

## NEW TRANSPORT SYSTEM



The future of commuting in Durban is captured in this artist's impression of a bus shelter on the new Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network that is planned for the city, aimed towards safe and easy travel.

# GO! Durban transport plan fast-tracked

**Mpumbe Madlala**

A REVOLUTIONARY transport plan that will change the lives of people in Durban is being pushed into top gear by the eThekwin Municipality.

Yesterday the city unveiled plans for the rollout of its Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network called "GO! Durban" of which the first phase will be completed within four years. The project includes a high-speed train between Joburg and Durban that will cut the travelling time to three hours.

The head of the eThekwin Transport Authority, Thami Manyathi said six contracts, worth R3 billion, would be given for construction work on the third corridor between Pinetown and Bridge City in KwaMashu.

Manyathi said the seventh contractor was already on site and that tenders for the construction of the first corridor, which will be from Bridge City to the CBD, and the ninth which will be from Bridge City to uMhlanga, would be advertised before the financial year-end.

He said the roll-out was based on a "wall-to-wall" plan that included a network of nine trunk corridors supported by feeder and complementary services. This would cover the whole city with different modes of public transport, including rail, bus and taxi integrated to provide a seamless, efficient and affordable service.

### First phase

The first phase, which consists of corridors one, two (Bridge City to Umlazi), three and nine will be completed in 2018.

"The Phase 1 network will accommodate approximately 25 percent of the public transport demand on corridors C1, C3 and C9, with a further 40 percent accommodated on the C2 rail corridor, as part of Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa implementation plans," Manyathi said.

The third corridor would have dedicated median bus lanes and platforms for transfer stations which would be built under a separate contract.

Manyathi said negotiations

with minibuss taxi and bus operators about their participation in the new transport system were crucial and consultation was ongoing.

Durban mayor James Nxumalo said the project encapsulated a future vision of the city and emphasised that communication was critical, especially with the taxi industry.

"We have a good relationship with the leadership in the industry that also stands to benefit from the project. We will sign a memorandum of agreement with them so that no-one feels excluded," he said.

Nxumalo said officials had visited Joburg and Pretoria where the Bus Rapid Transport system was being used to find out how these cities dealt with the stakeholders.

The rail agency was working on the improvements along the second corridor, with about R1 billion earmarked for the upgrade of their stations, Manyathi said.

"Additional investment will go towards upgrading the signalling system and infrastructure on the corridor, as well as the acquisition of new rolling stock, with delivery of new train sets expected to start

towards the end of 2015," he said.

Nxumalo also said the "fast train" would give people the choice between flying and travelling by train to Joburg.

However, Bafana Mhlongo of the KZN Taxi Alliance said they were feeling sidelined and had written numerous letters to city officials.

"They are not consulting us on this project that we are completely against. We feel they are just stealing our business and will, after that, leave us hanging," he said.

Mhlongo said the project would benefit only a few.

"Our Joburg members are struggling because of this project. If we accept it, we will be left with no work and our drivers will lose their jobs," he said.

Mhlongo said they were planning to march to show their unhappiness. "If that fails, we are even prepared to go court to stop the project."

The first GO! Durban bus was launched yesterday and will visit each of the city's 103 wards to create awareness of what's in the pipeline.