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T R A N S P O R T

# First active electric bus in SA launched in Cape Town

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TRANSPORT and Public Works Western Cape MEC Daylin Mitchell and Golden Arrow Bus Services (GABS) yesterday launched South Africa's first active electric bus.

As of July, GABS will be incorporating two electric buses into its day-to-day operations, and passengers traveling between Retreat and Cape Town will be transported in these vehicles.

According to a statement, GABS began its renewable energy journey in 2017 with the pilot installation of two solar plants of 25kWp each.

The positive results resulted in two of its facilities being declared carbon neutral in 2020.

Due to its success, GABS continued onto its next project: electrical buses.

The transport company partnered with BYD (bus manufacturer) and uYilo (co-funding) to test two 100% electric buses for a 12-month period.

This is not the first time GABS has been a trailblazer in transport solutions, as it previously tested free wi-fi on buses and introduced the electronic smartcard fare system.

GABS operates more than 1 000 peak-hour buses transporting 250 000 passengers daily and, according to the Department of Transport and Public Works, GABS boasts an on-time rating of more than 96% for first departures.

Mitchell said his department and GABS were working together on various technology solutions to improve public transport in the Western Cape.

He said his department endorsed innovative programmes such as this, given the challenges experienced by commuters in the absence of the passenger rail system.

"The narrative around safety on Golden Arrow buses is very different. After taking a ride in this bus, I am confident passengers will feel safe during their journey," Mitchell said.

GABS engineer Gideon Neethling said the testing phase of the electric bus has been rigorous and that in the first few months of testing the buses were tested in a range of circumstances without passengers.

He said the aim was to get to know exactly how the vehicles perform before incorporating them into daily operations.

"Testing these vehicles has been a joy for everyone who is part of the project. Each time we carry out a new test or reach a new milestone, the level of excitement increases further," Neethling said.

He added that there was much to be learnt about the new bus, including its electricity usage under various conditions, charge time between trips, possible scheduling challenges as a result of charge times, maintenance, battery degradation and other challenges.

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