



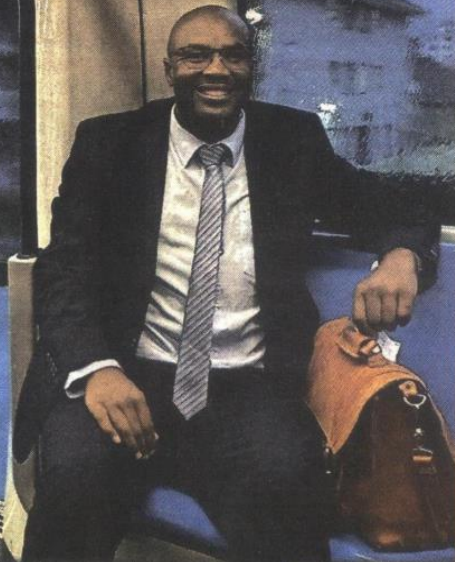
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ROF: Minibus taxi industry demands have affected scholar transport.

MOVING IN: New Mobility MEC Ricardo Mackenzie.



IN THE

DRIVER'S SEAT

Mobility MEC to meet taxi bosses on city blockade

BY TRACY-LYNN RUITERS

THE Western Cape's new mobility MEC jumped into action hours after he was sworn in, by reaching out to taxi industry leaders in a bid to prevent chaos on the roads tomorrow.

Mobility MEC Ricardo Mackenzie yesterday invited leaders from minibus taxi association umbrella body Santaco to a meeting, ahead of a "stayaway" planned for this week.

Premier Alan Winde and Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis have committed to attending the meeting set for this afternoon.

This comes amid complaints from taxi operators that they are being targeted and treated unfairly by traffic cops and City officials, and a blockade by Codeta preventing scholar transport operators from ferrying children in Mfuleni and Khayelitsha to and from school.

The Mobility MEC post became available when former MEC Daylin Mitchell was appointed as the new Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament late last year.

According to Winde, Mackenzie comes with a wealth of experience in the transport sector and in his work

for the provincial legislature as chairperson of the standing committee on transport and public works.

Winde said: "The council is within its rights to protest over its grievances, but we will not accept any violence, intimidation, or destruction of property that has unfortunately come to be associated with stayaways such as these.

Concerned

"I am also deeply concerned about commuters across the province, who will not be able to go to work or school on Wednesday if this action goes ahead.

"I appeal to Santaco's leadership to instead engage

with us to try to find common ground."

Mackenzie said Santaco has confirmed its attendance.

"I will listen to Santaco's grievances, if they are being unfairly prejudiced, I will work to put that right. My priority is to deliver safe and sustainable transport to which our people have a right," he added.

Meanwhile, the Western Cape Education Department said Codeta had ignored a court interdict to stop its two-week blockade that has affected more than 5 000 learners.

The interdict was taken out on Friday by Education MEC David Maynier, who also

opened criminal cases against the association.

Maynier said: "Principals reported that some buses in Mfuleni were stopped and prevented from transporting learners, leaving children stranded in the rain.

"As a result, 1 800 children who would ordinarily travel on our contracted transport missed school.

"What the minibus taxi mafia is doing is a crime, and cannot be justified."

Codeta has demanded that all scholar transport in Khayelitsha and Mfuleni be contracted to them.

Neither Santaco nor Codeta responded to approaches for comment.