

Rea Vaya: Johannesburg's decisive response to climate change

05 February 2014

The Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit system is a continent-leading initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate climate change effects. Affordable, regular and safe public transport reduces the number of vehicles on the road, making for cleaner air and a slowdown in pollution.

Corridors of Freedom, Joburg's well-planned transport arteries, are to help the City reduce its carbon footprint.

The Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is Joburg's flagship public transport project, and has dedicated bus lanes and a fleet of ultra-modern buses to ensure carbon emissions are as low as possible. Running on low-sulphur diesel with the most advanced pollution reduction equipment, the buses are the cleanest on the continent. They reduce nitrous oxides (the most dangerous health risk from vehicular emissions) by thousands of tons a year and particulate matter (such as soot) by hundreds of tons annually.

The City is also aiming to replace more than one third of its Metrobus fleet with modern dual fuel green buses.

Rea Vaya is the single largest climate change initiative ever undertaken by the City and represents a major turning point in how it deals with congestion, pollution and greenhouse gases caused by transportation.

"A crucial element of the Rea Vaya project is the reduction of Joburg's public transport carbon footprint. If only 15% of car users, who live close to the City switch to Rea Vaya, CO2 emissions can be cut by 1.6 million tons by 2020," said Councillor Mpho Parks Tau, Johannesburg's executive mayor, as the City gears to host the C40 Climate Summit, a biennial event for municipal leaders to share their strategies to alleviate climate change risks.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is the solution to peaking oil supply and climate change; serious and expanding problems. Communities connected to a train line can greatly reduce the need for driving, which burns fossil fuels.

Live, work and play to reduce the carbon footprint

The Corridors of Freedom is a broad strategy to create a more people-centred city, linked to interchanges where the focus will be on mixed-use development – high-density accommodation, supported by office buildings, retail development and places for leisure and recreation.

According to Johannesburg's Executive Mayor Mpho Parks Tau, these public transport corridors will ensure residents have freedom of choice, freedom of movement and, most

important, viable connections to employment opportunities that stimulate economic freedom.

"We are re-stitching our City to create a different future for our residents where we can link jobs to people and people to jobs. We will be embarking on Transit-oriented Development. Because the developments are along transport corridors, the provision of transport like Rea Vaya will enable fast, safe and affordable mobility along the corridors."

He said, "In this future Joburgers will live closer to their workplace and be able to work, stay and play in the same space without having to travel long distances. Reduced cars will save our environment due to less carbon emissions."

He added, "Through the Corridors of Freedom Johannesburg will make a decisive turn towards a low-carbon future with eco-efficient infrastructure that underpins a sustainable environment. Cutting down on carbon emissions and exhaust fumes will lead to a cleaner environment and improvements in the health of the population and the quality of life they enjoy."

The Rea Vaya will eventually run along 330 km of dedicated routes with modern fleet buses. This will allow more than 80% of Joburg's residents to catch a bus, placing residents within 500 m of a trunk route or feeder corridor.

Source: www.reavaya.org.za