

DoT may revise coach procurement timeline

The Department of Transport's (DoT's) acting deputy director-general Jan-David de Villiers said that the initial calculation that about 360 new coaches will have to be procured each year during the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa's (Prasa's) rolling stock fleet-renewal programme, might have to be revised, Engineering News reports.

South Africa is faced with a shortage of local train manufacturing facilities to meet the 65% local content target for the fleet-renewal programme and needs to create incentives for overseas companies to establish factories locally.

Given a projected 2.5% a year increase in commuter passenger volumes over the next 30 years, de Villiers said, the DoT has determined that in excess of 7200 new coaches will be required over the next 20 years to meet demand for rail services and to prevent overcrowding. Earlier this year, Prasa reported that the first batch of new trains is expected in 2015, but that entire replacement would only be completed by 2034.

However, De Villiers stated, it would be beneficial if the new fleet could be procured at a faster pace. "We have received an allocation letter from the National Treasury and we will have to align the volume of coaches that will be replaced each year with the available funding," he told Engineering News. De Villiers could not confirm by how much the yearly procurement volumes might have to be revised and noted that keeping the procurement programme for new rolling stock affordable could pose a significant challenge.

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