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CONTENTS



PAGE
2

DUMPING DRIVERS AND DIESEL!

Imagine a future where transport operators don't need drivers, or diesel! It's not a pipe dream, and it's just around the corner.



PAGE
20

FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THINGS HEAVY

Is the heavy commercial vehicle (HCV) sector being affected by the struggling rand and low consumer confidence?



PAGE
26

TECH-SAVVY LOGISTICS

We ask how leveraging everyday technology can assist, both within an organisation and between logistics partners.



PAGE
28

THE POILITICAL SIDE OF TRANSPORT

We explore the ideas of liberalising market access for the road freight industry and harmonising traffic legislation in the SADC region.



PAGE
36

REGISTRATION WOES COULD PUT DEALERS OUT OF BUSINESS!

Truck dealers in the Eastern Cape are spitting mad! Thanks to administrative inefficiencies, their very livelihood is being impacted!



PAGE
40

IT'LL STOP TRAFIC

Big or small, the humble van is becoming something to look at ... like the new Renault Trafic, for instance.



PAGE
54

TAXI TO AFRICA

Minibus taxis account for some 70 percent of modal share in the cross-border road-transport industry, within the SADC region.



PAGE
59

CALL IN THE SANGOMAS?

Let's link our upcoming elections with the recent Brexit decision, and bring public transport into the equation ...

COVER STORY

Fiat Professional's first foray into the one-tonne bakkie market is aiming to prove it can be a serious work and leisure vehicle. See all the details on page 14.



REGULARS

- 2** Steering Column
- 10** Wheel Nut
- 12** Vic's View
- 44** Global Focus
- 48** Short Hauls
- 49** Naamsa figures
- 50** Subscription form
- 58** Global bus
- 59** Hopping off

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Dumping drivers AND DIESEL!

Imagine a future where transport operators don't need drivers, or diesel! Does this sound like a pipe dream? It's not. And it's just around the corner, as CHARLEEN CLARKE discovers



CHARLEEN CLARKE

It's not every day that the head honchos of every European truck manufacturer gather in one room and chat to the media, but that's exactly what the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA) manages to achieve every two years.

The occasion is the so-called International Press Workshop, which sees the editors of the world's leading transport and trucking magazines converge on Frankfurt. They are joined by the CEOs of all the truck companies, who each give a presentation.

As has been the case for many years, **FOCUS** was the only publication from the African continent at the event.

The purpose of the workshop is to create some

hype prior to the IAA, which is organised by the VDA. It certainly achieved that goal, with many companies alluding to their IAA exhibits (Volkswagen, for instance, announced that it would launch the new Crafter at the fair). However, the captains of industry also gave an insightful peek into the future of transport.

Matthias Wissmann, president of the VDA, kicked off proceedings by posing the question to which we all want the answer: what does the truck of the future look like? "The answer is obvious: connected, automated and digital. This is where we will see the next innovative leap forward in road-freight traffic. Only a few weeks ago, in the European Truck Platooning Challenge, the European truck manufacturers showed just what is already technically possible. Driving in platoons can save up to ten percent of fuel and CO₂ emissions," he pointed out.

Wissmann went on to say that this example shows the potential that lies in connectivity. "It offers the chance to handle the quantities transported even more efficiently and to cope with economic growth in an efficient manner," he noted.

THE FUTURE IS AUTOMATED

As Wissmann pointed out, the future is most certainly automated. "Commercial vehicles are predestined for automated driving. The technology makes traffic safer, improves the workplace for drivers and reduces CO₂ emissions and operating costs.

"For this we need a discussion focused on the opportunities, without losing sight of the challenges. The efforts pay off. Data is the gold of the digital age. Trucks supply valuable information about the vehicle, the load, the road, traffic situation, weather and a lot more besides. Now we need to find the right applications that will further optimise day-to-day transport. We have a huge opportunity," he urged.



Various panel discussions took place at the International Press Workshop 2016. The captains of industry spoke with one tongue when they agreed that the truck of the future would be connected, green and able to operate sans driver. Pictured here (from left) are: Gero Schulze Isfort, MD of Krone; Ralf Eschemann, vice president of UPS Europe; Wolfgang Bernhard, board member at Daimler; Andreas Renschler, board member at Volkswagen; and event moderator Julia Josten.

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Andreas Renschler, member of the executive board of Volkswagen AG responsible for commercial vehicles and CEO of Volkswagen Truck and Bus, agreed that autonomous vehicles would equate to improved safety.

"At the University of California in San Francisco, a fully automated pharmacy measured 20-million drugs without one single error — people had made mistakes around 20 000 times. In the future, freight will be moved using decentralised transportation

autonomous driving could reduce the number of truck accidents by about 90 percent.

However, autonomous driving isn't without its challenges, as Bernhard pointed out. "Last year at this time I called for politics to incorporate the revised Vienna Convention into German law. That has since happened — and it's a good start.

"Yet, at a speed above ten kilometres per hour, the European Union-directive ECE R79 still prohibits the driver to take his or her hands off the steering wheel.

RIGHT: Håkan Karlsson, senior vice president of Volvo, said that the transport industry is experiencing a paradigm shift. He believes that three areas will drive the change: connectivity, automation and electromobility.

BELOW: Eckhard Scholz, speaker for the brand board of management at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, said that the company's products are being transformed from commercial vehicles that transport cargo to networked workplaces on wheels.



And there is still no certification or regulation for the autopilot function in a truck. Our industry has made valid arguments to change that. Otherwise partially autonomous trucks will be ready for the market, but not allowed on European roads."

CONNECTIVITY TO THE FORE

Henrik Henriksson, president and CEO of Scania, was in full agreement with his colleagues. "The future is about being connected, electrified and autonomous," he noted. However, he pointed out that connectivity is nothing new. "We have 200 000 connected vehicles on the roads. Out of all the trucks that we have delivered in the past five years, 80 percent are connected," he revealed. (Karlsson said that there are already 500 000 connected vehicles in the Volvo group.)

Clearly this will only grow in the future. This is a logical progression, as Bernhard pointed out. "Connectivity, industry 4.0 and the 'internet of things' have become buzzwords; everybody talks about them. Experts expect another 1,5 billion things will go online this year alone. This means 3 000 things are being added every minute.

"It's open to discussion whether or not it makes sense to have a running shoe or toothbrush on the internet, but what is clear is this: a connected truck will bring real added value; first and foremost, for our customers and drivers, but also for the logistics system as a whole, for the environment and for society. Yet, we still have to fully assess the extent of that value," he commented.

There are many benefits associated with connecting trucks to the cloud. "All participants involved in transport can exchange real-time information: with

systems that operate autonomously using artificial intelligence. We expect that this will be the case for most goods transport in the Western markets by 2040," he revealed.

Håkan Karlsson, executive vice president Volvo Group, pointed out that cost benefits will result from autonomous vehicles, too. "We have achieved 25 to 30 percent cost savings with autonomous trucks on a mine," he revealed.

Wolfgang Bernhard, member of the board of management of Daimler AG, Daimler Trucks and Buses, is another great fan of autonomous driving. He couldn't resist pointing out that Daimler introduced the first-ever autonomous truck — the Mercedes-Benz Future Truck — back in 2014.

"I'll admit, at Daimler Trucks, we're more than a little proud that we've blazed the trail for this technology in trucks. And this past March, less than two years later, we put a platoon of autonomous trucks on the A52 Autobahn. We are absolutely convinced this technology has tremendous potential," he noted.

Daimler is not alone in its enthusiasm; a leading consulting firm recently stated in a study that



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freight companies and freight terminals, with the infrastructure and other vehicles, with truck manufacturers, repair facilities and many others. The connected truck can also solve numerous problems faced by freight companies and drivers today, such as long waiting times at loading and unloading stations, empty 'deadhead' runs and traffic jams," Bernhard pointed out.

DIGITAL NO DAYDREAM

Of course, connectivity goes hand in hand with digitisation and Renschler pointed out that a digital future was no daydream. "We already have it today in other branches of industry where it is already leading to profound changes and even better opportunities. What we are witnessing now is the dawn and the reinvention of business models with a massive increase in efficiency as a result.

"Digitisation will open up the future for the transportation industry and all people involved in this ecosystem: no more inefficiencies, no more increasing obstacles of acceptance, no more negative impacts on the environment and the transportation infrastructure," he predicted.

One of the benefits of digitisation, according to Renschler, is the minimising of systemic inefficiencies. "We can exploit loading capacities, for instance, with an estimated market size of an annual €300 billion in Europe, we are transporting 'air' in the double-digit million euro range – that is expensive air, both for our customers and the environment.

"It means significantly lower impact on traffic and the environment – specifically: traffic jams, noise, particulate emissions. It means eliminating obstacles of acceptance, for instance passage restrictions for driverless vehicles that move around in connected, intermodal transportation systems, in which the flow of traffic is optimised through artificial intelligence," he noted.

Renschler cited a number of examples in this regard. "There is Gett, in which Volkswagen has made an investment of €300 million, for instance.



Henrik Henriksson, president and CEO of Scania, announced the opening of the first electrified highway in the world. It is 22-km long and is in Sweden.

THEY SAID IT

"In 2015, 835 truck drivers died in accidents in the United States alone – more than in any other occupation. We can change this."

Andreas Renschler, member of the executive board of Volkswagen AG responsible for commercial vehicles and CEO of Volkswagen Truck & Bus

"The Chinese truck market will rise by five percent to 800 000 this year."

Matthias Wissmann, president of the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA)

"Another 1,5 billion things will go online this year alone – 3 000 things are being added every minute."

Wolfgang Bernhard, member of the board of management of Daimler AG, Daimler Trucks & Buses

"Customers have a clear idea of what they're looking for when they purchase a new vehicle. Horsepower and torque are not as important here as having a system that links smartphones to the on-board network, in just fractions of a second, to ensure the driver can gain unlimited access to the internet. Revenue generated with vehicle connectivity features will increase to €110 billion between now and 2020 alone."

Eckhard Scholz, speaker for the brand board of management, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles

"In 2015, 51 percent of the low-floor city buses produced in our European sites were either CNG or hybrid. In 2016, standard hybrid buses represent 60 percent of our manufacturing capacity."

Pierre Lahutte, Iveco brand president

"A new product called Mercedes-Benz Uptime, which minimises truck downtime, will launch at IAA."

Stefan Buchner, head of Mercedes-Benz Trucks

"Since 2005, the annual traffic-jam length in Germany has tripled to 1,1 million kilometres."

Joachim Drees, CEO of MAN Bus & Truck

It is operating a very successful driving service without having any vehicles of its own.

"Fintech companies, such as TransferWise, are currently turning the financial industry upside down. The company offers simple money transfer between individuals at a lower rate than banks. Last year, the company was rated at around US\$ 1 billion. With more than 1.5 billion users, Facebook is the largest media platform on the globe and does not create any content itself.

"And, just to give you one example from a completely different branch of industry, IBM Watson is an artificial-intelligence technology that



Hartmut Schick, head of Daimler Buses, pointed out that it would be important to keep charging infrastructure as low as possible for bus customers, since this is where substantial costs are generated for cities and municipalities when switching to an electric fleet. In the future, much of this infrastructure may no longer be needed when battery performance improves.

learns and analyses entire subject areas on its own. It generates answers to concrete questions that Watson then renders in a natural tone of voice.

"Within a few weeks, IBM Watson can analyse scientific fields of study and contribute with significant results. For instance, it can identify unknown proteins to inhibit the growth of tumours. The business area of IBM Watson is planned to generate sales revenue of US\$ 10 billion until 2025," he revealed.

Profound innovations can also be found in the transportation industry. "Last-mile logistics is becoming increasingly customised and autonomous: Amazon is experimenting with 'Prime Air' test centres in the United States (US), the United Kingdom, Austria, and Israel. According to Amazon, it will be able to make deliveries using drones within 30 minutes as of 2019 — provided that the project is technically and legally feasible.

"In several states in the US, Amazon's Prime Now service is already available today, making deliveries possible within one hour, by identifying customer needs even before customers realise them!" Renschler revealed.

"Yesterday we opened the first electrified highway in the world, 22 km long, in Sweden."

Henrik Henriksson, president and CEO of Scania

"We can reinvent the bus. And that is precisely what we're going to do."

Hartmut Schick, head of the Daimler Buses division

"Global data volumes are doubling every two years. Already in 2020, the volume will increase to 40 zettabytes — this equals 50 times the amount of all grains of sand worldwide; in 2005, there were still five times more grains of sand than bytes."

Renschler

"The Transporter was the workhorse of Germany's economic miracle."

Scholz

"FleetBoard Store for apps - iTunes for truck transport - will go online at the beginning of 2017."

Buchner

"Germany's Ministry of Transport expects road transport to increase by almost 40 percent by 2030."

Drees

"The average truck in Europe is only loaded to 60 percent. The rest is waste."

Henriksson

"The future bus must be a living space in which people can work, shop, gather information, relax. We must offer city buses in which passengers feel just as comfortable as in their own living rooms."

Schick

"The new natural gas Cursor 9 is the first engine of its kind to deliver power and torque output in line with diesels."

Lahutte

"4G broadband supply along all major transport routes will be indispensable in future."

Drees

"Every MAN and Scania truck delivered to customers from 2017 onwards will be online."

Renschler

"The amount of data generated in logistics will increase a thousand fold over the next ten years."

Drees



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IT TOY

ELECTRIC MOMENTS

While drones will undoubtedly enter the transport fray in the future, diesel sales should plummet as trucks are powered by greener alternatives, such as electricity.

Bernhard announced some good news in this regard: "Electric drive in trucks has long not been a consideration, but things are starting to change, because battery technology is making great strides. From 1997 to 2025 battery costs are forecasted to drop by 60 percent. During the same period battery performance is expected to improve by 250 percent. Granted, that's never enough for long-haul transport, but the use of emission-free trucks for local distribution is conceivable in just a few years time. That means we can noticeably improve the quality of life – and we aim to do so," he commented.



Pierre Lahutte, Iveco brand president, pointed out that vehicles powered by natural gas can offer performance typically associated with diesel engines. The new Cursor 9 is a case in point.

Daimler Buses is also enthusiastic about the possibilities afforded by electricity. "We will bring an electric bus to market by 2018," Hartmut Schick, head of the Daimler Buses division, revealed.

Like Bernhard, he said that battery technology was making great progress. "Costs are decreasing dramatically, and performance is improving significantly. This is decisive in convincing our customers to use alternative-drive technologies. On the one hand, electric buses must be technically feasible. On the other hand, they must also be economical for our customers. In addition, electric buses must perform just as well as conventional diesel buses," he pointed out.

Karlsson announced at the workshop that Volvo will have a full-electric bus in serial production by spring 2017.

THE FUTURE LOOKS GOOD

So there we have it: a future vehicle that is autonomous, connected and quite possibly electric. Bernhard pointed out that this was tantamount to a revolution. "In terms of this revolution, truck transport will become safer, more efficient and cleaner. As you can see, we can look forward to the truck of tomorrow," he said with a smile.

Renschler agreed. "I am convinced that we have the most exciting years in the history of our sector ahead of us yet. We are committed to our goal of playing a significant and meaningful role in the transformation of the transport industry. We will do this with a great openness to new partners and business models, because we know that better logistics create a better world. This is why I am looking forward to the years ahead," he concluded.

It sounds as though we certainly have a lot to look forward to! **F**

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Seeing BLUE



There's been a visible increase in police activity on Gauteng's roads. Let's hope it continues and achieves some meaningful results



GAVIN MYERS

I can't be the only one to have noticed an increase in the number of police on our roads lately. In fact, I know I'm not, as a number of people I've spoken to recently have commented on the increased number of South African Police Service (SAPS) and Metro Police patrolling and setting up roadblocks around the Johannesburg/Pretoria metropolis, stopping all manner of vehicles.

I first really began to notice it about three months ago. Then, one Saturday night in June, I was pulled over in a roadblock on Sandton's Rivonia Road. The Joburg Metro Police were testing for alcohol – I blew a zero. The officer seemed disappointed by this ... perhaps he thought the new Volkswagen Kombi, which I was test driving for **FOCUS** at the time, was our party bus for the night.

I was pulled over again by the Tshwane Metro Police on Eufees Road a few days later. Two very pleasant chaps who, after checking all the necessary licences, it seemed just needed some good conversation. On that point, I've never actually encountered an unpleasant or unprofessional Tshwane Metro Police officer ...

Most recently, en route to conduct an interview in Rosslyn, Pretoria, I passed through six individual road blocks between my destination and our office in Johannesburg within the space of around 75 minutes. Luckily I wasn't actually stopped in any of them – because that would've made me late ...

This, it seems, is the problem: most people see this increased visibility by our boys in blue as an inconvenience. They complain when the police are never around – or, when the Metro Police simply sit at the side of the road behind a camera – but do the same when they are actually out doing some legitimate, active work.

So let's not be cynical and rather give the police the

benefit of the doubt ... calls for more effective traffic policing have been a regular feature of the South African automotive landscape for decades. During June, in fact, the Automobile Association of South Africa repeated the call for law enforcement to be "on the road".

"There needs to be a strong message across South Africa to all road users: the police will act if you drive in a manner that endangers other road users, and there will be severe consequences for your actions. While this approach may not immediately solve the long-term problems inherent on our roads, we believe it is a necessary first step to saving lives," the Association said.

A necessary first step is right. At least the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) seems to have taken some notice, launching a clampdown across Gauteng during May. It was codenamed "Operation Ke Molao" (it's the law) and it aimed to target hazardous routes and behaviour that result in preventable road collisions. At the time, road users were warned to exercise patience and expect delays.

Now, whether the increased police activity I've noticed is a direct result of the RTMC's efforts, or pure coincidence, I don't know. However, the latest available statistics show that there were 236 572 unroadworthy vehicles in the province alone (June 2015), and 1 013 278 vehicles countrywide that were unroadworthy, unlicensed, or both (December 2015). It is clear why this sort of initiative should be supported.

The officials shouldn't need to apologise for it by asking for patience, or justify it by reminding us of horrific statistics.

That said, I hope the authorities continue to annoy motorists indefinitely and, more importantly, achieve meaningful results. **F**

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What about an **EQUAL** playing field?

The reintroduction of a road freight transport permit system is on the cards. What are the consequences?

Rumours are flying around the road-transport industry that the South African government is thinking of possibly reintroducing a road-freight transport permit system in order to get more freight back onto rail, to boost rail freight volumes that have recently drastically declined, due to the slow economy and the cut back on exports of commodities such as iron ore, chrome and coal.

Details of a new rumoured permit system appear to be very vague at the moment, but the seed has been planted.

If a permit system similar to the previous systems is introduced, road-transport hauliers would have to submit an application to the authorities in order to move goods by road. The authorities would then decide whether or not to issue a permit, depending on rail capacity at that time and the type of load.

The reintroduction of a road-freight transport permit system that restricts the transport of freight by road would be extremely harmful to the road-freight transport industry, which is already feeling the pressure of a depressed economy.

It would also have a serious effect on the country's economy, as, in my opinion, rail cannot presently provide an efficient and secure system of moving general freight around the country and to neighbouring states.

We have previously had road-freight transport permit systems that restricted the movement of freight by road in order to protect rail. The first restriction came into effect in 1930 when the government introduced the Motor Carriers Act of 1930.

Until 1930, rail had enjoyed the major slice of the

market, as trucks did not have the load capacity or the durability to compete with rail. However, by 1930, some of the freight traditionally transported by rail was starting to be transported by road. To counter this threat, the Act was introduced to protect and safeguard the rail system.

The Motor Carriers Transport Act of 1930 severely (and almost completely) restricted the transportation of goods by road.

The Road Transport Act of 1977 replaced the Motor Carriers Transport Act of 1930. This Act did allow more freedom; nevertheless, the transportation of goods by road was still controlled by the "Permit System". This dictated what could be transported where and by whom.

Transporters wishing to transport goods had to apply to the Transportation Board for a permit.

However, gradually, under the principle of deregulation, more and more road transportation was allowed without the need for an authorising permit. In 1993, the permit system ceased to exist altogether for vehicles operating within South Africa.

Presently, transportation permits are required only for carrying paying passengers and goods that are transported across the border.

In my opinion, there is a need to move more freight by rail in South Africa, in order to relieve some of the road-traffic congestion, protect our roads and reduce the rate of horrific and unacceptable road accidents.

However, the reintroduction of a road-freight permit system is not the answer. Rail must compete with road transport on an even playing field and allow customers to choose the mode of freight transport. **F**



One of this country's most respected commercial vehicle industry authorities, VIC OLIVER has been in this industry for over 50 years. Before joining the FOCUS team, he spent 15 years with Nissan Diesel (now UD Trucks), 11 years with Busaf and seven years with International. Do you have a comment or thought you would like to share based on this column? Visit www.focusontransport.co.za and have your say!



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All work AND PLAY

Let's not mess about with cheesy sports analogies, Fiat Professional is serious about its intent for the Fullback to be a versatile work and play vehicle – and one that will drive the resurgence of the brand's light commercial vehicle (LCV) lineage in South Africa, writes GAVIN MYERS

The local bakkie market is currently in the throes of a generation change, with new models from a variety of brands having recently been launched, or nearing their introduction. The latest to hit the local market is the Fiat Professional Fullback.

While you may remember the Strada three-quarter tonner that was introduced to South Africa in 2005, the Fullback is Fiat's first one-tonne pickup. The company describes it as "a Work Hero designed to meet the real needs of professional customers and to face the requirements of daily life". The model line-up at launch comprises of three models: the Double Cab 4x4 LX, Double Cab 4x2 SX and Single Cab 4x2 STD.

So what's in the mix, then? Robust construction, reliability and versatility are the foundation values on which the Fullback has been developed. It's underpinned by a ladder-frame chassis designed for a high degree of strength, while the rear leaf-spring suspension adds the necessary ruggedness to carry a 1 000-kg payload and a three-tonne towing capacity.

The single cab boasts a payload of 1 160 kg, but it is its load bed length of 2 265 mm that really

impresses; not that the double-cab versions could be considered short, measuring 1 520 mm. The load beds of all models measure 1 470 mm between the wheel arches and 475 mm in depth.

The Fullback is an imposing size, with overall length of 5,2 m, width of 1,8 m and height of 1,7 m. The three-metre wheelbase balances the proportions, while some distinctive design features add a bit of individuality and Italian flair.

You'll obviously notice the distinctive front end with its butch, blunt grille and swept-back headlights. Then there is the cutline above the bold front wheel arches, which carries on along the sides of the load bin ... The result is a profile that is devoid of the heavy blandness that can so often plague such vehicles.

Double-cab models ride on stylish 17-inch rims wrapped in 245/65 rubber, while the worker-bee single cab has fit-for-purpose 16-inch steel wheels with 205-wide commercial tyres.

Providing the firepower to the two double-cab models is a 2,5-litre, direct-injection common-rail diesel engine. Available in two states of tune, the 4x4 LX model gets the full-fat 131 kW and 400 Nm of torque, while the 4x2 SX is tuned to





LEFT: All models carry more than a full tonne payload.

BELOW: Like the rest of the vehicle, the Fullback's interior looks good and feels tough.



100 kW and 324 Nm. The single-cab model is currently only available with a 2.4-litre petrol engine that produces 97 kW and 202 Nm torque.

Currently all models drive through a five-speed manual gearbox, although an auto is on the cards for diesel models. Both double-cab models feature electronic rear diff locks.

What else do they feature? Well, aimed squarely at the vocational market the single cab's STD trim level offers electric windows, air-conditioning, central locking, anti-lock brakes with electronic brakeforce distribution and a rubberised load bay. The 4x2 SX double cab adds driver and passenger airbags, comfy leather upholstery, cruise control, a touch-screen audio system with steering-wheel-mounted controls and a tow bar.

The top-spec, 4x4 LX double cab further offers buyers bi-xenon headlamps, electronic climate control, USB and Bluetooth connectivity, and a rear-view camera.

Across the range, all cabs are tastefully appointed



with contrasting black and grey upper and lower trim that creates a spacious feel. The single cab is in fact spacious enough for three, while the double cabs comfortably carry five with good leg and head room in the rear.

Of course, by now, you want to know what it's like to drive. Unfortunately, we were only able to get behind the wheel of the 100 kW, 4x2 double cab on launch. This motor pulls smoothly in a quiet and refined manner. The steering is light and visibility is good.

While bakkies traditionally sprung at the rear on leaf springs will always have a bit of "toughness" to their ride, the Fullback's ride quality is actually quite good. Indeed, Fiat has paid special attention to keeping noise and vibration down to a minimum.

Price wise, the single cab retails for R232 900, while the two double cabs are positioned at R402 900 and R468 900 respectively. The range is backed by a three-year/100 000 km warranty and a five-year/100 000 km service plan.

With these price and equipment levels, Fiat Professional is clear, and serious, about positioning the Fullback as a tough, well-rounded work-and-play vehicle. No easy task in bakkie-obsessed South Africa, it must be said ... However, the Fullback brings some fresh appeal to the bakkie market, which will, no doubt, grow as the range expands with more options. We can't wait to get our hands on more models for an in-depth evaluation sometime soon. **F**

Mastering
complexity
to secure

FLEET EFFICIENCY

The discipline of fleet management has always faced a plethora of challenges, not least of which is the fact that mobile assets generally operate "out-of-sight" of direct management control, creating any number of vulnerabilities for the commercial transport operation

Mitigating fleet risk, while optimising vehicle efficiency, are the core functions of fleet managers. Altech Netstar – a member of JSE-listed electronics and telecommunications company, Altron – has been at the forefront of developing fleet management (FM), telematics and stolen vehicle recovery (SVR) solutions since 1994. The company continues to pioneer better ways for commercial road-transport fleets to realise improved profitability and safety of mobile assets, both human and machine.

Today, Altech Netstar has grown, from its origins as a purely South African operation, to become a global leader in the telematics arena with customers across Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and Australia. The South African operation employs over 900 people with 14 regional offices around the country.

Altech Netstar offers a range of products to suit both large and small fleets. The company is at the cutting-edge of "technology convergence", effectively integrating myriad technologies in a manner that ensures the output of streamlined data to deliver actionable business intelligence for its customers.

According to Lawrence Wordon, executive: sales

and marketing, Altech Netstar: "Operational complexity defines the commercial road-transport industry. Fleet owners have to juggle a vast spectrum of demands on a daily basis, in a professional manner, to ensure enterprise sustainability.

"Invariably, oversights occur, leading to operational inefficiencies and heightened risk. Altech Netstar's fleet management solutions are designed to ease the burden of many of these demands, allowing fleet operators to focus on their core business.

"By harmonising the relationship between vehicle, driver and management using integrated intuitive technologies – which are customised to suit client-specific, work-flow models – Altech Netstar's bouquet of fleet management solutions is ushering in a new era for fleet owners where the concept of 'total fleet visibility' is now a reality."

With a business vision to be recognised as the fleet-solutions partner offering the broadest range of fleet management solutions, Altech Netstar has developed a range of leading-edge products to suit consumer and commercial markets.

Altech Netstar has a consumer customer base of over 600 000 subscribers and a fleet customer base of over 10 000 business-to-business, government and



commercial road-transport fleets (both independent and blue chip). The company is, therefore, ideally positioned to realise its vision, backed by an unmatched technological infrastructure within the South African fleet management industry.

SUPERIOR NETWORK FOR LOWER RISK

South Africa's fleet operating environment is one of the riskiest in the world, characterised by hijacking and vehicle, cargo and fuel theft, as well as high levels of traffic congestion, poor road conditions and high accident rates.

Altech Netstar has been at the forefront of the fleet security industry in South Africa for 22 years. With helicopter air support in all major centres and ground teams covering the whole region, it operates the largest private air and ground recovery service in southern Africa; with an impressive stolen vehicle recovery record thus far of over 60 000 cases.

The company also has a technology platform that sets it apart. This provides its customers peace of mind and cost effectiveness in a "one-stop shop", single-supplier SVR/FM solution.

"Altech Netstar is in a unique position, using its own private nationwide radio frequency communications network, to enhance vehicle security with anti-jamming technology," adds Wordon.

"All our products utilise a combination of GPS, GPRS, 3G (in Australia) and radio frequencies to ensure constant real-time transmission of data from vehicle to back-office desktops and Cloud servers, as well as handheld devices. This gives fleet managers reliable up-to-the-minute information on the status of their vehicles."

JammingResist™

"In South Africa, on-road risk is escalating every year, particularly the hijacking and theft of vehicles, fuel and cargo. Road safety is another priority for fleets operating across Africa, as is legal compliance with increasingly stringent road traffic legislation. Altech Netstar is constantly 'future-proofing' its products to ensure the ongoing safety and compliance of its customers' drivers, vehicles and cargo," he says.

The use of cell-signal jammers by criminals, to block GSM signals of vehicle tracking units, has escalated in recent years; allowing criminals to hijack both vehicles and cargo without detection by SVR teams.

Altech Netstar, via its private communications network and new anti-jamming product, JammingResist™, detects GSM signal interference and instantly and automatically restores communication between the vehicle and Altech Netstar's SVR division.

V-CAM

"Road accidents are another threat to fleet >



sustainability, leading to onerous claims and repair costs, increased insurance premiums, vehicle downtime and often damage to the fleet's public image," explains Wordon.

"The introduction of on-board video cameras in fleet vehicles has further helped to mitigate on-road risk," adds Wordon. "Altech Netstar has developed a highly sophisticated video monitoring solution for fleet vehicles called Vigil Camera (or V-CAM), where multiple cameras can be fitted to a vehicle.



ABOVE: Altech Netstar has the largest private air and ground recovery service in Africa.

LEFT: Lawrence Wordon explains Altech Netstar's "new era" fleet management solutions.

"These cameras provide real-time monitoring and video evidence of vehicle and driver activity, from any location, by simply logging on to the web-based software platform, or by utilising the easy-to-use mobile application.

"Apart from proving indisputable proof of the cause of any accident, V-CAM also helps prevent driver abuse of the vehicle and theft of fuel, equipment and cargo. The system also provides valuable insight into driver behaviour, assisting driver coaching programmes while improving driver safety, efficiency and productivity," explains Wordon.

Vigil Safety and Compliance

Compliance with the Road Transport Management System (RTMS) self-regulatory standards is helping to elevate best practice within the commercial road-transport industry in South Africa.

Altech Netstar's Vigil Safety and Compliance product allows transport operators to implement and manage operational standards with regard to vehicle and driver safety, vehicle overloading and driver wellness and development.

"With growing industry-driven compliance and the impact and cost implications of standards demanded by new consignor/consignee legislation, Vigil Safety

and Compliance is a comprehensive financial, administration, employee, fleet, load, and contract-management solution.

"It was developed in conjunction with major stakeholders in the industry, such as the National Department of Transport, the Road Freight Association and the Southern African Bus Owners Association," adds Wordon.

"By managing and clearly demonstrating compliance via verifiable reporting tools, fleet operators can improve operational efficiencies and open new revenue opportunities through RTMS accreditation, not least of which is the ability to operate abnormal load/length smart trucks and bi-articulated buses."

SCALABLE SOLUTIONS FOR DIVERSE APPLICATIONS

Altech Netstar's dynamic range of fleet management software solutions directly addresses the needs of diverse transport applications. These include: short, medium and long-haul freight distribution, passenger bus services, mining, construction, as well as government and municipal services.

Vigil Easy Fleet

"Our new Vigil Easy Fleet is a uniquely tailored fleet-management solution for small to medium-sized fleets, providing fleet and driver management information via a user-friendly, web-based software platform," explains Wordon.

Users can customise their own dashboards and access the platform from anywhere via the Internet. Live tracking, historical information, geo-fencing, fuel consumption profiles and a vehicle-servicing module are key features of the software solution.

"Fleet managers have access to 54 management reports that deliver easy-to-understand intelligence of mobile assets, helping to improve productivity, compliance and vehicle security," he adds.

Vigil Pro

For large commercial road-transport fleets, Vigil Pro offers a comprehensive telematics solution with state-of-the-art features, including: real-time logging and tracking; CANbus connectivity as standard; over 80 fleet management reports; driver ID; an accident sensor with per-second reconstruction; a panic button; fuel profiling; and driver scorecards.

"Vigil Pro is the most comprehensive fleet management system on the market. It is designed to free up internal client resources, minimise operational expenses and enhance productivity, while increasing driver control and vehicle security," says Wordon.

"It's a flexible solution with options, including stolen vehicle recovery, vehicle immobilisation, temperature monitoring, SMS notifications to cellphones and a trailer-packing interface," he adds.

Vigil FleetPro

Vigil FleetPro is Altech Netstar's professional fleet management software suite designed to give fleet managers enhanced control and accuracy over fleet expenses, via an advanced but user-friendly dashboard interface.

Apart from financial management functionality, Vigil FleetPro includes over 160 standard, built-in reports that access management information at all levels of the operation.

These include: vehicle maintenance, fuel costs, inventory management, insurance, traffic fines, vehicle licensing and Certificate of Fitness renewal reminders, Aarto compliance and database management for drivers, mechanics and other employees.

"The Vigil FleetPro fleet management product has been a leading market player since 1994, with many blue-chip companies such as major banks and software development houses as its clientele. Sold both locally and internationally, the product is

recognised as the ultimate, fully integrated, full life-cycle fleet and asset-management system.

"The FleetPro system is globular in design but divided into modules for ease-of-operation and quick customisation to suit the client's requirements. Each module is interlinked with other modules, giving a real-time, continuous flow of information from wherever the data is entered.

"The system is a financial sub-ledger containing all necessary financial transactions. FleetPro enables accurate control over fleet expenses, pinpointing problem areas while centralising all fleet management aspects and managing both internal and external suppliers. FleetPro provides a vehicle management system that minimises and optimises costs. This enables the fleet owner/manager to maximise operating efficiencies and profits, while accurately determining both short and long-term costs," Wordon explains.

DRIVEN BY PEOPLE WHO CARE

At the heart of Altech Netstar is a team of fleet management professionals committed to forming long-term relationships with their customers. From point-of-sale where customised solutions are implemented, through to nationwide technical support and via its Bureau Service, Altech Netstar is a 24-hour operation, working hand-in-hand with its customers to ensure optimum fleet productivity and safety.

"Our ability to integrate and maximise the functionality and reliability of proprietary telematics hardware and software and create scalable, customised fleet management solutions that can be managed by our customers or by our Bureau Service, makes us unique in the market.

"Fleet owners seeking to gain unprecedented return-on-investment on their fleet management system expenditure need look no further than the company that makes an extremely complex business ... as easy as pie – Altech Netstar," concludes Wordon. **F**



LEFT: V-CAM dashboard includes multiple simultaneous camera feeds.

BELOW: Altech Netstar's infrastructure and technology platform sets it apart.



For the love of all things **HEAVY**



The heavy commercial vehicle (HCV) sector forms an integral part of the South African trucking industry. Are the struggling rand and low consumer confidence affecting this sector? CLAIRE RENCKEN takes a closer look

In general the economy remains in a depressed state, which naturally affects all businesses. Kobus van Zyl, executive director, Daimler Trucks & Buses Southern Africa, explains: "The HCV market has declined by around four percent in the first half of 2016, and this is because of a number of factors.

"These include the current economic conditions in which we find ourselves, where we are experiencing subdued economic activity and continued price hikes. However, we have amassed a considerable amount of experience in the segments in which we operate, and this is evident in the number of customers we continue to serve. We have noticed that during such tough times people opt for brands that they trust, such as Daimler Trucks & Buses, as well as Mercedes-Benz Vans."

So, all is not doom and gloom in the HCV industry. In fact, for some original equipment manufacturers, things are actually looking positive. FAW's marketing and strategy department manager, Cheng Zhang, comments: "The June National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (Naamsa) sales reports show that

the HCV segment is showing 2,4-percent growth month on month."

Leslie Long, senior manager: marketing and demand planning at Hino SA, adds: "The HCV segment has shown uncommon resilience in light of the prevailing economic conditions this year – during the first six months, HCV sales were less than a percent down on last year, versus -19 percent in medium commercial vehicles and -6,7 percent in extra-heavy commercial vehicles. On closer inspection this is as a result of strong growth from lower-cost brands especially in the construction segment (tippers and mixers). The segment leaders have all shown a bigger than segment decline in sales."

Zhang goes on to say: "HCV fleet owners operating in certain transport sectors are holding steady economically. These sectors seem to include construction, long haul, agriculture and distribution."

"In our experience, in this competitive climate, some fleet owners are acquiring additional stock to improve fleet flexibility in order to honour their own 100-percent uptime commitments. This way they increase their reputation for on-time delivery. We may even be seeing a slight growth in start-up

Overall, the HCV sector is holding up fairly well.

HCV



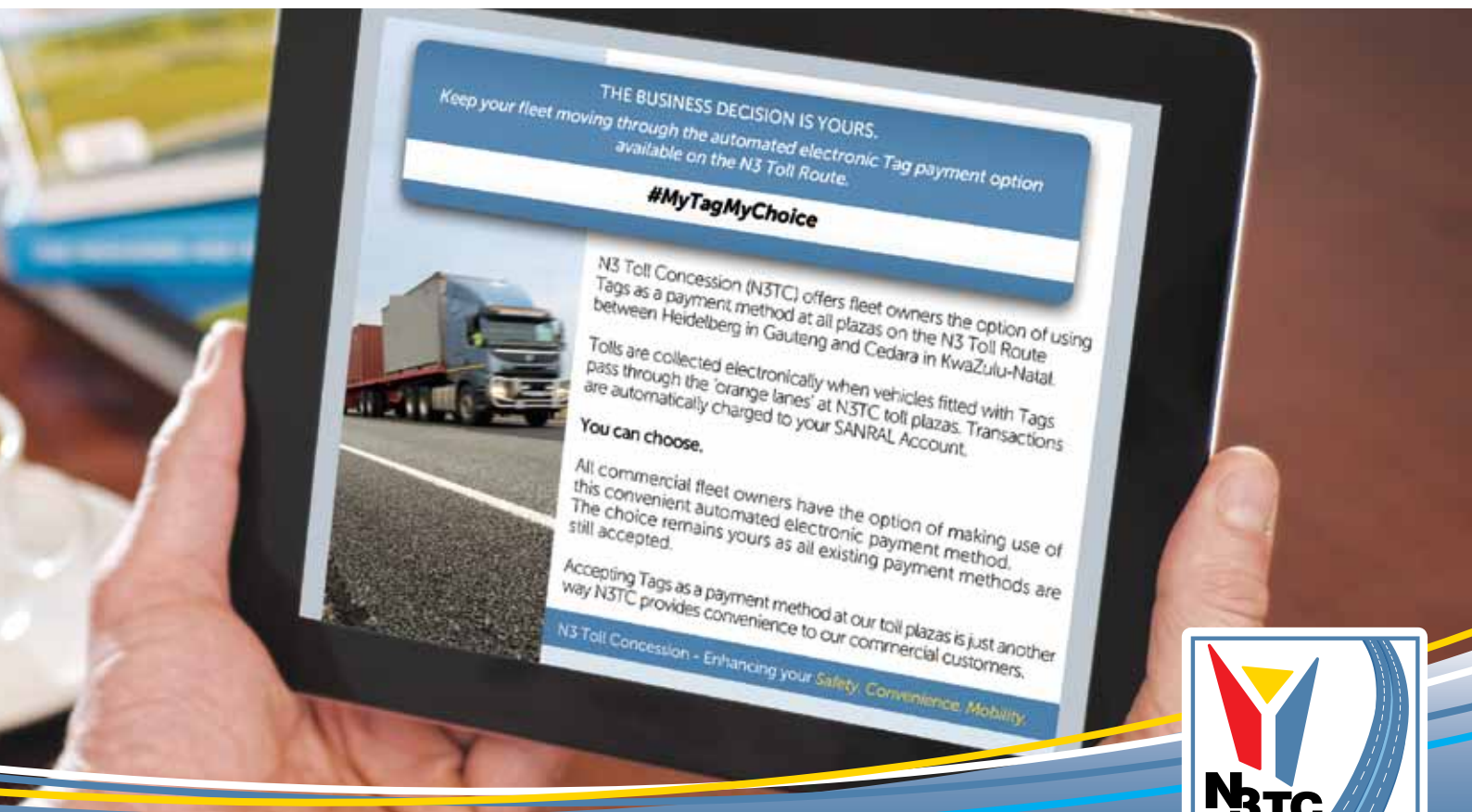
businesses and expanding opportunities for smaller fleet owners," he adds.

Interestingly, FAW has seen its largest success to date in the last six months, nearly doubling its sales over the same period last year. Zhang believes this surge can be attributed to a variety of reasons.

"First and foremost is the huge trust customers have, and continue to place on the FAW 15.180FL model. This model has exceeded its reputation for optimal operating cost efficiencies, affordability, reliability and uptime," he explains.

"It is also a highly flexible vehicle, which is easily combined with virtually any body requirement, from drop side to box bodies and tautliners. It is especially prevalent in the fast-moving consumer goods fleets. We are reviewing extending this particular favourite chassis-cab truck to other applications."

Another reason for the overall growth of the FAW brand in sub-Saharan Africa is the fact that it builds locally in South Africa, for Africa, at its Coega plant, which was established two years ago. This reduces time-to-market on orders and has resulted



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HCV

in increased parts supply and a growing African footprint.

"Year on year, so far, we have moved up two positions overall in the total commercial vehicle market, despite little to no representation in the medium commercial vehicle and bus segments," adds Zhang.

"All things being equal, we believe that the current market trends will remain largely the same for the remainder of this year. Our forecasting and analyses indicate that 2017 may show a slight improvement on this and last year's overall sales.




The HCV segment has shown uncommon resilience in light of the prevailing economic conditions this year

"Obviously, in an interconnected global environment and dealing with many foreign economies, various issues will continue to impact us in a number of ways – mainly oil prices, exchange rates, labour costs and a stable supply chain. Nonetheless, we think that the HCV segment in Africa appears to be where much of the future business, and thus new fleet owners, will be positioned for vehicle purchases," he says.

Van Zyl also remains positive about the future: "We are confident that there will be an upturn in our economy, and this will spark a positive trend leading to more orders of heavy commercial vehicles.

"We continue to keep a close eye on key economic indicators, and are optimistic that when the opportunities present themselves, we will be ready with the most ideal products and services. Our Daimler India Commercial Vehicles plant in Chennai continues to manufacture world-class vehicles that are tailor-made for the southern African market."

Long concludes: "We have seen a 'wait and see' attitude from customers to counter the economic slowdown, while the banks have all toughened up on approval criteria to manage risk. Having said that, the HCV segment will recover into the future in line with economic cycles, as HCVs form an integral part of any transport solution, and, as we all know, the economic activities in the country are, literally, driven by trucks." 



WITH THE HIGH DEMANDS OF FLEETS WITHIN THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT ONE SHOULD ALWAYS BE A STEP AHEAD OF THE REST.

To contribute, Michelin has taken the opportunity to create a modern day business solution for truck tyre dealers in South Africa. If your goal is to enable your business with the best products and services that the industry has to offer, then the opportunity is finally here to take part in the movement of the Michelin Truck Service Centre (MTSC).

The experience when visiting an MTSC dealership is a step above the rest. You'll be met by highly skilled staff who will ensure that your vehicle is properly taken care of and that all work needed will be attended to promptly and to the highest standards. All MTSC shops are fitted with top quality equipment from truck tyre fitting machines to wheel alignment

systems. These shops offer a range of value added services allowing you the customer to get the most out of the time your vehicle is off the road.

By inflating your tyres with Nitrogen at time of fitment, you will find that you improve overall tyre pressure conditions as Nitrogen inflated tyres run at optimal pressure for longer. The benefits of correct tyre inflation is invaluable and can extend overall tyre life overall. Considering this service as well as the repairing of tyres, it makes an MTSC centre a one stop shop for both large and small fleets. Another value added service is the retreading of quality Michelin casings. With the 4 stages of the tyre life cycle (Stage 1 - New, Stage 2 - Regrooving, Stage 3 - First Retread and Stage 4 - Second Retread) a Michelin casing has the potential of achieving multiple retreads. Recamic is Michelin's pre-cured retreading rubber which offers optimal performance and an improved cost per kilometre.

Another value added service provided by this world class service centre is the rotation your tyres. It is critical to remember that they should be rotated after every service interval. Tyre rotation ensures even wear which extends the lifespan and

improves performance of the tyre. We also use the best tyre change equipment to strip, fit and balance the tyres on your fleet.

MTSC centres have gone one step further by offering every engine a chance to breathe properly. All technicians can check your air and oil filters and replace them if necessary. Another added advantage is that you can visit your nearest MTSC dealer to check and replace batteries, as MTSC centres stock only the best quality batteries.

With all our products and services on offer, it is also key to know that as part of the MTSC offering, you get the added benefit of fleet surveys. MTSC centres offer a full range of fleet services and inspections to the benefit of the end user. MTSC centres uses top of the range diagnostics to detect engine problems before they occur. Once the problem has been detected, we offer a range of solutions to help prevent damage and keep your vehicles on the road. Becoming part of the MTSC family adds to your business and offers you a chance to focus on the important part of your business, while we take care of rest.



Beat the **CREDIT CRUNCH**

In the current depressed economic and political climate, business confidence has remained suppressed. However, fleet management and leasing solutions could help corporates. CLAIRE RENCKEN investigates

John Loxton, general manager of the fleet management and leasing division at WesBank, says: "To skirt around uncertainties about the future, businesses have avoided incurring any unnecessary capital expenditure, opting instead to sweat their existing assets – especially when it comes to transport and logistics. However, there is a way to avoid this last resort.

"For South African businesses, logistics and transport are as much a requirement as having a tax number. Whether it's a fleet of five delivery vehicles, hundreds of company cars for sales representatives, or an entire transport division – corporates more than likely have to budget for the costs associated with transport and mobility."

Loxton notes that, for the first quarter of 2016, the RMB/Bureau for Economic Research (BER) Business Confidence Index remained unchanged, when compared to the previous period. Confidence levels among manufacturers collapsed to levels last seen during the 2009 recession, and the overall outlook is

an expectation of further weakness in growth of gross domestic product. Combined with rising interest rates and a weaker rand, businesses can't be faulted for hesitating to spend capital.

"Traditionally this has meant extending the replacement cycle for assets. Instead of spending capital on new vehicles, businesses opt to increase operating costs in the form of extended maintenance on ageing assets. This is, however, a short-term solution. While it could keep those cars, vans and trucks on the road for a while longer, it would be at the expense of optimum resale values and increased downtime.

"A more financially savvy approach would be to treat all transport-related costs as operating expenses, through a full-maintenance lease (FML). The FML model optimises cash flow and allows businesses far more flexibility – for both up- and downscaling," he explains.

These solutions have evolved and are now completely flexible and transparent. "In our experience, this allows customers to structure leases

TRUCK FINANCING MADE EASY

TruckFinancing.co.za offers a range of truck fleet financing options. Its lenders specialise in commercial truck fleet financing and provide a variety of customised payment options and interest rate combinations.

The application process is fast and efficient since there are no face-to-face interviews. Once the documentation – which clients receive via email, fax or post – is completed, it can then be faxed, emailed or posted back to the company. Its consultants will then provide advice and guidance throughout the process.

TruckFinancing.co.za recognises that no two customers are the same and assesses its clients' individual business needs to help them find the best truck financing solution.

The company aims to find suitable finance that fits individual business needs. By making use of just one application, it can apply to multiple lenders on behalf of clients in order to find the best rates in the current truck financing market in South Africa.

that best suit their business requirements. Further value is added through managing clients individually, monitoring their fleets and then providing valuable feedback that allows them to restructure their lease contracts based on usage trends. This level of transparency affords fleet and finance managers the opportunity to proactively reduce transport-related costs at a fixed rate," says Loxton.

"As a financial decision, FML makes perfect sense. It provides fleet operators with the lowest cost of acquisition, using a discounted cash-flow analysis to illustrate the difference between FML and more conventional acquisition methods.

"At WesBank we are also able to offer customers rental facilities without this having a negative impact on their credit lines. Businesses also benefit from our expertise and industry partnerships, which deliver exceptional operational efficiencies.

"Most importantly, with a mandate to deliver exceptional service, we build relationships with our customers to gain an intimate understanding of their business requirements. Through this, we're able to deliver FML solutions that reduce transport costs," Loxton adds.

"Those that need to expand or replace their fleets can easily gain access to the vehicles they need

without spending capital or carrying depreciating assets on their balance sheets. At the same time, they don't have to be concerned about maintenance and administration costs, as full-maintenance leases cover these costs and even offer replacement vehicles as an option.

"In cases where businesses face difficult trading conditions, or need to free up their cash flow, they'll be able to cancel a lease at any time, thus immediately remedying the situation. This is in stark contrast to financed assets where a small business could have to settle outstanding loans, most likely incurring substantial losses.

"Of course, the leasing route isn't a one-size-fits-all remedy. Businesses should use experts who are able to align to their values, provide the best advice and tailor a solution that perfectly meets their business needs," he concludes. **F**

TECH-SAVVY

logistics



Advancing technology and increased e-commerce means logistics supply chains need to be able to keep up with the times – and the demand. We ask how leveraging everyday technology can assist, both within an organisation and between logistics partners

According to Chris Schatebeck, lecturer at the University of Johannesburg, the conventional use of the internet has progressively shifted from information dissemination to commerce, and the ability to create, modify, share and discuss content.

Today, he says, the internet, along with social media, offers inexpensive and sophisticated instruments to companies for advertising, selling products or services, promoting ideas and values and communicating with customers – in an easy, effective and direct manner.

Schatebeck recently presented his paper on Social Media within Global Logistics Providers at the 2016 Southern African Transport Conference, in which he investigated the use of social media in two global logistics providers: DHL Express and TNT International Express. Specifically, the target population for the study focused on South African "Generation X" employees, at various levels of seniority, within the logistics industry.

"Social media has rapidly infiltrated organisations across the world and has had an influence on corporate strategy," Schatebeck notes. "It can reveal important consumer sentiment, as well as valuable market information," he adds.

So, what did the study conclude? Respondents indicated that their top management can implement social media as a strategic differentiator and that it should be better integrated into daily operations.

Schatebeck adds that there seems to be a lack of awareness around social media within organisations, particularly with regard to strategic integration – a finding that is especially troubling as the benefits of social media seem apparent to respondents.

"Executives in the logistics industry can better integrate social media into their strategy by providing employees with knowledge around social media and extracting the benefits that social media holds. Also, awareness around social media and its benefits needs to be created by organisational managers.

"Managers in the logistics industry should view social media as an opportunity to gather information and draw conclusions and insights from social media interactions," he concludes.

WORKING TOGETHER

If social media can help an organisation better interact with the general public in the pursuit of more efficient business practice, surely sharing data between organisations can achieve the same objective?

For the last ten years, Nachi Mendelow, general manager of business development, Africa, for WiseTech Global, has helped companies on the continent to collaborate.

Mendelow says that true collaboration unlocks value for everyone – suppliers, customers and the business. She adds that logistics operations in South Africa are in a great position to take advantage of the massive growth opportunities represented by the region's gross domestic product outlook.

"There's a chance for everyone to benefit by sharing skills, goods and knowledge. Today's technology makes this collaboration faster, more efficient and immune to the stresses of international logistics by sharing it all within a single-database system," she says.

South African companies are well poised for this, as they have embraced the latest technologies and practices, while being aware of the challenges, institutional gaps and relevant cultures of the region.

Mendelow adds: "Armed with regional knowledge and cutting-edge software, logistics operators and their clients can more easily overcome the challenges as they take part in Africa's economic renaissance."

"By automating and integrating we can work to create a high-velocity, low-touch supply chain where every member collaborates more effectively and efficiently – freeing up staff across all borders to be more accurate, more productive and, ultimately, more successful," she concludes. **F**



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The political side of TRANSPORT

It's often said that more could be done within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to make cross-border trade less difficult, expensive and time consuming. We explore the ideas of liberalising market access for the road-freight industry and harmonising traffic legislation in the region

The SADC region consists of 15 member states – three of which are the islands of Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. Between the remaining 12 are six landlocked states, 14 transport corridors and ten regional ports.

According to Shaka Yesufu, a senior lecturer of law with The National Traffic Police Academy, these corridors are major regional transport routes, along which a significant proportion of regional and international imports and exports are carried by various transport modes.

Yesufu recently spoke at the 2016 Southern African Transport Conference. He notes that regional infrastructure development, including surface transport routes, creates a larger market and greater economic opportunities.

"The development of infrastructure is critical for promoting and sustaining regional economic development, trade and investment and will contribute to eradication of poverty and improved social conditions," he adds.

"In recent years the SADC region has made significant progress in development of regional infrastructure, including transport and communications systems, which are fundamental to cooperation in the region," says Yesufu.

While Yesufu went on to discuss the harmonisation of traffic laws within the region, Bevuya Mdlankomo, researcher within the Research and Strategic Projects Unit at the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency, discussed the region from a legislative and market-oriented perspective.

Mdlankomo notes that, in the context of a developing region like SADC, road transport is important as it carries the most regional traffic and enhances regional trade, which is vital for economic growth.

"The need for market liberalisation of road transport in the context of the SADC is also premised on the need to respond to the high costs of importing and exporting within the region, in comparison with the world markets – based on data from the World Bank's cost of doing business database," he says, adding that



the cost of imports and exports are approximately three times that of the world's cheapest markets.

So, the SADC region could benefit from developed infrastructure, harmonised laws and open markets. Is it possible to achieve this and, if so, is the region ready?

"Attempts to harmonise legislation within the SADC region have not been without stumbling blocks," says Yesefu. Barriers have included that it is unaffordable for some member states, the lack of a single currency (such as the euro for the Eurozone), language barriers, diverse legal systems, a lack of security and stability and the inability of the SADC to properly market its vision, objectives and services.

"There are certainly distinct benefits to be gained from harmonising traffic legislation. It is a sound objective to work towards. One of the founding principles of the SADC is to promote free trade facilitated by free movement of goods and services among all member states.

"However, the reality appears to contradict this principle. In order for the harmonisation of traffic legislation in the SADC region to be implemented successfully, the barriers must be addressed adequately," he notes.

Likewise, Mdlankomo says that, while the region had agreed in 2010 on a linear approach to achieve

market liberalisation, implementation lagged behind. "According to the SADC, some of the challenges identified have been the lack of political buy-in, the issue of national interest versus regional benefits, and fear of unfair competition in the region," he explains.

Through engagements and consulting, in 2013 it was agreed in principle to adopt the same approach as the European Union (EU), called quality regulation. The basis of this is that regulatory authorities, along with governments, should define measurable, practical standards for the operation of transport.

"In essence, the operators should comply with specific licensing requirements in order to enter the market, which is different from the current biased regulatory framework that requires operators to have a permit to operate. Any operators that can meet these standards will be able to enter the market. In this way the market will be liberalised, since entry will be based on complying with minimum standards and regulations," Mdlankomo notes.

As part of his research, Mdlankomo conducted a study among stakeholders (operators) to assess their awareness on the topic. Interestingly, it was found 40 percent of the operators don't understand the implications of market liberalisation. "This is a major hindrance to political lobbying, with regard to achieving liberalisation through the SADC protocol implementation," Mdlankomo notes.

It was found, however, that 42 percent of respondents agreed that quality regulation can drive market liberalisation within the freight industry in the SADC. However, 68 percent disagree that permits should be removed to encourage liberalisation.

"Operators understand the value of monitoring the goods and passenger flow between countries. Furthermore, stakeholders' responses indicate an understanding that there is a need to filter access in terms of who can be allowed to transport goods across borders," he explains.

Regarding market restrictions, 28 percent of the respondents disagreed with these being removed.

"Major shortcomings of allowing open market access are the fear of competition and the risks associated with contraband, as well as illegal or inferior goods, penetrating the market," Mdlankomo continues.

Mdlankomo recommends that some of the progressive, or gradual, liberalisation options that have improved trade and economic development in trading blocs like the EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) could be beneficial for the SADC.

"It was also evident that progressive liberalisation can be advocated within the SADC environment through adopting regulatory reform to remove the barriers that inhibit a country's ability to develop and grow in the case of cross-border trade," he says.

With this much to consider, **FOCUS** will continue to keep readers updated of any developments. **F**

Modern day trucking challenges the **STATUS QUO**

Transport is an essential service that drives the economy and impacts everyday life. It is, however, a tough industry that often struggles with poor public perceptions

W

hile the transport industry has seen some necessary change over the past two decades, road transport remains the dominant way to move large volumes from A to B in southern Africa. However, it is both capital- and labour-intensive, and – unless you are passionate about trucks – there is nothing glamorous about it.

That said, sections of the industry have seen radical transformation and increased innovation has made transport smarter, more efficient and, critically, safer. In effect, transport has entered the information age where technological advancement, mobile data and analytics are enabling a new connected world of transport

"Technological innovation in the transport industry presents an opportunity to challenge the status quo of risk management and operational efficiencies," says Neil Henderson, Barloworld Transport chief executive.

"For example, the availability of data from telematics helps to monitor

and analyse our fleet and our drivers in real time, providing superior journey management for greater efficiencies, enhanced safety and, ultimately, cost savings for the customer," he adds.

While innovation is critical to modern transportation, people and risk management remain as important as ever to a business such as Barloworld Transport.

Drivers are a central cog in the transport industry

machine and even though modern trucks are technologically advanced, they still require professional drivers with the necessary skills and experience to operate them. "Looking after our drivers and protecting the lives of all road users is not negotiable," Henderson notes.

Customer collaboration and supply chain integration is another positive aspect of the industry today. With the amount of real-time information now available, there is also greater data sharing and collaboration with customers, making supply chains more transparent and efficient.

"As an industry, we have opened ourselves to innovation – to improve operational efficiencies and better serve our customers, but, aside from vehicle innovation and changes in technology, we are also confronted by change-inducing risk.

"For instance, the South African road statistics are shocking. In 2015, there were close to one million accidents and about 43 percent of professional drivers in South Africa have expired professional driving permits," Henderson adds.

"The more risk-averse a company is, and the better the innovation that is in use, the more efficient and safe the operations will be. However, to survive and grow in the transport industry, solutions are needed – not just 'one-size-fits-all' approach," says Henderson.

As such, integrated transport solutions are key to addressing a customer's full transport requirements. Transport works best when the customer's needs are understood, expectations and challenges are taken into account, and solutions are specifically tailored to suit each customer's needs.

"So, while accepting the status quo may mean resisting change, which hampers innovation, it depends entirely on how you define this. Barloworld Transport believes a combination of embracing innovation and being driver-centric should always remain the priority areas in the transport industry – it is a pivotal means of ensuring safety on the roads," Henderson concludes. **F**



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A new level of OF BIG



Mining trucks keep on getting bigger and bigger, as miners increasingly opt for huge-capacity trucks with greater operational efficiency. Take the Belaz 75710, for instance; it has a staggering 496-t payload ...

A quick and simple internet search will tell you that the Belaz is considered the world's biggest mining dump truck. Launched in October of 2013, by the Belarusian company Belaz, the truck is 20-m long, 8,16-m high and 9,87-m wide.

According to *mining-technology.com*, the empty weight of the vehicle is 360 t and it features eight large-size Michelin tubeless pneumatic tyres and two 16-cylinder turbocharged diesel engines. The power output of each engine is 1 716 kW (2 300 hp), and the massive vehicle uses an electromechanical transmission powered by alternating current. The top speed of the truck is 64 km/h.

The Caterpillar 797F is also considered to be one of the biggest mining trucks in the world, with a 400-t payload. It's 14,8-m long, 6,52-m high and 9,75-m wide. The truck uses six Michelin XDR or Bridgestone VRDP radial tyres, and Cat C175-20 four-stroke turbocharged diesel engines with an overall power output of 1 193 kW (1 600 hp) and a top speed of 68 km/h.

One of the biggest suppliers of mining trucks in South Africa, Caterpillar also manufactures the 730C, the 730C EJ, 745C and the 735C three-axle articulated trucks.

South Africa is well known for its mining industry and many towns and cities have been built around

the industry, as well as companies such as Bell Equipment. This mining equipment supplier manufactures the B25E 6x4 Supertruck. Considered the cost-effective version of the standard B25E, the Supertruck has a 24 000-kg payload, gross power of 205 kW (275 hp), and is 9,95-m long and 3,37-m high.

The company, founded by South Africans Irvine and Eunice Bell, also manufactures the B35D, B60D, B18E and the B60E. A prototype of the B60E was showcased at the Bauma trade show in Munich earlier this year. According to *equipmentworld.com*, the truck is directed at quarry and mining operations and will use a 4x4 all-wheel-drive configuration rather than the more typical 6x6.

Bell Equipment says that it adopted the two-axle concept of a rigid truck, which the B60E is designed to replace in some applications, with a driven front axle and independent front and rear chassis. The truck boasts a 55 000-kg payload, power of 430 kW (577 hp) and is 11,114-m long and 4,212-m high.

In 1966 Volvo Construction Equipment invented the world's first articulated hauler. Its latest haulers include in A25F and the A30F. The A25F has a payload of 24 000 kg, is 10,218-m long, 2,859-m wide, 3,434-m high and has a dump height of 6,529 m.

The A30F has a payload of 28 000 kg, is 10,296-m in length, 2,941-m wide, 3,434-m high and has a dump



height of 6,56 m. Other models available from Volvo are A25G, A35F, A40F, A40F FS and the massive A60H.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT MINING TRUCK

Dump trucks (including standard, rigid-frame, articulated versions) are only some of the trucks available to the mining industry. How does a company choose the right truck for mining applications? The website *constructionbusinessowner.com* lists seven points that may be helpful when choosing a mining truck:

1. **Evaluate the company's needs:** The equipment needs to suit the type of work that is going to be undertaken.
2. **Understand the specs:** Look at each truck's specifications and all the options available to match job requirements with machine specifications. Most distributor and manufacturer websites can be used to start the process, because they offer considerable detail. Payload capacity is an important spec on which contractors should focus.
3. **Consider the speed:** Operators want to accelerate quickly under load, which means a truck should be selected with a high power-to-weight ratio to ensure productivity on the job. Look for a unit offering an abundance of horsepower and torque that is designed with an engine and transmission combination which allows operators to go faster and haul more in one cycle. Some trucks have an all-wheel drive system with automatic limited-slip differentials in each axle to give operators superior



- traction and speed in different working conditions.
4. **Consider fuel efficiency** during the specification process. Fuel consumption should be based more on material per litre than the amount of fuel used per hour.
5. **Assess comfort features:** After determining how a truck will handle the demands of the job, evaluate its comfort. Today, most articulated trucks offer ergonomically designed cabs that provide great visibility and comfort.
6. **Compare service and support:** Before making the investment, look at the service and support provided by the distributor and the manufacturer.
7. **Questions to consider:** What kind of material is being moved? How far is the material going? What kind and size of loading machine is being used? Is the cab ergonomically designed? **F**

ELECTRA MINING AFRICA SET TO ELECTRIFY

As the largest trade show in southern Africa and one of the world's largest mining shows, over 850 local and international exhibitors will showcase their latest products and services at Electra Mining Africa, between September 12 and 16, at the Expo Centre in Johannesburg.

The exhibition will provide the local mining, construction, power and energy, as well as transport and related industries, with a valuable platform for engagement, collaboration, interaction and networking.

Visitors have multiple shopping and learning

objectives and Electra Mining Africa 2016 will offer visitors interactive product displays, daily live demonstrations, industry experts on stands, as well as the additional attraction of industry seminars and conferences alongside.

"Many professionals visiting the show will use Electra Mining Africa to network, exchange ideas, share information and develop partnerships," says Gary Corin, MD of Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery, organisers of the show.

An exciting addition this year is the free-to-attend seminar programme, which is being run in association

with the South African Institute of Mechanical Engineers (SAIMEchE). The seminars will provide an excellent learning platform with industry specialists sharing their knowledge and expertise.

In addition, the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), Women in Mining South Africa (WIMSA) and the Lifting Equipment Engineering Association of South Africa (LEEASA) will be hosting informative and topical conferences at Electra Mining Africa.

There will also be a Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mining Conference, which is taking place on September 15, alongside Electra Mining Africa. The conference is an inaugural SADC mining event dedicated to showcase and explore the latest insight into sustainability, developing diversified economies and improving operational efficiency.

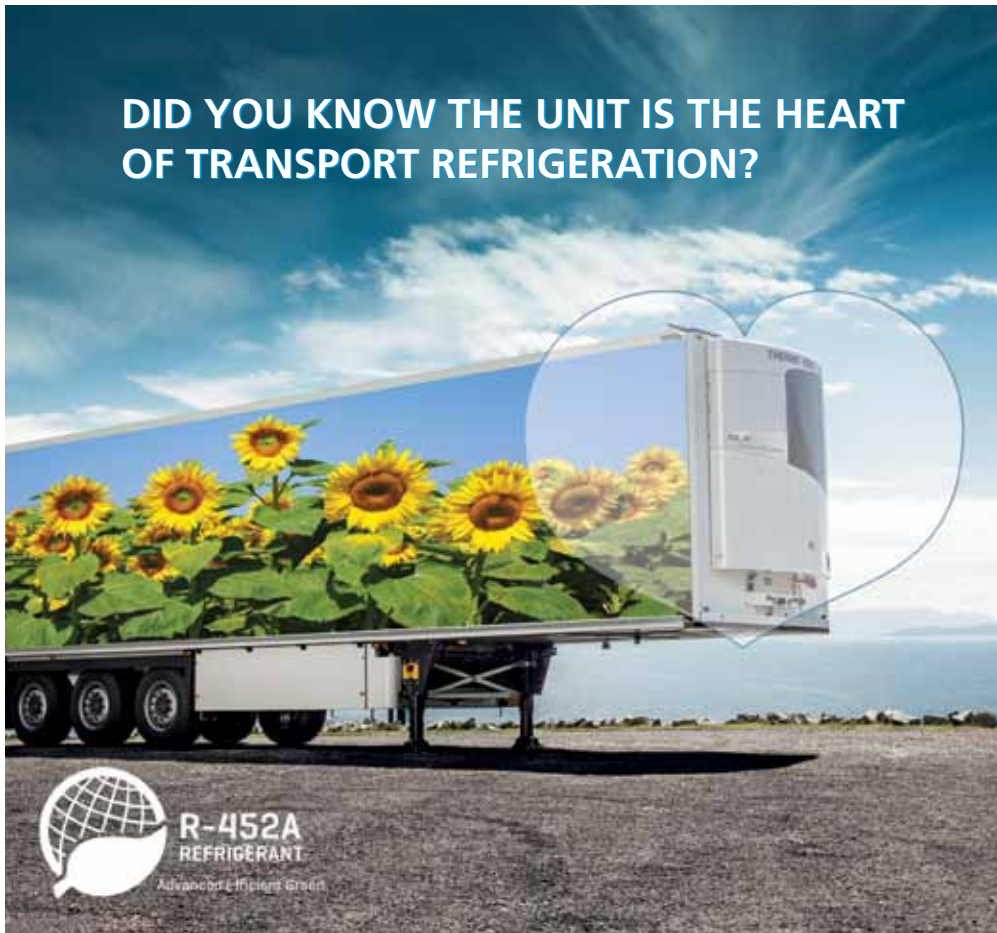
"We are delighted to partner with these influential and trusted industry associations," says Corin. "We appreciate their support and look forward to their various activities and interactions at this year's Electra Mining Africa."

For visitor pre-registration, go to www.electramining.co.za. 



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Registration woes could put dealers **OUT OF BUSINESS!**

Truck dealers in the Eastern Cape are spitting mad! Thanks to administrative inefficiencies, their very livelihood is being impacted! CHARLEEN CLARKE investigates ...

Roy Thompson, commercial vehicle sales consultant at Maritime Motors in Port Elizabeth, is one very angry man. Understandably so. He tells **FOCUS** that, thanks to "pathetic levels of incompetence", there are massive time lapses between applying for weight changes and vehicle registration in the province.

"The service from the post office and Bisho is shoddy and utterly inconsistent," he insists. (The post office handles all licensing and weight change applications in Port Elizabeth; the Eastern Cape Department of Transport is located in Bisho.)

These delays have serious implications. For example, issues such as the 21-day permit expiring, and unlicensed trucks driving on the road. Thompson says: "It generally takes two to three weeks for these applications to go through ... We phone the post office, but they either don't answer, or they say that nothing has been done from Bisho's side."

Thompson has now reached the end of his tether. "While we should be concentrating on new deals, we are having to contend with this rubbish as an ongoing issue. We continually have to carry the stress of clients threatening us, together with the possibility of fines for unlicensed vehicles travelling on our roads. If the situation doesn't change, I can guarantee you that we will go bankrupt in within six months," he tells **FOCUS**.

Thompson is not alone in his ire. Frikkie Viljoen, sales consultant at Isuzu Truck Centre in Port Elizabeth, says he has been struggling with the same issue. "I currently have four weight-change transactions that have been outstanding for more than 30 days. The phones at Bisho are not even answered," he reports.

Peter Parkin, Hino sales manager at Hino Algoa Diaz Road, has experienced exactly the same frustration. "I have a submission that is six weeks old and has still not been processed. We have five other outstanding submissions. Apart from the legal issue, this is costing us R550 to R600 extra per month for additional permits.



The situation is disastrous. We are now reaching the point where Certificates of Fitness (CoFs) will need to be redone at a further cost of R450 a time. This is an extra cost for us and an inconvenience for our customers, because these units need to be taken out of service to redo the CoF," he reveals.

Thompson contends that this extra cost is massively unfair and unnecessary. "When permits expire, is the post office prepared to issue a new one at its cost? Neither Maritime Motors nor our

June 13. Cape Town is frequently even faster (three or four days). I delivered a new Mercedes tipper truck to Mossel Bay on June 2, and personally applied for a weight and description change at the licensing office in that city. The Natis document was processed by June 7! That is within three working days!" reveals Thompson.

"How is it possible that the Port Elizabeth authorities are so incompetent when the proof is quite clear for all to see: Mossel Bay municipality has had its weight-change applications and Natis documentation processed within three days!"

NO END IN SIGHT

Because of the severe consequences, the dealerships have moved heaven and earth to speed up the processes; but to no avail. They have been met with a stony silence (**FOCUS** had precisely the same reaction

when we attempted to get comment from the post office and the Eastern Cape Department of Transport). Not surprisingly, this sorry state of affairs is hugely frustrating for all those concerned.

"We are sick and tired of stressing ourselves out just to get new commercial vehicles registered here in the Eastern Cape. This is solely due to a 'don't care' attitude between the post office and Bisho. We cannot carry on like this anymore!" says Thompson.

Added to this, there are now unlicensed vehicles trawling the province's roads – through no fault of the dealers. "Who is going



Roy Thompson is one of the many who are sick of the "don't care" attitude in the Eastern Cape.

clients are prepared to pay for a second permit (which I am also led to believe is illegal; you can only legally issue one 21-day permit per vehicle)," he tells **FOCUS**.

Erwin Stroebel, regional manager: Eastern/Southern Cape & Border at the Retail Motor Industry Organisation, confirms that the situation has serious implications. "This has a devastating effect on the Eastern Cape economy; we have a real problem here!"

ELSEWHERE IS MUCH QUICKER

What really galls the sales professionals is the fact that the situation is not replicated in other provinces. "Application for weight change was lodged in Cape Town on June 7; the Natis documents were issued on

to pay the fine if and when the client is stopped and his truck is pulled off the road?" he asks?

That's a very good question indeed ...

• As this issue of **FOCUS** was going to print, Charles Reynolds, general manager at the Eastern Cape Department of Transport, sent us the following communication. "I would suggest that a meeting be arranged in Port Elizabeth this week between post office, dealers and the Eastern Cape Department of Transport to resolve this matter. I will task relevant managers to facilitate such meeting. Ms Bovu will contact role players to attend." We will report on the outcome of this meeting in a future issue of **FOCUS**. **F**

Don't spend A CENT



Mercedes-Benz Trucks lifts the load off customers by offering Zero Cost of Ownership

As a truck operator, you do not have to be a mathematician to know that all savings add up, and this is exactly what Mercedes-Benz Trucks has achieved by introducing the concept of Zero Cost of Ownership.

According to Mercedes-Benz Trucks, operators can achieve unheard of fuel savings as a result of its product innovations, such as Hypoid rear axles, Direct Drive transmission and FleetBoard driver and vehicle management systems. In addition, a TruckStore buy-back at competitive residual value is guaranteed and Telligent Maintenance will ensure you enjoy incredible savings on services. All this means is that, as an operator, you earn back every cent you paid for your Actros 2646LS/33 DD.

"Earning back every cent you paid for your Mercedes-Benz Actros 2646LS/33 DD may sound too good to be true, but it really is possible. Our quest has always been to offer unmatched value-chain offerings coupled with proven quality products. This is a further demonstration of our commitment to achieving reduced Total Cost of Ownership and constantly improving fuel efficiency for our customers," says Christo Kleynhans, product manager for Mercedes-Benz Trucks.

Zero Cost of Ownership ensures that Mercedes-Benz customers benefit from the combination of product enhancements and value-chain offerings that the company offers. Using the Mercedes-Benz

Actros 2646LS/33DD over four years or 800 000 km, the following savings are garnered:

- **Fuel Savings:** Fuel efficiency is a key topic for operators, and when using the Mercedes-Benz Actros 2646LS/33DD, compared to the Actros 2644LS/33 HUB, comprehensive tests have proved that a customer can achieve incredible fuel savings with a combination of Hypoid axles and Direct Drive transmission.
- **FleetBoard:** When optimally used, this state-of-the-art vehicle and driver management system ensures significantly lower fuel consumption.
- **Maintenance Savings:** The cost of keeping a vehicle on the road plays a major part in determining Total Cost of Ownership, and, with Telligent Maintenance, these costs can be dramatically reduced.
- **Buy Back:** A competitive residual value from TruckStore ensures that real value is gained when returning the truck.

Over four years, or 800 000 km, Mercedes-Benz Trucks achieved Zero Cost of Ownership by summing up the contributions of the respective product enhancements on the Actros 2646LS/33D that achieve fuel and maintenance savings, and a competitive residual value.

Combining these elements effectively equates to the customer's net price on the Actros 2646LS/33DD, resulting in Zero Cost of Ownership. **F**



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Gone are the days where what was, literally, a box on four wheels featured only a small space for the driver and some headlights up front. Big or small, the humble van is becoming something to look at, says GAVIN MYERS

Take Renault's new Trafic, for example. Do you remember what the old one looked like? No? Well I'll bet you won't forget this one too quickly. Why? It has a bit of personality – something we've begun to notice in its counterparts from Ford, Peugeot, Fiat and Volkswagen as well.

The Renault, though, has a thoroughly modern Renault-family look to it; with its proud badge, broad grille and bold headlights. The black plastic bumpers, grille, mirrors and rear light surrounds

brakes with Electronic Brakeforce Distribution, hill start assist, side impact bars and traction control.

New Trafic is also powered by a new engine – a 1,6-litre direct-injection, common-rail diesel unit that employs twin turbo technology to produce high torque at low revs and better power delivery at higher revs. The result is an impressive 88 kW and 320 Nm. This drives the front wheels through a six-speed manual gearbox.

Next to the shifter is a nifty button labeled Eco. Press it and the engine's power delivery is subdued to aid fuel consumption. Should full power be required, the driver need simply press the accelerator button to temporarily disable Eco mode. It's an effective system that makes the journey more relaxed without sacrificing drivability.

Renault claims that the new 1,6-litre Trafic will consume just 7,6 l/100 km on the combined driving cycle.

What about the size? Well, there is only one option available locally, but with it you get 5,3 m³ of load volume and 1 200 kg payload capacity. The gross vehicle mass is 3 010 kg, while a maximum (braked) towing mass of 2 000 kg is permitted. Carrying something of length, rather than volume or weight? No bother – objects up to 4,15 m long can be loaded thanks to the nifty through-loading flap in the bulkhead and liftable section under the passenger seat.

Any gripes? Well, the audio system is fiddly and parking sensors wouldn't go amiss, given the small wing mirrors. The biggest issue is the lack of a cab-mounted isolator lock for the loading compartment, though a deadbolt is fitted to the inside of the rear doors.

The Trafic is priced competitively at R392 200 and comes with a five-year/150 000 km mechanical warranty, six-year anti-corrosion warranty and five-year/100 000 km service plan.

It's a very likeable van with high levels of usability – and a personality to boot. **F**

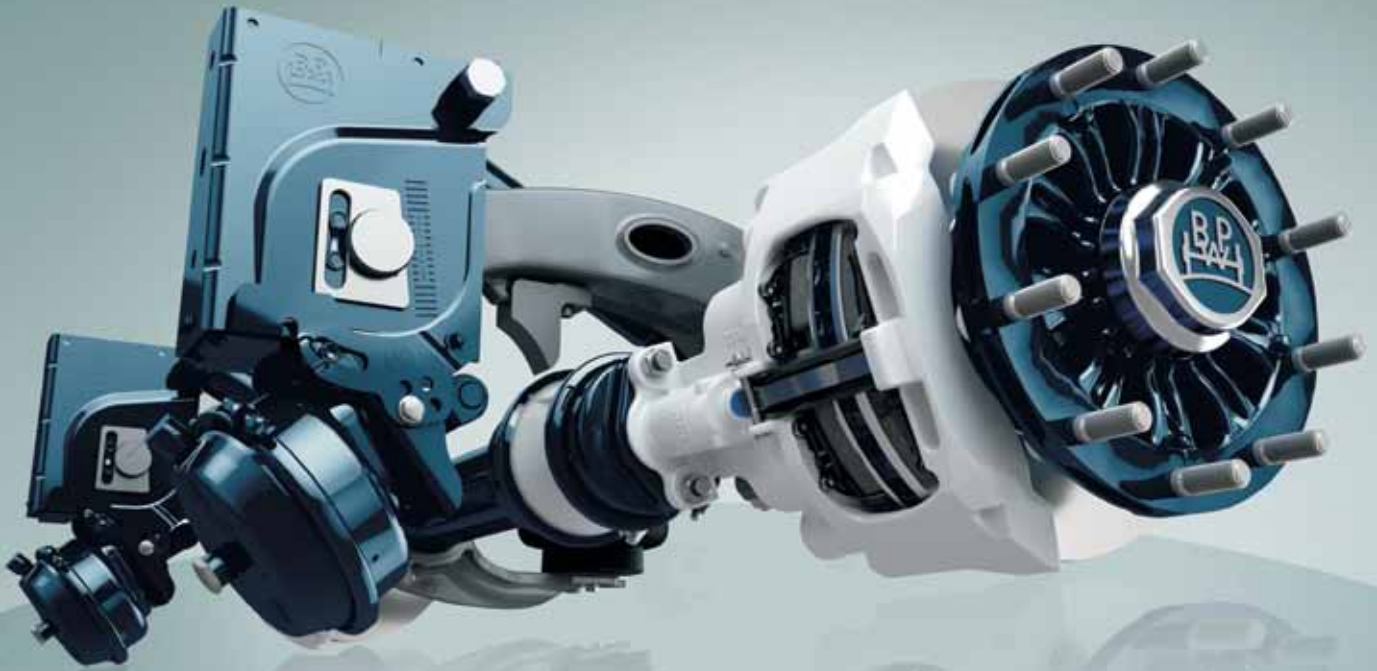


don't necessarily detract from this – being perfectly functional for tough inner-city transport work.

This newfound personality is also carried over to the interior, which blends form and function for a perfect work environment. Piano-black air vents and some chrome detailing adds a touch of class, while when operating the switchgear it feels like that of a passenger car. The instruments are dominated by a large digital speedo.

What really counts, though, is the removable clipboard that mounts onto the centre seatback when it's folded forward (it fits perfectly into the document slot atop the dash, too), as well as the wide-angle mirror in the passenger sun visor – so simple, yet so practical.

The seats are well-shaped and the cabin is comfortable enough for three; with a multitude of clever storage spaces, air-conditioner, power windows and a (somewhat fiddly) Bluetooth audio system. Only a driver airbag is offered, however, but complementing this on the safety front are anti-lock



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The New 9 ton ECO Plus 3 replaces the current 9 ton ECO Plus 2 version for single wheel application. All dual wheel applications remain with the current 10 ton ECO Plus 1 axle design.

Moving with MiX

They may be from vastly different fields, but each company is an established leader in its own right. Now MiX Telematics and H&M Removals have joined forces to bring a tangible reduction in transportation risk to H&M's customers, while reducing day-to-day running costs



With more than 24 years of experience transporting household and office furniture across South Africa, H&M Removals has gained a reputation as one of the most trusted brands in the furniture removals and self-storage business. The company's partnership with MiX Telematics – a leading global provider of fleet and mobile asset management solutions – has proved positive.

"In April 2013, H&M's fleet controller selected the MiX Fleet Manager solution to help reduce the company's risk in terms of driver behaviour, fleet efficiency and operating costs," says Richard Coates, sales director at MiX Telematics (Africa).

H&M Removals identified driver behaviour issues as the leading cause of inefficiencies within the company's fleet and the highest risk to cargo and road safety. The company also needed to find a way to track any differences between pumped fuel and used fuel in order to reduce operating costs.

"We needed a solution that could track driving events like speeding and excessive idling, monitor fuel consumption, provide driver scoring and maintenance management, as well as comprehensive reporting," says Angela Julies, fleet controller at H&M Removals.

The implemented solution comprises the MiX Fleet Manager web-based platform and on-board computers that were installed in the company's fleet of 35 trucks. This provides valuable telematics data and enables real-time vehicle tracking, in order to maximise the safety of en-route freight and reduce the day-to-day operational costs.

Working through Tectra Telematics, a local MiX Telematics channel partner, H&M Removals chose to roll out a complete fleet management solution based

on in-vehicle telematics using a two-phase approach.

In the first phase, 17 vehicles that regularly travelled long distances received on-board computers. At the same time, training on how to configure and use the MiX Telematics web portal was rolled out at the company's Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg branches. The second phase saw installation on the remaining vehicles in the fleet.

The MiX Telematics solution has also enabled H&M Removals to design and implement a comprehensive driver-performance management system. Combined with corrective driver training, this has improved the average driver ratings from 85 to 96 percent.

Over-speeding warnings and excessive-idling notifications, together with other driver behaviour monitoring parameters, have further helped the company to reduce day-to-day fuel consumption from an average of 2,4 to 2,7 km/l.

Since the solution combines driver scoring, detailed event logging and after-hours vehicle tracking into a single, automated report, the company has also been able to exercise greater fleet management control without requiring additional fleet controllers or other resources.

H&M Removals also relies on the system to help manage driving licences, Public Driving Permits and the vehicles' Certificates of Fitness.

Today, H&M Removals operates a complete MiX Fleet Manager solution comprising the MiX Communicator on-board computers and real-time vehicle tracking units.

"Our advanced fleet management solution has enabled H&M Removals to reduce the risk of accidents, reduce fuel consumption by 12 percent, improve driver behaviour and achieve 100-percent compliant vehicle utilisation," concludes Coates. **F**



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New Toyota **PROACE VAN** hits UK market



In his monthly review of global news for local truckers, FRANK BEETON updates European van news; looks at the newest engine braking technology from Jacobs Vehicle Systems; discovers yet another cooperative arrangement between General Motors and Navistar; and comments on possible trucking implications of Volkswagen's latest corporate strategic plan

Back in 2013, when discussing Peugeot/Citroën's SevelNord integral-van operation, situated at Valenciennes in France, which was building the Jumpy/Expert medium-van range for these brands, we noted that Toyota had announced its intention to purchase between 5 000 and 10 000 spun-off vans annually, and also share in the development costs of the next-generation product.

This was welcome news, as Fiat had withdrawn from participation in an earlier joint arrangement (which saw its Scudo van also built at this venue) and had gone off to join a Renault-led grouping, which was providing its new Talento model. Toyota's decision to access the Peugeot/Citroën partnership for its ProAce van would, therefore, make a significant contribution to the future viability of the SevelNord operation.

The new generation emerges

During its world debut at this year's Geneva Motor Show, held in March, the new-generation SevelNord product emerged as the Peugeot Traveller, Citroën Spacetourer and second-edition Toyota ProAce.

Since then, the new ProAce van has been launched on to the United Kingdom (UK) market, with two

wheelbase options, three body sizes and payload capacity up to 1.4 t. It features Euro-6-compliant 1.6 and 2.0-litre turbocharged diesel engines covering the power spectrum from 70 to 90 kW (95 to 120 hp), driving through five- or six-speed manual transmissions. The range consists of panel vans, crew-cab combi versions, people movers and a platform/cab unit that can accommodate special bodywork applications.

The ProAce is available with several trim and equipment levels, the most comprehensive of which includes: stability control, hill-start assist, pre-collision system, adaptive cruise control, head-up display, cornering lights, rain-sensing windscreen wipers, dusk-sensing headlights, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, multimedia system, satellite navigation, 17-inch alloy wheels, air-conditioner, cooled and illuminated glovebox and front fog lamps.

Unlikely local connection

Is there any chance of the ProAce coming to South Africa? We don't think so, as it is positioned too close, in payload terms, to the locally produced Quantum van/minibus line-up. In South Africa, many integral vans are converted into long-distance mini- and midibus taxis. In that area of activity we cannot see this



class of vehicle being considered an alternative to the larger Sprinter/Crafter-size vehicles, with their dual rear wheels.

However, we still believe that there is potential for Toyota to look at the larger SevelSud product range – made up of the Fiat Ducato, Peugeot Boxer and Citroën Jumper/Relay – as a source for a future European market product.

The SevelSud arrangement is due to persist until at least 2019, and there is sure to be a major facelift or model change before then, which will provide an ideal opportunity for Toyota to explore options, including a possible South African market entry.

LATEST JAKE BRAKE LAUNCHED IN EUROPE

Safely controlling the speed of a heavily loaded truck on a long downhill stretch has been a challenge ever since motorised road transport presented itself as a serious alternative to railways early in the 20th century.

Very early foundation braking systems, which often worked only on the propeller shaft, or one of the vehicle's axles, were singularly ineffective if used continuously to control speed. The situation did not really improve to any extent even when drum brakes were applied at all wheel positions.

Frequent braking led to overheating of the friction material and/or hydraulic brake fluid, and serious accidents through loss of control were often the unfortunate result. The advice given to drivers – that they should engage the same gear when descending

a particular hill as they would have needed to climb it, in order to maximise the braking effect of the engine "running against compression" – was not always followed, often with disastrous consequences.

Over the years, various technologies have been developed to improve the situation, and allow loaded trucks to travel safely downhill at higher speeds than the crawl that inevitably resulted from the gearing-down technique described above.

The simple exhaust brake, employing a butterfly valve to close off the exhaust manifold, and increase the engine's braking effect, was an important advance that was widely used on European trucks from the 1950s. However, an American solution, which also involved additional control of the exhaust-valve opening, was even more effective.

After being industrialised by the Jacobs Manufacturing Company in 1951, this compression-release brake became widely known as the "Jake Brake", and was characterised by a loud staccato, almost machine gun-like sound, when deployed.

The principle employed was that the cylinder's exhaust valve would be opened towards the end of the piston's compression stroke, thus releasing the energy that would normally have been fed back to the crankshaft during the subsequent power stroke, and increasing the braking effect of the engine.

Enter the High Power Density Engine Brake

During 2011, Jacobs Vehicle Systems (JVS) revealed



its High Power Density Engine Brake in the United States (US). This differs from the traditional Jake Brake in also opening the inlet valve at the appropriate time, providing two braking events during each camshaft rotation.

JVS has claimed substantial benefits for this system, including one-and-a-half times the braking performance over the engine's entire operating range, more than twice the retardation performance at low revs, lower noise, and beneficiation of the exhaust after-treatment system's thermal management.

Additional claimed benefits – including improved engine start-up and shut-down, with reduced cab vibration and shaking – reduce the driver's temptation to leave the engine idling for extended periods and lead to further reductions in fuel consumption and emissions.

The HPD system is said to be suitable for use in the modern generation of smaller displacement diesel and gas-fuelled engines, whereas traditional compression-release systems were usually applied to larger displacement units. It is also claimed that use of this system could potentially remove the need for the hydraulic driveline retarders currently favoured by European truck manufacturers, adding some 175 kg to the vehicle's legal payload capacity.

JVS currently supplies its products to the North American heavy-duty diesel manufacturers as well as Hino, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, DAF, Daimler, Renault, Deutz and Volvo. The European launch of the HPD system, which took place at the Millbrook Proving Ground in the UK during April, was clearly intended to raise awareness of the latest system and its benefits in a market where smaller-capacity diesel and alternative-fuel engines are widely used.

ANOTHER GENERAL MOTORS/NAVISTAR LINK-UP

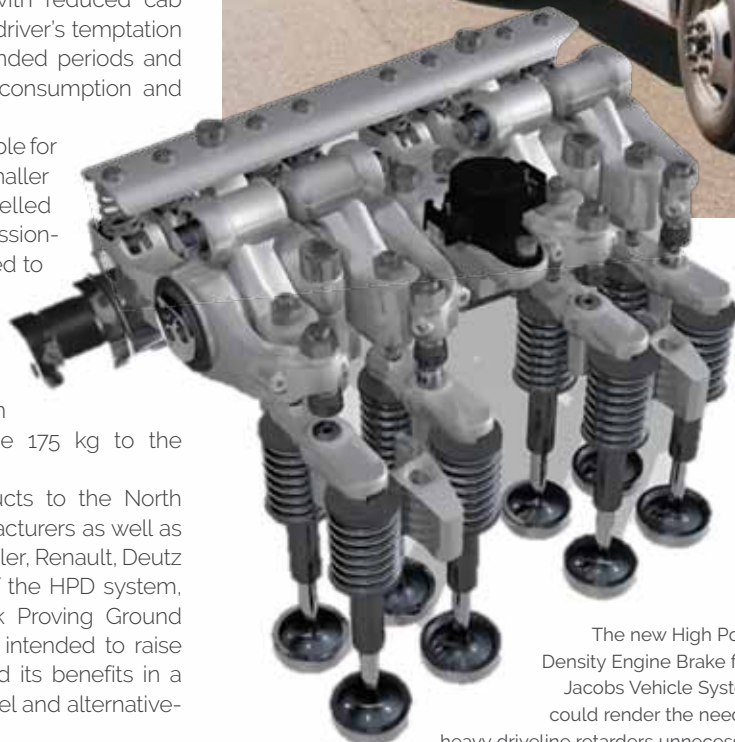
Back in 2015, we looked at the growing success of European-style integral panel vans in the North American market. An increasing number of models, spun off from European product platforms, but with some level of adaptation for American tastes, were taking leading positions in the small and large commercial-van segments of the US market. It was notable that the market leaders in both of these categories had European parentage.

In the heavier van class, Ford's Transit had taken the lead. Among the 'also-rans' were the Chevrolet Express and GMC Savana models from General Motors (GM), which are both badge-engineered derivatives of the company's indigenous North American 'G Van' family.

This consists of integral van, people mover and 'cutaway' chassis/cab models; the latter intended for the fitment of bespoke bodywork in the aftermarket, for use in service vehicle, ambulance or bus applications.

G Van details

The technical specification catalogue of the G Van



The new High Power Density Engine Brake from Jacobs Vehicle Systems could render the need for heavy driveline retarders unnecessary.

family includes a choice of 4,8-litre or 6,0-litre V8 petrol engines, a 6,6-litre V8 turbodiesel, six-speed transmission and rear-wheel drive, with single or dual rear wheel fitment. GVM ratings stretch up to around 6,5 t. There are two wheelbase options for the integral models, and three for the cutaways.

The 'cutaway' designator indicates that the semi-forward control cab is not closed off at the rear, leaving the buyer with a choice to have access between the driver's compartment and the interior of the rear body, if required.

Despite the apparent swing to European-style vans, GM seems intent on continuing with the G Van line-up for its home market. Early in June, it was announced that Navistar Inc. would be building the cutaway derivatives, on GM's behalf, at its Springfield, Ohio plant, from the first half of 2017.

GM has said that this arrangement will free up its Wentzville, Missouri plant to keep up with demand for its mid-size trucks, and the integral-van derivatives of the G Van family. However, we cannot help thinking that the longer-term future may include consideration of European products, based on the Vauxhall and

General Motors has contracted Navistar to build the cutaway version of its Chevrolet and GMC G Van range.



Opel models produced in GM's van partnerships with Renault and Nissan.

In September 2015, a long-term agreement was announced between Navistar and GM covering the development and assembly of conventional-cab Class 4/5 commercial vehicles (roughly 6.4 to 8.9 t gross vehicle mass ratings) which will be sold with both International and Chevrolet branding, from 2018 onwards.

The joint-venture vehicles will also be built by Navistar at its Springfield, Ohio, facility, which is to gain an investment of \$US 12 million (about R174 million) and 300 additional jobs as a result of the medium truck arrangement, with the G Van programme adding a further 300 work opportunities.

Does Volkswagen still have its eye on Navistar?

It was back in 2012 that we first reported on rumblings that Volkswagen (VW) AG may have been interested in acquiring Navistar International, in order to gain immediate and substantial access to the North American heavy-duty truck market.

At the time, VW was rolling out its strategy for global motor industry leadership, and with the recognition that its Scania and MAN assets had no substantial presence in that market, nor the dedicated conventional (bonneted) models that would be necessary to make a significant entry, the acquisition of Navistar, its products and distribution structure, would have provided a quick and easy way forward.

No visible progress towards such a takeover has been made up to now, and Volkswagen has had to confront its own very substantial demons in the shape of the diesel-emissions scandal since then, so

speculation over an intended takeover has abated.

Earlier this year, in our article discussing the possible implications of the scandal, we questioned whether VW would still have the appetite, or means, to continue building or expanding its Volkswagen Truck and Bus GmbH empire, or if it would consider scaling down, or even selling off some of the elements in order to finance corrective actions.

We also pointed out that the Truck and Bus operation still faced challenges, including Scania and MAN's adversarial history, and considerable market coverage overlap by the two brands in both geographic and product-related terms.

New strategic announcement

During June, VW's CEO Matthias Müller announced details of the group's latest long-term corporate strategy, which, inter alia, included the goal of making VW Truck & Bus "the most profitable company in the sector, with a significant presence in all key regions of the globe".

Commentators immediately seized on this as a firm indication that a North American market entry was, once again, on the planning horizon, and that the acquisition of Navistar International had returned to the agenda. However, Navistar has built some new partnerships since 2012, which may complicate a potential acquisition plan.

We do not think that the magnitude of Navistar's recently concluded cooperation agreements with GM will be sufficient, in their own right, to scupper any potential takeover bid, but it may be possible that GM, with its sights apparently set on resurrecting some of its own domestic truck business, could move to secure its supply position.

Further, the US government, recognising Navistar's importance as a supplier of vehicles to its military, will not be in favour of the company coming under foreign ownership.

As it stands, only Navistar and Paccar still remain as major US-owned truck manufacturers.

There is also an indication, in the VW strategic announcement, that "in the medium term, the truck and bus business unit will increasingly evolve from a pure-play commercial vehicle manufacturer to a leading provider of intelligent transport solutions". This may suggest that added-value services – such as autonomous driving, and transport on demand; a sort of "Uber for trucking" – will provide the main short-term focus, while geographic market expansion and acquisitions may follow later.

Our take is that VW has emphatically reaffirmed its commitment to the commercial vehicle business, and given the size and financial strength of the group, even in the aftermath of the emissions scandal, anything will be possible. **F**



Global FOCUS is a monthly update of international news relating to the commercial vehicle industry. It is compiled exclusively for FOCUS by Frank Beeton of Econometrix. Do you have a comment or thought you would like to share based on this column? Visit www.focusontransport.co.za and have your say.

CONTINENTAL TYRE WEST AFRICA OPENS IN GHANA

Leading international tyre brand Continental Tyre officially opened its first warehouse for western Africa on July 20, in Ghana. The warehouse will be situated in the Tema Harbour with flexible storage capacity to accommodate the company's development in the region.

The opening of the warehouse follows on the successful launch of the company's new legal entity Continental Tyre West Africa (CTWA) on April 20.

As a part of Bollore Africa Logistics, the warehousing facility is part of the organisation's top-quality bonded logistics platforms situated a few kilometres from the port terminal.

"The capacity of the facility allows us the opportunity and flexibility to expand as the market dictates," says Johann Liebenberg, market manager, CTWA.

"We expect delivery within 24 to 48 hours in Ghana, as well as a significant reduction in time to service the rest of the countries in western Africa," says Liebenberg.

CTWA believes that the market holds enormous potential for all its brands including the fast growing General Tyre range. "We want to have our products close at hand and we will keep stock for the light truck, truck tyre and commercial specialty tyre segments of the market," adds Liebenberg.



Tyres will be supplied via Continental plants in Europe, South Africa, Malaysia and America.

The western African market is estimated to be in the region of over eight million potential tyres in 2016, growing to over 12 million in 2025.

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COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SALES REPORT FOR JUNE 2016

Note: For the time being, Great Wall Motors SA (GWM) and Mercedes-Benz SA (MBSA) will only report aggregated sales data. The GWSA and MBSA commercial vehicle market split volumes are estimates based on historical trends and forecasting techniques. The totals listed below do not include MBSA figures.

Light Commercial Vehicles < 3 501 kg	Total: 13 398
AMH	738
Fiat Group	86
Ford Motor Company	2 931
GMSA	2 029
GWM	85
JMC	35
Mahindra	137
Mazda South Africa	46
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	20
Mitsubishi Motors SA	1
Nissan	2 148
Peugeot Citroën SA	5
Renault	2
Suzuki Auto	36
TATA	120
Toyota	4 467
Volkswagen SA	512
Medium Commercial Vehicles 3 501 – 8 500 kg	Total: 779
AMH	20
Fiat Group	2
Ford Motor Company	12
GMSA	200
Iveco	54
JMC	5
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	206
Peugeot Citroën SA	4
TATA	16
Toyota	205
Volkswagen SA	55
Heavy Commercial Vehicles 8 501 – 16 500 kg	Total: 404
FAW	46
GMSA	135
Iveco	2
MAN	23
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	65
TATA	47
Toyota	78
Volvo Group Southern Africa	73
Extra-Heavy Commercial Vehicles > 16 500 kg	Total: 794
Babcock DAF	9
FAW	26
GMSA	54
Iveco	60
MAN	68
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	294
Powerstar	56
Scania	205
TATA	14
Toyota	44
Volvo Group Southern Africa	258
Buses > 8 500 kg	Total: 106
Iveco	6
MAN	59
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	29
Scania	33
TATA	3
VDL Bus & Coach	2
Volvo Group Southern Africa	3

*Source: National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (Naamsa).

INTERBUILD AFRICA 2016

Interbuild Africa – one of the largest building and construction trade exhibitions in Africa – is taking place at the Johannesburg Expo Centre, Nasrec, from August 17 to 20. Interbuild Africa attracts some 7 000 industry buyers to source products and services from more than 300 exhibiting companies representing over 22 countries.



Interbuild Africa 2016 will host a free-to-attend seminar theatre, where visitors can learn all about the latest trends impacting on the sector. The show's organiser, Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery, has also partnered with leading industry bodies to host a number of high profile conferences and workshops.

Already co-located with four other industry-leading events (Glass Expo Africa, Plumbdrain Africa, EcoAfribuild and Hardex Africa), this year's event will see the launch of two new shows.

Sani'ter will showcase the crucial role of water-resource management, water quality, waste-water management, access, infrastructure, sanitation and developing technologies. In addition, Wood World South Africa, organised as part of a joint venture with Hannover Fairs International (Deutsche Messe), will be unveiled as a dedicated pavilion at the event.

Visitors can pre-register online at www.interbuild.co.za to avoid the queues at the exhibition.

RTMS COMPLIANCE MADE EASY WITH CTRACK



The first platform of its kind to manage and store all information related to Road Transport Management System (RTMS) certification has been launched by vehicle tracking and fleet management company Ctrack.

The platform was created after Ctrack identified a need for an efficient, all-in-one software tool to manage and keep track of the standard road safety and transport productivity guidelines as set out by the RTMS.

"Ctrack recognises the critical role that the RTMS plays in preserving road infrastructure, improving road safety and increasing the productivity of the logistics value chain," begins Hein Jordt, MD of Ctrack Fleet Management Solutions. "By making sure the annual auditing process goes smoothly, we hope to encourage more fleet owners and operators to invest in becoming RTMS accredited."

Importantly, the platform includes policy guidelines that explain the different segments of RTMS requirements in detail. In this way, fleet managers can constantly check whether they are adhering

to RTMS standards, and timeously implement the necessary actions for compliance through Ctrack's fleet management software.

"Using this software to its fullest makes it easier for fleet owners to adhere to the RTMS standards, and also makes it easier for auditors. Theoretically, auditors could access the fleet owner's web portal with a once-off password annually, and audit the fleet. This access will significantly reduce the amount of paperwork to be inspected at the transporter's premises," says Jordt.

The solution integrates with Ctrack's existing advanced fleet management software suite, FleetConnect. This fully customisable platform enables fleet owners to administer, manage and support the different aspects of their fleet's activities.

Besides providing the RTMS capability, Ctrack FleetConnect also integrates all other components of fleet management into a single centralised database. This serves as a one-stop platform for assessing fleet trends and analysis, managing the risk associated with the fleet, viewing multiple hierarchical reporting structures, as well as a variety of other tools.

"This platform will enhance the rollout and implementation of RTMS for all transport operators, and also exponentially ease the annual auditing process by third-party auditors," says Kathy Bell, board member of RTMS.

Since its inception in 2004, the RTMS certification has grown to become an official South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) standard for the South African heavy-vehicle transport sector.

Today, nearly 10 000 trucks and buses are certified through the self-regulation scheme, with companies audited on an annual basis according to a strict set of requirements. These include guidelines on the maintenance of roadworthy vehicles, improving driver behaviour and optimisation of load.

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THE MINUBUS TAXI:

a SADC essential?,

THE SELF-DRIVING BUS

of tomorrow has arrived!,

Heading for a HEALTHY FUTURE



GAVIN MYERS chats to Ray Karshagen, head of the bus division at Iveco South Africa Works, to find out how Iveco Bus is getting on

It's probably fair to say that Karshagen is currently a very happy man ... The bus division of Iveco South Africa is making significant strides in the local bus market and, importantly, the company is successfully beginning to break into key players in the Industry, who are building up confidence in the Iveco Afriway bus product and proving its capabilities.

Karshagen explains that this strategy extends beyond the purchase price of a vehicle; having been based on the creation of products that are reliable, have proven cost of ownership benefits and professional aftersales support.

"To prove this to the operators Iveco has been running a programme of demo buses with target fleet customers. Of the demo buses we've had in the market over the past 12 months, all but two have been purchased by the customers that were testing these buses. This tells us they were happy with the buses and that we proved that the vehicle can do what we say it can," he says.

Naturally, this has attracted the interest of some significant bus operators, but Karshagen explains that there is another crucial spin off.

"We've been following those demo vehicles very carefully and improving the product as we go along; especially regarding protection of chassis components

in severe operating conditions, which gives the customer added confidence.

"South Africa has it all: from all-paved roads to the extreme mix of 20 percent paved and 80 percent unpaved. A lesson we've learnt is that the product has to be tested to this worst of extremes. You don't know up front who the end user is going to be. It could be someone who has challenging operating conditions," notes Karshagen.

The success is plain to see: Iveco has upped its share of the South African bus market to an impressive ten percent in the year to date (to June). "We're making strides, but the challenge we have is to attack the rest of the market – which is a tough task," Karshagen adds.

How does one do this, then? By focusing its efforts on the 70 to 80 percent of the total market volume made up of front-engine vehicles – and that means some exciting new models are on the way...

The first of these is an automatic transmission for the Afriway 4x2, which premiered at this year's Southern African Bus Operator's Association (SaboA) annual conference. By the time you read this, the first units will be with customers – Karshagen says that an impressive number of orders are on the books already, from customers who have used the manual transmission versions, but would prefer to run the automatic transmission derivative.



"We've successfully launched the front-engine, manual Afriway 4x2 and are happy that it has proved to be so reliable. The automatic will open up another market sector to Iveco. Again, we'll select target customers and put demos into their fleets to prove fuel consumption benefits, operational suitability and lowest cost of ownership."

The onslaught continues with a 6x2 version, which is currently entering its testing programme before being released to market in early 2017.

"Mechanically the 6x2 is exactly the same as the 4x2, but with the addition of an air-suspended tag axle. It will be 13,9-m long, with 80 seats, and will be

launched with both transmission variants," explains Karshagen.

"The Iveco strategy of delaying time to market to get the development right, and focusing on full durability testing at Gerotek, is really paying off," he adds. "We're selling proven products. It's been a tough task, but the results are starting to show."

Another factor aiding the company, Karshagen says, is its after-market service partners.

"It's imperative to have good partners for future success. The first sale is made by the sales team, and the rest by the aftersales team. It's a factor in any market, and especially important across the border; because of distance our partners can't wait for a customer to break down before they order parts. That level of service is what will determine future success."

Incidentally, Karshagen notes that Iveco plays a significant role in the right-hand drive southern African markets, and is doing well – especially in Zimbabwe.

What about making those future sales in a South African market that's not showing any significant growth, but remaining stable at 1 100 to 1 200 units a year?

"To grow we must also help the customer trade out older buses to get our vehicles into their fleets. Bus Centre is our partner and is an approved Iveco used bus dealer. It is an expert at valuing and reselling these buses," says Karshagen.

Despite the intricacies of the South African market, Karshagen is optimistic about the future of Iveco Bus. No doubt this time next year, when the automatic and 6x2 models have established themselves, Karshagen will have an even bigger grin on his face. **F**

Taxi to AFRICA!



It is estimated that minibus taxis account for 70 percent of modal share in the cross-border road-transport industry, within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. So yes, they do perform an essential service, but it's not without its challenges...

The minibus-taxi industry in South Africa has grown from a negligible informal sector activity in townships, to be a dominant mode of public transport. However, the fact that minibus taxis have limited carrying capacity, yet they travel such long distances per trip, raises key questions with regard to the sustainability, viability, cost-effectiveness and productivity of cross-border operations. Furthermore, it also raises questions about safety of services; given that minibuses are driven by one driver over such long distances.

BACKGROUND

The cross-border minibus-taxi service is defined as a service for the conveyance of passengers, rendered by means of a motor vehicle with a carrying capacity of not less than nine persons and not more than 16 persons, including the driver, with no prescribed timetable or fares. The majority of these minibus taxis are not owner driven; they officially carry a driver and 15 passengers.

Meanwhile, passenger transport in South Africa – just like in many other developing countries – has many characteristics that are generally absent

from the public-transport systems in the first-world countries.

The first and prime characteristic is the high volume of low-capacity vehicles (less than 20 seats) in commuter services, and the dominance of this form of public transport in the overall public-transport sphere.

RESEARCH

In order to gain an understanding of this sector, a study entitled: Market Access Regulation was conducted by the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency (C-BRTA) in partnership with the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The quantitative component of the study comprised field surveys that were undertaken to establish the peak and off-peak travel demand profiles and peak and off-peak cross-border service profiles.

The peak and off-peak travel demand profiling surveys were carried out at Beitbridge, Lebombo, Oshoek and Mahamba border posts (on the South African side). The surveys entailed interviewing a sample of passengers who were entering and exiting South Africa to establish elements such as: reasons for travelling, frequency of travel, travel costs, trip origins and destinations.



In addition to the passenger interviews, the surveys included 24-hour vehicle occupancy counts for vehicles entering and leaving South Africa, including number plate observations for public-transport vehicles. The dates of the surveys were carefully selected to capture the peak and off-peak dynamics.

FASCINATING FINDINGS

The minibus-taxi industry has displayed great levels of resilience and innovation in the face of shifting political and socio-economic conditions and has become the dominant mode of public transport in South Africa. However, the industry is plagued with violence, poor road safety and low financial margins.

These are the major concerns affecting cross-border minibus-taxi operations between South Africa and other SADC countries:

- Minibus taxis have limited carrying capacity, yet they are travelling long distances between countries (in most cases the distances are longer than 1 000 km per single trip). This affects the sustainability, viability, cost-effectiveness and productivity of the operations;
- The fact that there is only one driver assigned to a minibus, raises questions about the safety of services;

PROFITABILITY WOES

The low profitability of minibus-taxi operations is creating an impediment on the day-to-day performance of the industry, as it influences maintenance of vehicles, quality of vehicle purchased, as well as drivers' salaries.

It leads to owners deferring, or even ignoring, essential maintenance, the use of cheap and inferior vehicle parts alongside services undertaken by unqualified mechanics, which further result in the deterioration of overall condition of the industry's minibus taxi fleet.

Inadequate financial management is another reason for the low profitability prevalent within the cross-border minibus-taxi industry. Research on the economic role of the minibus-taxi industry revealed that owners are commonly unfamiliar with concepts such as profit, budgets, depreciation and return on investment. The same can be argued in the case of the minibus-taxi industry in the cross-border environment.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

Minibus-taxi operators should consider replacing minibuses with higher-capacity vehicles (midibus and buses) for cross-border operations. The cost of transporting one passenger in a cross-border passenger service may decrease considerably as the vehicle size increases.

For instance, by going from a 16-seater minibus to a 35-seater midibus, or 64-seater bus the number of seats may be doubled, or be four times higher, but the labour costs and the vehicle operating costs do not multiply at the same rate. Thus, significant reduction in unit costs may be achieved at maximum vehicle performance, while ensuring unbeatable comfort and improvement in safety through larger, high-capacity vehicles.

Funding should be mobilised for cross-border minibus operators to procure high-capacity vehicles. This would go a long way towards enhancing profitability, productivity, viability and sustainability.

Minibus-taxi operators need to be supported in order to improve the management of their operations and their businesses in general.

Regulatory authorities in the respective SADC countries should investigate and implement measures to address oversaturation in the minibus-taxi industry on some routes.

Regulatory authorities should also consider prioritising the issuing of permits to buses for cross-border operations for long distances, as, in principle, they are more efficient than small low-capacity vehicles.

Finally, regulatory authorities should regularly consult one another before granting cross-border permits to minibus-taxi operators in order to ensure that permits are issued only where and when there is sufficient demand. **F**

This article is based on a paper entitled: 'An Analysis of South African Long Distance Passenger Transport: Cross-Border Passenger Movements', which was presented by Makibinyane Thoso and Etiyel Chibira from the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency at the 2016 Southern African Transport Conference.



- Many minibus operators regularly overload trailers to recover the loss due to unoccupied seats, fixed costs related to the vehicle and semi-variable costs related to the vehicle and driver;
- Sometimes luggage is mixed with passengers, which does not only reduce passenger comfort, but also potentially reduces safety.

PRODUCTIVITY CHALLENGES

While the cost of operating a minibus taxi is lower when compared to a standard bus, so, too, is the revenue per kilometre. This effectively reduces the viability, sustainability and productivity of minibus-taxi operations in the cross-border road transport environment.

MODEL

relationship

Since 2001 the bus group comprising Kopano Bus Service, Madodi Bus Company and Mathole Bus Service has built up a relationship with its bus supplier of choice, Scania South Africa. In fact, the group has 159 Scania buses in its fleet covering local and cross-country operation

Most recently, on July 13, the group took delivery of ten Scania F95 65-seaters buses – which is in addition to 12 F95 65-seater and three F95 80-seater buses that were added to the fleet in May. Currently, the fleet is comprised of Scania F94 and F95 vehicles.

So what makes Scania buses so suitable? Olivia Maponya, executive director of Kopano Bus Service, explains that the success of the relationship can't be put down to just one factor.

Operating commuter services across the Limpopo province, as well as being available for private hire and organised parties countrywide, the group requires its buses to be reliable, low maintenance and affordable. Maponya says that the Scania fleet meets this brief, but it's also the "behind the scenes" support and service that sets Scania apart as a bus supplier.

"For example, a big advantage is that Scania also provides its own in-house financing. This makes things easier for us as a client as we don't have to run around to financial institutions seeking funding," Maponya adds. Indeed, this is a big advantage, considering the buses are replaced on five-year cycles.

While replacing the fleet this regularly helps to keep it young and maintenance costs low, it also has another benefit for the group – in that driver satisfaction is raised.

"Our drivers always get excited and are filled with hope and confidence when we introduce new Scania's to the fleet. They always show appreciation, and we've noticed it through their extra effort, commitment and dedication when taking out their

daily tasks," Maponya says proudly. When new buses are delivered (and whenever required) Scania provides the group's drivers with training.

"We are able to monitor and manage the drivers' behaviour and the overall fleet using the Scania Fleet Management System, which is installed as a standard feature to all new buses," Maponya elaborates.

This allows the company to be aware of any technical issues which, says Maponya, are "addressed within a blink of an eye".

"The Scania staff are very professional, and we are pleased with the manner in which they support their clients and stand by their products – which gives us an added incentive and peace of mind in our decision to run a fleet that is 100-percent Scania," she adds.

This personal touch never goes unnoticed. "In October 2015, our board decided to visit the Scania international head office in Sweden to gain intensive knowledge and understanding of the product. We were taken through the chassis and engine assembly plants and learnt about the entire bus manufacturing processes as well as the standards to which Scania products are made – and we were quite impressed!" Maponya says modestly.

Of course, a relationship is a two-way street. Esaia Taunyane, based at the Scania Elandsfontein dealership, has been dealing with the group since 2007. "This is one very professional operator – from the management to the drivers, inspectors, conductors and workshop staff. If I had to describe a model client, this would be it," he says.

A model client and a model relationship, what more could anyone ask for? **F**

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FOCUS
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Advancing the AUTO

Allison has written another chapter in the long history of advanced automatic gearboxes, says FRANK BEETON

Driving city buses before the 1930s must have been incredibly challenging. Using unassisted steering, clutch, gearbox and brake controls to navigate a vehicle weighing upward of ten tonnes through increasingly heavy traffic, almost defies understanding in these days of unbridled technology.

Fortunately, vehicle manufacturers soon recognised the physical effort demanded of bus drivers, and sought to develop technical solutions to ease the load. One of the earliest was the pre-selector epicyclic gearbox, which employed a miniature gear selector and a gear-change pedal to replace the usual clutch pedal. This took a great deal of the physical effort out of gear shifting. This transmission type became widely used in Great Britain before the Second World War, and continued to be used well into the 1950s.

As that decade progressed, the epicyclic transmission evolved into the direct-acting type, which eliminated the third control pedal, and provided almost instantaneous gear changes.

With the contemporary adoption of full-air braking and low-geared manual steering, British buses of the 1950s became even more driver-friendly. Just as well, as one-man operation became increasingly prevalent; the driver also performing the fare collection duties previously entrusted to a conductor.

This essentially British easy-change transmission type was also fitted to bus chassis of German and Japanese origin into the 1970s, when their manufacturers sought to compete more strongly with the likes of Leyland, Dennis, Foden and ERF in their traditional market strongholds.

While it was possible to add fully automatic functionality to epicyclic transmissions, the vast majority operated as semi-automatic units, requiring the driver to make gear changes under manual control.

In America, Allison introduced a fully-automatic bus transmission in 1947, but it took some time before its

recipe of torque converter and planetary gearbox was accepted in markets traditionally supplied by British manufacturers.

By the late 1970s, however, operators were looking increasingly for efficient fully automatic functionality, and, as the technology evolved, an increasing number of front-engined ladderframe bus chassis, equipped with Allison full automatics, found their way into fleets in "emerging markets".

The subsequent swing to rear-mounted engines for more sophisticated bus operations brought fully automatic transmissions of German origin into play, but Allison has retained its position as a preferred supplier of bus transmissions in many parts of the world.

During 2015, Allison introduced its B3400 xFE bus automatic transmission to the United States market. It has subsequently followed up with the T3280 xFE, T3325 xFE and T3375 xFE models for sale elsewhere.

In essence, the xFE line-up has advanced the capabilities of the Allison Torqmatic range, with its software and electronic controls, by the application of first-range lockup, optimised gear ratios, lower shift points, and automatic engagement of neutral when the vehicle is at rest.

Allison claims fuel consumption improvements of around seven percent over the previous generation, and some examples have exceeded this in real-world tests.

Interestingly, we have not yet seen any large-scale adoption of automated manual transmissions (or AMTs) for city or transit bus use, although they are definitely a factor in limited-stop coach applications. However, a trend has emerged where AMTs have been chosen as viable alternatives to traditional torque converter/planetary gear automatics in stop-start truck operations.

It will be interesting to see if any manufacturers decide to use similar transmissions for frequent city stop-start bus operations. **F**

Call in the SANGOMAS?



Let's link our upcoming elections with the recent Brexit decision, and also bring public transport into the equation...

By the time we read this, many South Africans will have voted, hoping that their party of choice is going to raise their quality of life. Sadly, when it comes to public transport, no matter where they put their cross, they can look forward to a rough time.

In the United Kingdom (UK), most comment has been critical of the country's decision to leave the European Union (EU). One local academic, Anthony Butler, of the University of Cape Town, puts it this way: "The political fallout in the UK has dire implications ... Brexit followed a campaign in which the 'leave' camp peddled blatant untruths. Such dishonesty flourished in a culture of popular ignorance ..."

Public transport didn't feature in either the Brexit, or South African elections, but it is one of the issues in life that is clouded by "popular ignorance". This leads to apathetic communities and opens the way for questionable transport practices to flourish.

In South Africa, think of e-tolls, South African Airways, ongoing minibus-taxi problems, the oversized Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) locomotives, underperforming projects like bus rapid transit (BRT) and the Gautrain, as well as chronic congestion on many of our roads. All of this is hurting the economy to the tune of many billions of rand.

Let's take a quick look around the country. Starting in DA-run Cape Town, we have Cosatu's Tony Ehrenreich calling for yet another strike to demand improved rail and bus services there. According to him "the train services are still poor and MyCiti buses cater mainly for the affluent areas".

He is right – the Cape Town municipality has a poor

record in public transport. For well over 100 years, it stood back and allowed private operators to run its bus service; naively thinking that the service ran at "no cost to the ratepayer".

Now the council is trying to correct the resulting mess by pouring billions into a lopsided and expensive BRT service. It should rather have started long ago to pay the existing operator to simply jack up its services, at a much lower cost than BRT.

Cosatu has a point, but why does it always only pick on Cape Town? What about the big ANC-run cities in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, where conditions are no better? Of course we know the answer to that one. Cosatu has failed workers all over South Africa, due to its political bias and its inability to stand up for the transport needs of workers across the whole country.

Moving on to KwaZulu-Natal, the Durban municipality is pumping billions into pouring concrete all over the city in the name of its Go!Durban scheme. Like Cape Town, it has made no serious attempt to improve the service that is already there. It could be carrying thousands more passengers every day at a more modest extra cost, simply by reorganising its existing buses. However, given its poor bus record over the past 20 years, we should expect nothing from Durban anytime soon.

As for Gauteng, remember that it has no public transport plan. That doesn't bother the bigwigs of Gauteng who, at yet another tedious "summit" on public transport, recently ratified a public transport authority.

"We will launch a single transport authority soon, with a single ticket for all transport modes in the province," said premier Makhura. That's nothing



new – in March 2015 this column pointed out that Gauteng already had an "authority", which was shut down in 2008. (I suspect that this was done partly to allow the Gautrain to proceed unhindered and unchallenged.)

Then Makhura added: "We want the taxi industry to be involved in the expansion of the Gautrain." Rather try mixing oil and water, sir.

An EFF spokesperson was quick to respond to him, saying: "You can hardly develop and formalise the taxi industry – you can't even get them to a boardroom – so I wonder how you are going to achieve (a transport authority)."

To underline how rudderless Gauteng is, a few days later, transport MEC, Ismail Vadi, was calling on

church leaders to help out with the Mall of Africa taxi debacle. Why not also call on sangomas to help bring down Gautrain's loss of R70 a passenger?

This column has consistently emphasised the role that ordinary buses should be playing throughout South Africa. There is no need for fancy BRT and rail schemes.

One of the worst examples of this is the City of Johannesburg where the bus service has crumbled from 1 014 daily trips in 2007, to 903 in 2014 and now (mid-2016) sits at a miserable 789 trips. This is the same city that trumpets its "corridors of freedom".

Unfortunately the bus industry has left the country – our very own BUXIT!

Shame on us. **F**



Vaughan Mostert lectured on public transport issues at the University of Johannesburg for nearly thirty years. Through Hopping Off, Mostert leaves readers with some parting food for thought as he continues his push for change in the local public transport industry.

BUS STOPS

AUTONOMOUS CITY BUSES ENTER SERVICE

Daimler Buses is celebrating its achievement of being the world's first manufacturer to put a city bus into automated operation in a real-life traffic situation. The Mercedes-Benz Future Bus with CityPilot has driven autonomously for the first time



The Future Bus recognises whether the route is suitable for automated driving and informs the driver accordingly. The driver then presses a button and CityPilot is activated.

On a section of the longest bus rapid transit (BRT) line in Europe, the bus drives at speeds up to 70 km/h, stops to the nearest centimetre at bus stops and traffic lights, opens and closes the doors, drives off again automatically, passes

through tunnels, brakes for obstacles or pedestrians and communicates with traffic signals.

An aim of the system is to significantly enhance road safety and improve efficiency. CityPilot recognises the traffic lights with its sophisticated camera system. In addition, the vehicle communicates via Wi-Fi with the route infrastructure, receiving information on the status of traffic-lights.

Red lights ahead; the bus independently brakes and comes to a gentle, safe standstill. The bus waits for pedestrians to cross, and does not drive away until the road is clear. To avoid a collision, CityPilot has an automatic braking system.



Based on the 12-m Citaro, the low-floor Future Bus is divided into three areas: The "service" area is at the front; the "express" area with a focus on standing room and quick passenger flow is in the middle. Behind that is a "lounge" area where passengers spend more time.

In the completely redesigned cockpit, the driver receives required information on a large display in an innovative presentation style, and can concentrate fully on his or her core tasks. An electronic ticket system dispenses with the conventional selling and checking of tickets by the driver.



Join us on our cyberstoep

A stoep, stoop, porch, veranda or portico (whatever tickles your colloquial fancy) is loosely defined as a roofed platform along the outside of a house, level with the ground floor. It is, however, more than that ...

It's a place where you can enjoy a sundowner after a hard day's work, a place where you kuier with friends and discuss whatever is on your mind, or where you cuddle up with a good book on a glorious day. It doesn't have to be a physical place, built out of bricks and mortar either ...

Charmont Media Global has its very own CyberStoep, where all these activities are happening digitally. This website aims to entertain as a flock of journos review, give their opinion and write about absolutely anything and everything under the sun.

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