Implementing a transformative public transport project in South Africa’s urban environment – the case of Cape Town’s MyCiTi BRT

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How can public transport investments transform South African cities?

Current situation in South Africa
- The spatial legacy of apartheid is still a distinct characteristic of South African cities
- Inequality of access to opportunities persists
- A dysfunctional urban form exists that entrenches inequality and widens the disparity of levels of mobility
- There is a reliance on private vehicle use to serve the mobility habits of the middle class and there has historically been investment in road infrastructure to support this
- Low population densities in middle class suburbs, long commuting distances for low-income communities that are on the outskirts of the city
- Low-income communities are captive public transport users, and reliant on a poorly developed public transport system

The motivation for introducing BRT in South Africa
- Rise in private vehicle ownership driven by an expanding middle class has led to increased traffic congestion
- There was a realisation that expanding the road network to support the use of private vehicles would not alleviate congestion
- A pressing need to develop an attractive public transport option to maintain the current public transport users and motivate a shift from private vehicle use to public transport
- The need to invest in more equitable mobility for all citizens in urban centres
- An upgrade of public transport services of the FIFA 2010 World Cup host cities was required
- Contribute to the long-term transformation of public transport networks and the urban form of South African cities

The evolving story of the MyCiTi

Modal split for those travelling to work in South Africa (NDoT, 2014)

- Commuter rail is characterised by poor levels of service, and significant overcrowding, renewal of the passenger rail is part of the initiative to transform public transport in Cape Town
- The traditional bus services receive substantial subsidies, and have low ridership levels
- The high dependence on private cars cannot persist, if Cape Town is to achieve equitable mobility for all its residents
- The minibus taxi industry is the major provider of work trips for those without access to private cars, but is informal and receives no subsidies
- There has been increasing pressure to subsidise the minibus taxi industry
- Still a significant percentage of the population are reliant on walking to work, as they cannot afford or access other services

A timeline of the MyCiTi BRT

- November 2005: City of Johannesburg completes scoping study to re-configure their Strategic Public Transport Network plans into the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project
- April 2007: Green Book launched at Transport Week in Cape Town
- Subcontracted PTISG allocations made to the City of Cape Town (CCT) for the period 2007-10
- 2007-8: Study tours to Bogota: CCT and minibus taxi industry
- October 2008 – Public Information meeting disrupted by representatives from the minibus taxi industry
- NTLA 2008 passed providing for devolution of responsibility for public transport to municipal government
- Mike Moriarty appointed as project manager, cost consultant
- Draft reporting system introduced
- April 2010 – An additional R300 million allocated by national government to the PTISG
- July 2010 – Draft business plan presented for implementation of the full Phase 1 of MyCiTi
- May 2011 – Table two three-route route begins operating
- Ongoing negotiation around the long-term operating contracts between VODA and CCT
- October 2013 – Long-term contracts signed between CCT & VODA
- October 2015 – Transport for Cape Town established
- 2016 – Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (ITDP) introduce the BRT concept to various stakeholders in South Africa
- January 2007 – Meeting in Cape Town between Helen Zille, Lloyd Wyse, Reuben Mbeki and Philip van Rynveld
- Public Transport Strategy and Action Plan approved by Cabinet
- October 2007 – Lloyd Wyse appointed by the CCT
- August 2008 – Council approves commencement of project to implement Phase 1A of the BRT
- February 2009 – Draft tender released by CCT to engage negotiations with the minibus taxi industry
- September 2009 – Cost overrun of MyCiTi made known
- October 2009 – Council grants permission for MyCiTi to proceed, funded to a level affordable through historical funding
- May 2010 – World Cup MyCiTi’s service began operating based on interim contracts with previous taxi operators to run service
- October 2010 – Business Plan adopted by Council after public consultation process
- 2012 – Updated Business Plan released
- 2015 – Transport for Cape Town established
- 2016 – Transport for Cape Town established

Challenges experienced
- Implementing the Bogota model for BRT in the South African context, understanding the need to adapt
- Pulling together a project team that could implement the MyCiTi with its high degree of complexity
- Negotiations with the minibus taxi industry: deciding on what level to engage with the minibus taxi industry, make up of the compensation model and its recipients
- Cost overrun in terms of the capital cost and operational costs
- The deadline for delivering the World Cup service
- Negotiations to reach the signing of the long term operating contracts with the Vehicle Operating Companies

Lessons learnt – Key drivers
- The importance of responsibility for public transport being designated to a single-tier city government, which has the systems, capability and experience to implement a complex project like the MyCiTi
- Support from National in terms of policy vision: integrated rapid public transport networks, BRT a core element, and designation of responsibility through the NTLA. Increasing amount of funding made available through the PTISG
- Leadership on a political level in local and national government; within the project team and the minibus taxi industry
- The dedicated project team and high levels of collective competencies that made up the team including city officials, local and international consultants
- Overcoming the deep levels of mistrust between the minibus taxi industry and government through ongoing facilitated negotiations. Developing attractive compensation models to involve those in the taxi industry directly impacted by Phase 1
- External deadline imposed by the FIFA 2010 World Cup, funding made available, the opportunity to involve the minibus taxi industry