

CAPE ARGUS

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Chappies toll plaza won't harm environment, says Carlisle

NONTANDO MPOSO
Staff Reporter

THE NEW toll plaza on Chapman's Peak Drive would have little or no major effect on the environment, Transport and Public Works MEC Robin Carlisle said yesterday.

This comes after concerns were raised by the the Civil Rights Action Group (Crag), one of the groups opposing the plaza. Co-ordinator Terry



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Wyner said yesterday that they were concerned that the R54 million project would negatively affect the environment. "They are going through with a concept that was designed over 20 years ago that

will impact badly on the environment while they should be looking into new modern ideas that will preserve our sacred mountains," said Wyner.

Yesterday the construction of the toll road continued despite numerous protests by various groups and residents over the past few weeks.

Carlisle said this week that the project was set to be operational by Easter next year.

A builder who didn't wish to

be named said they had been waiting six months to start building the toll plaza.

"Soon the public will have a nice landscape viewing point where they can come to enjoy the view."

Carlisle said the provincial government consulted numerous environmentalists over eight years who found the plaza would have little effect on the environment.

"The fact that R180 billion

was spent to build the current pass is hardly eco-friendly."

Hout Bay Residents' Association chairman Len Swimmer said they would be filing a lawsuit against the provincial government because of the plaza.

Research by Crag's lawyers on possible interdict action would be ready in two days.

Wyner said the plaza would restrict access to certain picnic trails that are there for "people who don't have green grass on

their backyards"

"The public is paying R25m for the plaza, they should use that money to build hospitals for the people of Imizamo Yethu," said Wyner.

Carlisle said the free day pass would remain in place provided the plaza project went ahead as planned.

"The operational costs generated by the toll will cover the expenses of the free day pass."

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DIGGING IT: Builders hard at work on the Chapman's Peak toll plaza, which is going ahead despite objections from several groups.

PICTURE: DAVID RITCHIE

Cape Town offers citizens a ticket to ride

Department urges other cities to follow metro's lead in rolling out electronic fare collection system

BRONWYNNE JOOSTE
Metro Writer

THE NATIONAL Department of Transport has described Cape Town's electronic fare collection system as "ground-breaking" and urged other cities to follow the metro's lead.

Public transport has been high on the agenda in Cape Town in the past few days. On Friday a task team was formed to streamline services in the city. One of the team's biggest goals will be to help commuters



hard hit by Metrorail delays and cancellations.

At a media briefing yesterday, the national Department of Transport said Cape Town was the first city in the country to meet the regulations set out in the department's plan for automated fare collection.

The myconnect card is the

first step in a system which will eventually allow it to be used for parking and even groceries.

The MyCiti myconnect card was launched at the end of November and more than 13 000 cards have been sold.

Among those at the briefing were Ibrahim Seedat, the director of the national department's public transport network development, Brett Herron, the mayoral committee (Mayco) member for transport, roads and stormwater, Simon Just, Absa consumer cards

head, and Sindi Ncala, ICT-Works chief executive officer. Absa and ICT-Works operate the card, dealing with payment methods and technology.

Seedat said Cape Town was the first city to meet the automated fare collection regulations the national department put out in June last year. "It's ground-breaking given that the regulations were only promulgated in June last year. Cape Town is ahead of the 11 cities that we fund."

He said the city's progress

would put pressure on other regions to "start accelerating the roll-out".

Cities have until June 2016 to comply with the regulations.

Seedat said the city was setting the pace for other countries. "Cape Town is one of the first to have a pre-paid travel pass system. Cape Town is one of the cities starting to pioneer this."

What set it apart was that it was one of the first "pre-paid anonymous cards". This meant commuters would not have to

fill in all their details when buying the card.

Just said a "micro aerial" was placed in the plastic card which communicated with the validation systems in the machine.

Seedat said the city had driven a "hard bargain" with Absa during its negotiations. The plan was to expand the service to retail stores and develop bulk packages where commuters could buy weekly or monthly credits.

Herron released a statement

yesterday on a task team to improve public transport.

Transport MEC Robin Carlisle called a meeting on Friday to set up the team. It comprises the city, which will chair it, Metrorail, the provincial department of transport, the Cape Chamber of Commerce, the Golden Arrow Bus Services, and the SA Taxi Council.

Herron said Metrorail was "undergoing a very severe crisis". Since November there were 73 train cancellations and more than 2 500 delays.

The team would look at ways of providing additional transport when Metrorail or other operators experienced problems.

"Over the past month and particularly last week, we have seen train commuters being unfairly inconvenienced by criminal acts of vandalism.

"As a caring city and a responsible partner in the public transport sector, we must have a plan in place so we can come to their assistance."

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880 Cape pupils still looking for a school

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Education Writer

THREE weeks after the start of the school year, officials are still trying to place 880 pupils.

"There has been an increase in new arrivals since last week," said Paddy Attwell, spokesman for the Western Cape Education Department.

The metropole south education district was trying to place 632 pupils, the largest concentration in one district.

In the metropole east education district, officials were helping 161 pupils yesterday morning – and more arrived later.

"The Helderberg basin is the main pressure point in the district, especially around Gordons Bay and Somerset West," said Attwell.

Kuils River had also seen an influx of pupils.

Attwell said Rouxville Primary, a new school in Kuils River, had helped to absorb many of the new arrivals.

Officials in the metropole north education district were trying to place 86 pupils.

Attwell said the main rea-

son for the late enrolments was migration to the Western Cape.

Thobani Nonduna, who has to start Grade 8 this year, said he was hoping to be placed in a school by Monday. He has not attended any classes this year.

Thobani said he had been absent when his primary school handed out application forms for high school.

When he returned to school and asked about the forms, he was told to pay a R600 registration fee, which his mother couldn't afford.

His mother, Mandisa Nonduna, said a Kraaifontein high school, where she wanted to enrol Thobani, had told her to return on Monday.

Wallacedene resident Nora Tafafeni, who runs Norah's Rehab Centre, said four pupils who had not yet been placed were being cared for at the centre during the day.

Attwell said schools were enrolling pupils temporarily, subject to parents providing the relevant documents.

Parents who need assistance with enrolment can contact 0800 200 506 or 0861 923 322.

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A last chance for Chappies

FOR ALL the passion in the opposition to the controversial Chapman's Peak office complex and toll plaza, it is clear that the scope for political or any other action in this sorry saga is limited.

It is ironic that the Democratic Alliance administration in the Western Cape – and, in particular, provincial minister Robin Carlisle – should find themselves in the firing line over this poorly conceived development since the deal was crafted, signed and sealed by their predecessors in the ANC about a decade ago.

The record clearly suggests that Carlisle, having inherited a poisoned chalice, has improved the situation by recrafting a contract which is less onerous on the province, and taxpayers.

Equally, the ANC doubtless acted in good faith in terms of then new legislation intended to promote private-public partnerships, but was almost certainly contractually outmanoeuvred.

The upshot – realistically – is that we are probably stuck with the toll road and all that goes with it for now, or, rather, for the duration of the 30-year contract.

It is a bitter pill to swallow, especially when the scale and cost of the new toll plaza (the province's – or public's – share is R25 million) are still disproportionate to need and desirability.

Perhaps, though, there is still scope to extract further improvements; the Table Mountain National Park land transfer still has to be approved by Parliament.

Even if the office block does not appear to be the monstrosity some people are making it out to be, the outstanding approval required for the land transfer might provide a final opportunity to revise the design so that the end result is less intrusive, and cheaper. We should grab it.

Citizens have lost faith in policing

Reported crime doesn't tell the true story of lawlessness and violence in our society, write Joel Bregman and Angy Peter

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RECENT claims that Cape Town is one of the most violent cities in the world and the most violent in SA have been criticised by Western Cape Premier Helen Zille ("First tackle the causes of violence", January 24).

Mexico's Citizen's Council for Public Safety and Criminal Justice based these findings on cross-country comparisons of murder statistics. Zille is right to question the validity of these claims. Comparing murder rates between countries is problematic given different levels of reporting, the quality of policing and criminal justice system, and definitions of homicide.

However, her claim that the homicide rate is not the best indicator of violent crime levels within SA – and that we should instead rely on aggravated robbery – needs to be interrogated.

In contrast to Zille's claims, experts have long held that homicide is the crime most likely to be recorded and therefore that the homicide rate is the least imperfect tool with which to measure violent crime levels. The SAPS Crime Report 2010/11 further states that "murder is internationally considered the most reliable crime trend. Murder being the one crime trend which should virtually not be influenced by over- or under-reporting and/or the non-registration of cases, is consequently believed to be the most consistent indicator of increases and decreases in crime".

Unlike homicide, aggravated robbery – a property-related crime – is not always reported and recorded. This is particularly prevalent in poor, working-class communities.

The Social Justice Coalition is a community-based organisation working in Khayelitsha's informal settlements, advocating for safer communities as part of our Justice for All campaign. We have recorded examples where residents are turned away from police stations when trying to open a case.

There are three main factors contributing to under-reporting of cases and non-recording of crime such as aggravated robbery.

First, poor people have little to benefit from reporting property-related crime since they are generally unable to afford insurance.



POINTLESS EXERCISE: To the degree that the police and the criminal justice system are failing to perform their duties, they too are complicit for contributing to an environment in which people lack faith that they will be protected, justice will be dispensed and criminals can operate with impunity, the writers say.

PICTURE: ANTOINE DE RAS

Second, the lack of faith in police and the criminal justice system to investigate, find, charge and prosecute criminals translates into a situation where people feel they are wasting their time reporting such crimes and do not even go to a police station to try to do so.

Third, when victims attempt to report a case, they are sometimes prevented from doing so by police. Given that police stations in high-crime areas are often under-resourced, police concentrate on "priority crimes". They do not always give sufficient attention to

what are deemed lesser crimes, and those they believe have little chance of being solved. Cabinet's decision in 2004 to set the police a goal of an annual overall crime reduction of between 7 and 10 percent has also affected police's willingness to record crimes for fear of missing this target.

The premier fails to mention that crime is spread unevenly and is often heavily burdened on poor and working-class communities. A 2008 report released by the City of Cape Town found that within the jurisdiction of the city, five of the 58 police

districts – Nyanga, Harare, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and DelFT/Belhar – accounted for over 44 percent of homicides. These statistics indicate that the Cape Flats bears the brunt of homicides in the city. Similar trends are apparent in cities across the country.

Zille singles out drugs and alcohol as the primary drivers of crime stating that, "an estimated 80 percent of all violent crimes are fuelled by alcohol and drugs". She mentions initiatives introduced by the Western Cape government to curb substance abuse. Such programmes are

welcomed. The contribution of alcohol and drugs to violent crimes and the overall negative effects they can have on society is well recognised.

However, by positioning crime as an issue largely attributable to drugs and alcohol, its multifaceted nature is ignored. Poverty, the availability of weapons, lack of after-school care, poor infrastructure such as inadequate area lighting etc all contribute to high crime levels.

Furthermore, the premier does not mention two of the key obstacles hindering the provision of safety in SA – the failures of both the police

and criminal justice system. She writes that a high percentage of homicides occur in the home and between people who know one another, and that this is therefore a crime that is "impossible to police".

Of course, police cannot be everywhere all the time. However, to the degree that the police and the criminal justice system are failing to perform their duties, they too are complicit for contributing to an environment in which people lack faith that they will be protected, justice will be dispensed and criminals can operate with impunity.

Despite a national decline in levels of homicide, Khayelitsha has experienced increases over the past few years. It also has high levels of other violent crimes such as sexual assault. Monitoring criminal cases at Khayelitsha Magistrate's Court, we have witnessed dockets being lost, victims and families not kept informed of the progress of their cases, suspects being granted bail when they should not be, and cases taking years to be concluded.

Given these circumstances, the SJC and a number of Khayelitsha-based civil society organisations lodged a formal complaint on November 28, 2011 with Zille in terms of Section 206(5) of the constitution. We requested she appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the continued and systemic failures of the Khayelitsha police (including SAPS and Cape Town metropolitan police) and the criminal justice system serving the community, including the National Prosecuting Authority, the Department of Correctional Services and the Khayelitsha Magistrate's Court.

While we recognise that there are many hard-working and dedicated people working in this sector, the evidence cannot be ignored.

Zille initially welcomed this complaint and is due to respond shortly following legal advice and consultation with stakeholders.

Crime cannot be successfully addressed by focusing on a single contributing factor. It is a complex issue that needs to be approached holistically, with a range of interventions. Social crime prevention strategies and a functional and trusted police service and criminal justice system are an integral part of this.

Senior leaders in government must be aware that their statements have a direct influence on policy and implementation and must therefore be well-informed and honest about the challenges we face. Employing statistics that paint a more positive situation of crime levels, in contradiction of international best practice, simply distracts us from the extent and scope of the problem.

● Joel Bregman is a researcher and Angy Peter is a community liaison officer at the Social Justice Coalition.

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Dutch shipping company reviews decision to pull out of Saldanha deal

LYNNETTE JOHNS

Business Writer

DUTCH-based shipping company Universal Africa Lines (UAL), which pulled the plug on a multimillion-rand investment at the Saldanha Port, is reconsidering the move after a meeting with Transnet.

UAL pulled out of the deal after it said the Transnet

National Ports Authority had dragged its heels in agreeing to repair a harbour wall, one of the provisos which would have led to finalising of the lease.

The company will now make a decision within weeks, but it will be based on whether the TNPA will hold true to its promises of improving facilities.

UAL planned to spend millions of rand on the oil and gas

shipping supply hub, which would serve the shipping line's interests up the African west and east coasts.

The planned hub is a harbour area at Saldanha which is devoted to the loading, offloading and repair of equipment and ships.

Yesterday the Transnet National Ports Authority chief executive, Tau Morwe, blamed

the hold-up on environmental impact assessments and construction delays and said UAL's decision was "regretted".

UAL chairman Roger Jungblut said yesterday that they had decided to withdraw after 16 months of negotiations had come to nothing, but, after meetings with TNPA, they were now reconsidering.

"The UAL group has 37

years' experience in the industry and based on this we know that decisions have to be taken within a short period of time serving the oil and gas offshore industry and, as a result, UAL could not deliver to the industry as anticipated when negotiations originally started.

"It is correct that UAL has withdrawn and is reconsidering their development depend-

ing on TNPA promises to improve facilities."

Provincial Finance MEC Alan Winde has welcomed Transnet's commitment to speedily resolving the issue.

The Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, Michael Bagraim, said he was delighted that the ports authority and UAL would reconsider their plans.

Morwe said UAL would inform them of their final decision within two weeks.

Morwe said: "From the outset, TNPA had indicated the anticipated delays in concluding the agreement. EIA approvals - these are out of TNPA's control - and construction time frames had the potential of drawing out the implementation of the project."