

Government looks at amending law to accommodate e-hailing services

The government has taken an initiative to amend the National Land Transport Act in an effort to accommodate e-hailing services which include Uber, Zebra, and Taxify.



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"As we speak there is an amendment bill in parliament which is being assessed by the portfolio committee on transport," transport minister Joe Maswanganyi said.

Addressing a media briefing on Thursday on the outcome of the meeting between the department of transport, the meter taxi associations and the e-hailing operators, the minister said public hearings on amending the act are expected to start soon.

"We cannot predetermine the outcome of the amendment bill which is before parliament, so there is a willingness on the side of government to accommodate innovation in this regard. However as we speak the National Land Transport Act No5 of 2009 has to be complied with," he said.

The minister's meeting with operators follows an increase in violence involving both these operators.

Preventing acts of intimidation and violence

"Following this meeting and to ensure a safe environment for both the public and public transport operators, the law enforcement agencies will continuously monitor all the identified hotspots to prevent acts of intimidation and violence.

"It must be noted that perpetrators of violence and intimidation will be immediately dealt with in terms of the applicable laws," minister Maswanganyi said.



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Furthermore, it was emphasised during the meeting that public servants and their spouses, partners and immediate family members must be impartial, and must have no direct financial or business interest in any sector of the public transport industry, and may not decide or adjudicate on a matter in which they have such an interest.

"The public service regulations also prohibit civil servants from participating in any form of remunerative work or business prior approval," South African Police Services (SAPS) general Nobesuthu Masiye said during the meeting she requested that public servants who are involved in the Uber business be reported to the police.

"We are going to deal with our own, there is no one that is above the law in this country. Whoever is breaking the law will be arrested, whether it's a member of the SAPS or a member of the department of transport or an educator, whoever is involved as a public servant will be arrested," Masiye said.

"Fruitful discussions"

Convenor of the Gauteng Concerned Meter-Taxi Operators, Oupa Sikhosana, said his organisation had fruitful discussions with the minister.

"We are happy because the minister was able to sit around the table with us and listen to our concerns," Sikhosana said.

He said the minister has assured them that the law will be applied in dealing with this matter. Section 50 of the National Land Transport Act states that no person may operate a road-based public transport service unless he or she is the holder of a legal operating licence or a permit.

This means, therefore, that anyone who operates a public transport service for reward without an operating licence will be violating the law.



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Sikhosana has defended meter taxi drivers, saying they are not violent. "This cheap mode of transport is enslaving our children, you find drivers who are in their early 20s who have to drive for 20 hours to make money.

"Those children should be in universities, Uber does not create jobs, they enslave people and indebt people who buy cars because they believe they can make money," he said.

Sikhosana said meter taxis were creating better jobs for the women who sell food in their ranks and the young men who wash their cars.

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