle pools that will best enable client departments and entities to provide services to the public. The George Regional Hub will facilitate the provision of public services to people living in the Southern Cape and surrounding areas of the province.

At present, the Regional Hub in George has a fleet of 102 vehicles and provides vehicles to seven of the fourteen departments in the province. The new facility can accommodate 157 vehicles and the office block will accommodate six GMT officials. The budget of the building maintenance of all depots are managed by the DTPW.

The depot in George is also a parking facility and the GMT Technical Inspectorate operates from the site, covering the Southern Cape and Karoo regions.

GMT Rental in Cape Town is a vehicle rental service and clients are billed by GMT Fleet Finance. All repairs and servicing of vehicles are managed by GMT Fleet Services team and the service provider, Nedfleet, that is based in Maitland.

2.3 Key issues discussed

During the tour of the facility it was highlighted that GMT is required to deliver specially equipped vehicles, all of which are offered to client departments. Conversions for specialised vehicles, such as ambulances, rescue and forensic pathology services vehicles, as well as mobile clinics, are contracted to merchants to promote empowerment and economic growth.

These specially equipped vehicles are delivered to client specifications. The number of requests for specialised vehicles and even for fully equipped trailers is increasing because of client departments taking their core business activities to the doorstep of communities to further improve service delivery. GMT intends to explore ways to increase this capacity and the provision of training to drivers who operate these specialised vehicles.

2.4 Concerns

It was highlighted that the misuse of government vehicles and losses remained a major concern for the Department and they were constantly striving to find innovative ways to minimise the losses. Thus far, during the 2022/23 financial year, 242 incidents of losses were reported at a cost of R1 449 000. During the 2021/22 financial year, 2 275 incidents of losses were recorded at a cost of R19 190 000.

2.5 Resolution

The Committee RESOLVED that it would visit the GMT Maitland Depot at a future date.

2.6 Acknowledgements

The Chairperson thanked the Department and the staff of the GMT George Regional Hub for availing themselves to address the Committee.