

Bus Buzz



Monthly newsletter for Golden Arrow passengers

Looking back on 2013

This year has seen many changes unfolding in the public transport landscape within the City of Cape Town. The first phase of the City's integrated rapid transit (IRT) system was formalised with the signing of 12-year operating contracts for services along the west coast corridor on the Atlantic seaboard. In addition to this, a Heads of Agreement (HoA), which will pave the way for the introduction of the N2 Express Service, was concluded amongst GABS, Taxi Associations and the City. It is envisaged that the N2 service will commence in July of next year.

Some of the Phase one services will be operated by Table Bay Area Rapid Transit (TBRT), which was formed as a joint venture between GABS, Abahlobo Transport Services and Siyakhula Bus Services to exclusively function as a vehicle operating company in the City's MyCiti bus service.

The month-long strike in April was a major disruption to the company's operations. The financial losses and inconveniences suffered by the company, employees, passengers, suppliers and the local economy were of immense proportions and certainly far in excess of the wage settlement that was eventually concluded. Upon reflection it is therefore clear that very serious thought needs to be given to the far-reaching ramifications of prolonged strike action, particularly in light of the fact that it would seem that no real gains were won as a result.

Road safety remains an on-going preoccupation in public transport operations and, as such, we have increased our efforts at entrenching a culture of responsible driving through the institution of a two-day professional driver safety refresher course. This course has become compulsory for all drivers to attend every two years and with its focus on driver behaviour and attitudes, has been a positive reinforcement of improved driving skills and conduct on the road.

Since its commencement in 2008, on-board drive-cam monitoring units have now been installed on 75% of our fleet. Apart from providing accurate visual and audio recordings on a continuous basis, the drive-cam



GABS' General Manager Francois Meyer

has also proven to be useful in eradicating bad driving techniques or to enforce improved driving behaviour. The system has found general acceptance within our operations and we are satisfied that it makes a valuable input to our goal of promoting safe and responsible driving.

Golden Arrow Bus Services could not exist without you, the passenger. We want to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to you for your ongoing support. Over the next year we would like to encourage you to actively participate in a dialogue with us about the service that you are receiving. Your input is of great help to us and we always take all your comments, complaints and queries very seriously. You can address letters to the Bus Buzz editor or you can call 0800 65 64 63 tollfree, either way please do not hesitate to get in touch.

And last but certainly not least we would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a safe and joyful festive season and a prosperous new year.

GABS launches new internal complaints handling system

Golden Arrow Bus Services (GABS) values customer complaints and believes that complaints present the company with an opportunity to retain passengers and improve services. To this end the company began the process of reviewing its complaints system earlier this year to gauge efficacy and resource utilisation. It was found that the system was cumbersome and did not take advantage of the multitude of technological advancements that have emerged in the last decade.

The Information Technology (IT) department, senior operations staff and the public relations department therefore came together to identify areas for improvement and to design a complaints system that would significantly increase turnaround time and reduce the time spent administering the system as well as making the audit trail far simpler. The new system also meets key requirements in the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) as well as Transport for Cape Town's IRT contracts.

The system is web based with complaints automatically downloaded from the Transport Information Centre's (TIC) server and uploaded directly to the GABS web database for immediate action by the relevant GABS operations staff. The system allows for all complaint forms (telephonic, email, Facebook, Hello Peter etc.) to be uploaded into the same system and has various levels of authority built into it so that key users are able to monitor the en-

tire system and to ensure that all complaints are being handled in a timely and professional manner.

The primary mode of communication is sms-based making it simple for complainants to track the progress of their complaint via series of sms's which they receive throughout the complaint investigation and resolution process. Email responses and phone calls are also used where necessary. According to IT Manager, Nigel

Solomons, the updated complaint system has already proved successful, although tweaking is ongoing to ensure that it is perfectly suited to the needs of those administering it. "The input that the IT department received from the TIC and fellow Golden Arrow staff members has allowed us to create a system which meets Golden Arrow's unique needs and it is certainly going to take complaint administration to the next level," he says.



Best wishes for a prosperous 2014



**FOR COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES CALL
0800 65 64 63 TOLL FREE**



Passenger forums reflect on 2013



ONWARDS AND UPWARDS: GABS' passenger forums celebrate a year of working together to improve service levels

This year's annual Golden Arrow passenger forum function was held at the Ikwhezi Community Hall in Gugulethu. The function represents the last meeting of the year and it gives forum members and Golden Arrow officials a chance to contemplate the year that was, while looking forward to the year ahead.

Golden Arrow's passenger forums date back (in their formalised state) to 2000 and over the last 13 years the relationship between the company and the passenger forum members has become an essential feedback mechanism. The forums are grouped according to five areas; Khayelitsha, Nyanga, Blue Downs, Delft and Philippi although passengers travel to various locations along the metropole from these points.

Membership is voluntary and forum members receive a badge that

they wear which identifies them to fellow bus passengers as passenger forum members. The forums are considered an absolutely key stakeholder participation mechanism. At each meeting they set the agenda and all discussion points are formally minuted and further deliberated upon at high level operational meetings if solutions cannot be found at the particular forum discussion.

The end of the year function is not just about enjoying a delicious meal though. Operations Manager, Anwar Ally was on hand to discuss the cost-saving initiatives that Golden Arrow has in place as well as the newly launched complaints system. Provincial Department of Transport representative, Luthando Mlonzi gave a presentation explaining the contract system and how the Division of Revenue Act (DORA) impacts Golden Arrow's government subsidy allo-

cation. He also gave passenger forum members insight into how the relationship between provincial government and Golden Arrow works and the impact which the devolution of subsidy allocation from provincial to municipal level will impact on this relationship.

Once all the serious business had been taken care of it was time to relax and enjoy each other's company and this is always particularly enjoyable as the relationship with the forums has matured to the stage where the forum members know and trust the GABS operational staff with whom they deal. It is always incredibly heartening to see how proud the forum members are of the contribution that they make and Golden Arrow appreciates how dynamic a communication tool these interactions have become.

Old Persons Grant:

Everything you need to know

Community corner

information .. useful numbers .. first aid .. health

Who Can Apply for the Old Persons Grant?

If you are a woman or man 60 years or older, you can get a monthly payment from the government called an old age grant.

You must be a citizen or permanent resident of South Africa and must be living in South Africa at the time of applying for the grant. You must not be maintained or cared for in a state institution (such as a state old age home), living in a psychiatric hospital, getting care from a state treatment centre or getting state care for a drug habit. You must not be in receipt of another social grant in respect of yourself, and your spouse must comply with the means test. A 13-digit bar-coded ID (identity document) must be submitted.

Only people whose financial situation is below a certain level can get the grant. The test to decide this is called a means test.

Instructions:

Applying for the Grant

You can apply for the old age grant by filling in an application form at your nearest SASSA office. You do not need to pay to make the application.

The application process should not take longer than two hours. You will be interviewed, have your fingerprints taken and given information on whether you qualify for the grant. You will also need to show certain documents and provide some information, including:

- Your South African identity document (ID), which must be bar-coded.
- Information about your marital status:
- If you are single, an affidavit stating that you are single.
- If you are married, your marriage certificate.
- If you are divorced, your divorce order.
- If your spouse is dead, your spouse's death certificate.
- Information about your income and assets:
- If you are employed, your wage certificate.
- If you are unemployed, your Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) "blue book" discharge certificate from your previous employer.
- If you have a private pension, proof of the private pension.
- If you have a bank account, your bank statements for three consecutive months.
- If you have investments, information on the interest and dividends you earn.

If you cannot go to make the application yourself, a friend or family member can bring a letter from you and a doctor's note saying why you can't visit the office yourself. A home visit may then be arranged.

When you make the application, you should say how you would like the money to be paid. The money can be paid out in cash on specific days at a pay point or you can get the money paid electronically into your bank account. Remember that normal bank charges can apply to any money going in and out of your bank account. You can decide to change the payment method at any time by filling in a form at a welfare office, but the change will only happen a month later.



It will take about 30 working days for your application to be processed and checked and either approved or refused. If your application is refused you will get a letter explaining why it has been refused and how you can appeal.

If it is approved, you will start getting payments within three months. The payments will be backdated to the day you applied for the grant. You can find out what has happened to your application and when you can expect payment by calling the South African Social Security Agency's (SASSA) toll-free helpline on 0800 601 011.

The old persons grant will be cancelled if you die, if you are admitted to a state institution or if your income or assets improve so much that you no longer qualify in terms of the means test. You must inform the department of any changes in your circumstances.

Call the toll-free helpline: 0800 601 011 for more information.