

Bus travellers have no ticket to ride

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Thousands of anxious commuters hoping to visit their loved ones over Easter are scrambling to make alternative travel plans as the bus drivers' strike bites.



Image via Greyhound

Regular bus commuters queued for taxis and crowded into trains across the country [as the strike began yesterday](#).

Long-distance travellers were affected in many cities. Passengers demanded answers, and refunds, from bus companies including City to City, Translux and Greyhound.

Troubled commuters

Themba Jack, at Cape Town Station waiting to travel to Port Elizabeth, did not know if he would get home in time to prepare for an important church event. He was told to wait for two hours before he could collect a refund. He booked a City to City ticket on 6 April 2017. "I am in a hurry. I need an alternative [and] my money is with them," he said.

Chiedza Gochera was shocked to find no buses for her trip to Harare, Zimbabwe, at Park Station, Johannesburg. "I am unhappy. I am travelling with my daughter and I fear for her safety and mine ... This is such an inconvenience and nothing was communicated to us about the strike. I will have to buy another ticket and hopefully Greyhound will refund me," she

said.

Alex Wilson's plan to visit his brother in Cape Town was scuppered at an empty bus terminal in Durban. The 28-year-old Malawian national from the Bluff spent R670 on his ticket and was due to board an Intercape bus at 9.30am.

"I'm disappointed that I'm no longer going. I was going to spend two weeks but I will have to make another plan to get there," he said.

Caster Mathebula, 30, of Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, was also left in the lurch in Durban. He had booked a ticket with Greyhound to travel to Johannesburg.

Unions, employers meeting

Unions representing striking workers met employers yesterday afternoon in a bid to reach an agreement that could end the strike.

Autopax spokesman Nozipho Jafta said: "We have not been able to operate any of our services today. So what we have done, those who want a refund, and where we have cash, we were able to refund them or told them to come back tomorrow."

Refunds were a sore point for many. Nokulunga Bokvel, who booked a City to City bus from Cape Town to Queenstown in Eastern Cape, had to borrow R170 to make alternative travel arrangements. "I booked a return ticket but they said they can only refund me for one, for now and we will have to see later. I had to ask someone from work [for the extra R170]," said Bokvel.

Unions are demanding a 12% wage increase. "From the time we began mediation ... they have not demonstrated any commitment to engage meaningfully with the demands," a union spokesman said.

Source: The Times

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