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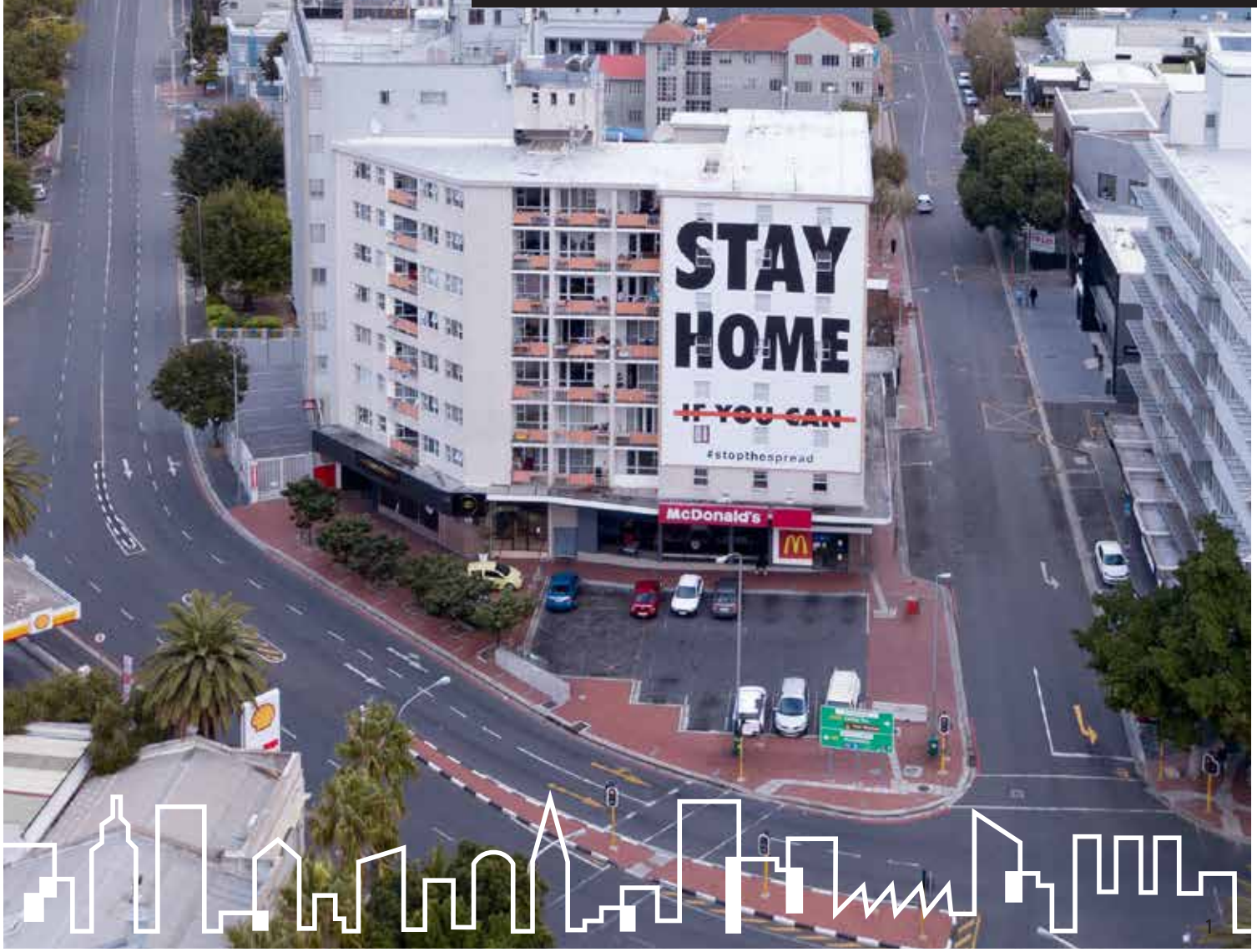
SOUTH AFRICA

URBAN LOCKDOWN LESSONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA:

INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUITABLE AND RESILIENT LOW-CARBON TRANSPORT



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CONTENTS

KEY MESSAGES

What can city decision-makers and employers do to stem the tide of the "old normal"?

- Develop and implement (or support) small-scale pilots, then monitor, evaluate, learn, shift, and implement at scale.
- Work with the minibus-taxi sector, which is here to stay, and focus attention on reform that is acceptable to all parties – this may be a combination of integration into formal or bus rapid transit systems, operational or commuter subsidies, and regulation that requires employee registration and benefits.
- Cast aside doubts that a large segment of the workforce can and does work efficiently and effectively from home, and accelerate flexible working programmes – this may include four-day work weeks, compressed work weeks, or the "pod offices" (where one works "near-home") proposed by Shelley Childs (Childs, 2017).
- Develop and support trip-reduction programmes that enable and reward public transport use, higher vehicle occupancies, and walking and cycling as transport modes.
- Implement or accelerate the implementation of sustainable mobility policies that do exist, and develop those that do not – then resource these adequately.
- Audit the regulatory and legislative environment and processes for barriers to agility and flexibility regarding change.
- Consider collecting travel-behaviour data on a longitudinal or continuous basis, rather than in a five-yearly fell swoop, to enable swifter decision-making.
- Move beyond the "provision of information" model of behaviour change and give transport behaviour the same attention that marketing agencies would give their product.

The minibus-taxi sector is fundamental to transport in South Africa, but when it is driven by profit only, workers are at risk and passengers are not central to the service offering.

Knowing about climate change does not translate into sustainable consumption and travel practices.

INTRODUCTION

Lockdown and re-emergence approaches to COVID-19 across the world generated an outpouring of prediction and introspection, analysis and discussion, on how to #buildbackbetter for a post-pandemic world.

COVID-19 was the "life shock" or "critical incident" (Behrens et al., 2015) that could break lifetime travel habits and behaviours, and shift users to walking, cycling or less travelling altogether: the "Avoid" and "Shift" of the ASI[1] approach to emissions reduction, congestion mitigation, and low-carbon energy reliance, forced upon almost the entire mobile world.

Coming towards the end of 2020's pandemic response, with a "Level 1" South Africa almost back to the "new normal", this report reflects on how it came to be that this "new normal" – transport-wise – is edging back towards the old. Initially, as with much research work commissioned early on in South Africa's pandemic, this report had intended to offer guidance on how the country's response, re-emergence and recovery could not only attend to current public health needs but also serve as a catalyst to accelerate low-carbon and transport-related social-inclusion goals. But although this opportunity may be lost, all is not lost. If anything, South Africa's lockdown response to COVID-19 exposed the entrenched and intractable nature of many of the country's transportation challenges, now replayed in a different arena, and the inordinate difficulty in effecting long-term transport behaviour change at any point, let alone on the fly. Thus there is value in looking back not at what "could have been" but at what could still be, given what we know now.

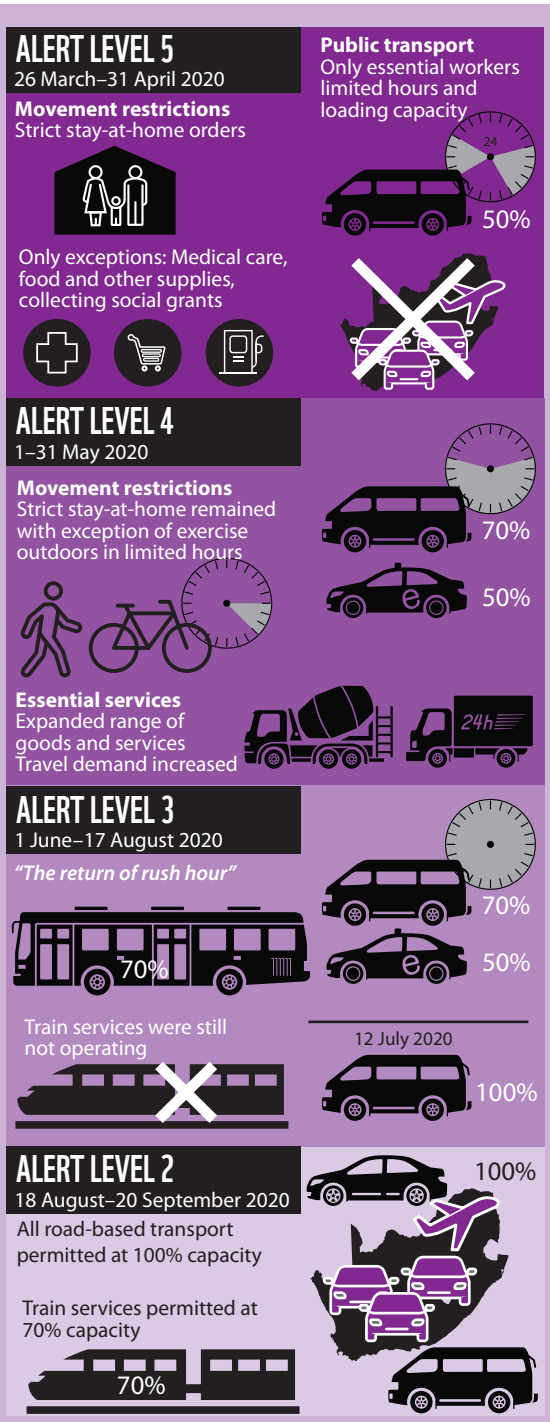
South Africa's lockdown response to COVID-19 exposed the entrenched and intractable nature of many of the country's transportation challenges and the inordinate difficulty in effecting long-term transport behaviour change.

This report is part of a WWF series titled *Urban lockdown lessons for South Africa*, working with South African cities to develop greater food security, climate disaster resilience, and a low-carbon future. It aims to reflect on South Africa's COVID-19 responses regarding transport and mobility (between March and September 2020) – with its focus on physical distancing and transmission control – and consider possible lessons for low-carbon policy and behaviour change approaches in the longer term.

As our re-emergence from the pandemic is still in its early stages, and also because of the timeframe between journal submission to publication acceptance, there is not yet a depth of scholarly work regarding COVID-19 travel behaviour, mode shifts, and longer-term impact. Nonetheless, as 2020 draws to an end, there is a breadth of considered and informed opinion in the media and online space. This report draws on these insights, interviews, and discussions with sustainable mobility activists and planners in South Africa and beyond.

This report focuses on walking, cycling, and paratransit (minibus-taxi) services, and Travel Demand Management. Although scheduled, subsidised public bus services were subject to similar restrictions as paratransit services, the challenges experienced by this particular transport mode are not the scope of this report. The ramifications of the collapse of the rail system, once routinely described as the backbone of transport in South Africa, requires substantial further thought.

The first section, on the minibus-taxi (paratransit) industry, offers an overview of minibus-taxi regulations and responses and government engagement during Alert Levels 5 to 2, and argues that the challenges during these months mirror those of the ongoing attempts by the government to regulate the paratransit sector since 1994. As COVID-19 foregrounds these challenges again, it provides support to the view that polices and approaches to reform and inclusion need to be reviewed. At least one case study suggests that there are already successful, working new business models and operations approaches.



BOX 1: PUBLIC TRANSPORT REGULATIONS DURING LOCKDOWN

Lockdown **Alert Level 5** was in place from midnight 26 March until 31 April 2020. Movement was severely curtailed:[2] individuals were not permitted to leave home except under strictly controlled circumstances, such as to seek medical care; buy food, medicine and other supplies; or collect a social grant. All long-distance and inter-provincial public transport was prohibited; public transport operations were prohibited except for transporting essential workers, and then only between 05:00 and 10:00 and 16:00 and 20:00. Vehicles were not permitted to carry more than 50% of their licensed seating capacity. Exercise outside of the home was prohibited.

Alert Level 4, from 1 to 31 May 2020, permitted public transport services between 05:00 and 19:00, with a grace period of until 20:00 to drop off passengers. Loading capacity remained at 70% for minibus-taxis, and 50% for e-hailing and metered taxis. An increasing number of goods were deemed essential, and travel demand increased. Exercise was permitted outdoors between the hours of 06:00 and 09:00.

As the *Daily Maverick* reported, 1 June 2020 saw "the return of rush hour" (Payne, 2020a) with **Alert Level 3**. Minibus-taxis and buses were permitted to resume operations at all hours (still at 70% loading capacity), whereas e-hailing and metered taxis could operate at 50% capacity. Train services were still not operating. On 12 July 2020, the decision was announced that minibus-taxis could be fully loaded for short distances, on condition that risk-mitigation protocols related to masks, vehicle sanitising and open windows were followed.

By **Alert Level 2** (18 August to 20 September 2020), all road-based transport was permitted to operate at full capacity, and trains could carry a maximum of 70% capacity.

In Alert Level 3, Travel Demand Management in the form of staggered working hours made a fleeting appearance (see the second section, "Returning to work") in a bid to transport the workforce within the constraints of reduced vehicle capacities. However, before industries could scramble to put flexible employee schedules into place, minibus-taxis were permitted to travel at full capacity, thereby setting sail that particular ship of opportunity.

Such is their invisibility to decision-makers that walking and cycling (other than exercise) did not even get a mention in South Africa's COVID-19 regulations as transport modes – neither expressly prohibited nor encouraged. The third section, "Walking and cycling", describes how, unlike the international response, in South Africa the activist sector was the only one visible in this arena.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations or research gaps that may be of interest to those working as researchers or in advocacy, policy support and decision-making.

1 Avoid, Shift and Improve transportation, in order to reduce emissions, reduced energy consumption, reduce congestion and create more liveable cities.

2 gov.za/covid-19/individuals-and-households/travel-coronavirus-covid-19#5

THE MINIBUS-TAXI INDUSTRY

As with publicly funded public transport, the minibus-taxi (paratransit) sector was grounded by COVID-19 regulations.

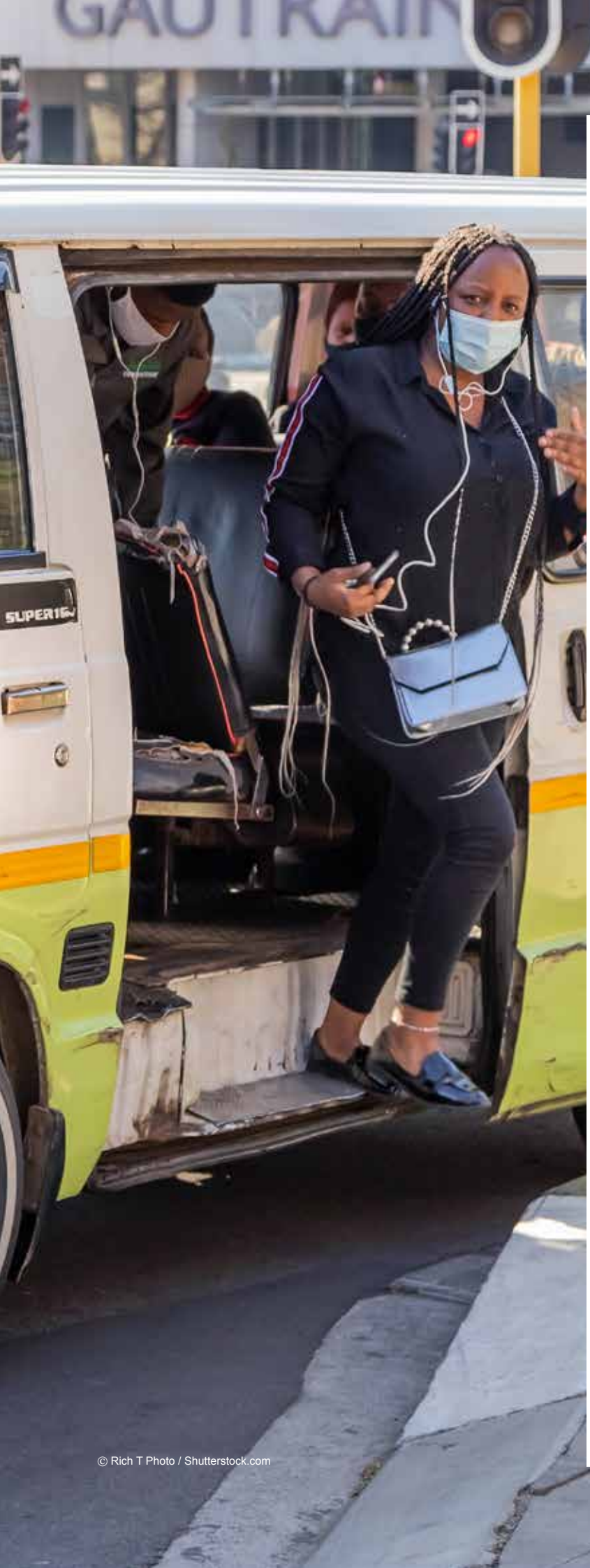
The paratransit sector includes about 200 000 vehicles (of which about 137 000 operate with the relevant and valid operating licences)[3] and transports in the region of 15 million commuters daily (between 66 and 75% of commuter trips) (Maeko, 2020; Fobosi, 2020). This industry has been in the sights of South Africa's Department of Transport since the passing of the National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009, to be formalised or replaced, largely by bus rapid transit (BRT). Among the government's arguments for state-funded BRT was a commitment to greater equity of service distribution and increased accessibility, and improved industry employment conditions, where profit would not be the motive for route allocation and service provision. This transition or replacement process proved to be fraught with difficulties. Early in the process, in 2009, the government was accused of bowing to minibus-taxi pressure to put reform processes on hold, as an electioneering tactic. The paratransit sector indicated its resistance, sometimes violently, to BRT, on the grounds of insufficient consultation, lack of clarity on its future role in the system, the compensation model, and the likelihood of employee redundancies (Schalekamp and McLachlan, 2016).

200 000
VEHICLES

137 000
VALID LICENCES

15 000 000
COMMUTERS DAILY

66-75%
OF COMMUTER TRIPS



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As 2020 ran its course, the financially precarious, unsubsidised – and at times illegally operated – nature of the minibus-taxi industry meant that drivers, queue marshals and taxi-rank managers, for example, had no easy access to unemployment insurance or COVID-19-specific relief; and the required sanitation measures were likely to place even greater financial burdens on stricken operators. The Unemployment Insurance Fund's 2018/2019 annual report had already noted that "unfortunately, the taxi sector has been slow in complying with the fund's requirements and continues to resist attempts by the fund to register" (Melzer, 2020). Essentially, taxi drivers are on their own: "self-employed" renters of a vehicle by the day or week from an owner or operator.

COVID-19 drew renewed attention to the concern that government attempts to reform and formalise the industry have been slow, contested and, at times, ill-advised or ineffective (see e.g. Schalekamp and Behrens, 2013; Behrens and Salazar Ferro, 2016; Schalekamp and Klopp, 2018; Scorcia and Munoz-Raskin, 2019). The spectre of violence, resistance and political interference, which had stalked earlier negotiations and transitions, re-emerged amid COVID-19 pressures and vested interests. The dramatic loss of income within the sector due to movement restrictions (Maeko, 2020) led to violence and threats of protests, strikes, fare inflation and violation of lockdown capacity limits unless adequate government relief was provided (Ndaliso, 2020; Fobosi, 2020). By June 2020 there were reports that some taxi associations intended to increase fares by up to 172% to cover losses.[4] The decision to allow taxis to "operate at 70% is as good as declaring the taxi industry dead", warned Francis Masitsa, president of the National Taxi Association (Payne, 2020b). The decision to allow taxis to operate at 100% capacity was cited as "capitulation" by the state for political expedience, bowing to pressure by the industry (Mabuza, 2020).

The industry spurned a R1,135 billion relief package to help ease the impact of COVID-19 in June as inadequate. Again reminiscent of BRT negotiations, inadequate consultation about compensation models were cited. The Minister of

3 sanews.gov.za/south-africa/government-avails-r13-billion-taxi-relief-fund

4 Greg Nicolson, dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-06-09-joburg-commuters-to-suffer-taxi-fare-increase-in-absence-of-industry-relief

Transport, Fikile Mbalula, noted the challenges of negotiating relief packages with a largely unregulated industry, and his spokesperson, Ayanda-Allie Paine, reminded all of the complexities of compensation calculations: "How are you going to compensate? Is it per kilometre that the taxi drives? Is it per permit? Is it per vehicle?" (Melzer, 2020).

Already before COVID-19, the industry operated on what Bradlow (2020) describes as "razor-sharp margins ... [and its] operational model is now in even deeper crisis". Any relief should not be a "once-off intervention" but the basis of a sustained process. Santato president Phillip Taaibosch, quoted in the *Mail & Guardian* (Maeko, 2020), said that post-COVID, "support [for] the industry's recovery and long-term sustainability requires a mix of operational-cost efficiencies, regulation and subsidisation from the government".

The operational subsidisation of the minibus-taxi industry has been under discussion since at least 1995, when the first transport minister post-1994, Mac Maharaj, set up the National Taxi Task Team. Already then, a development programme was agreed on to find a way to ensure that taxi operators could keep "accounting" records and show how funds would be applied to reduce commuter costs (Browning, 2020).

Regrettably, that development programme was not implemented, says long-standing minibus-taxi consultant Paul Browning (Browning, 2020), but COVID-19 revived this discussion in the media and in government. In response to the industry's refusal to accept a R1,135 billion relief package to help ease the impact of COVID-19, in June Minister Mbalula made a "firm commitment that we are moving towards a funding model that will ensure the taxi industry is subsidised. This ... must be underpinned by an accelerated process to formalise this industry" (Browning, 2020).

As Browning notes, these pronouncements by Mbalula offer new hope for the long-awaited transition of the taxi industry from the informal sector of the economy to (at least) the semi-formal. Quite apart from the subsidy issue, a more formal small business model would surely result in more orderly transport operations (Browning, 2020; Fobosi, 2020).

The question of accounting is also likely to accelerate discussions around cashless fare payments and integrated ticketing (Bradlow, 2020). Melzer (2020) points out that relief funding and compensation comes with compliance strings attached, among which the most likely are UIF registration, taxation and telematics. Smart card and cashless fare systems have been in various trial phases since 2012 (Jennings et al., 2015), and in 2014 proponents explicitly noted that these systems could provide taxi entrepreneurs with some relief within the declining profits caused by increases in the fuel price, and the lack of subsidisation, for example. A further outcome would be that drivers would be paid a wage and have UIF benefits.

In July 2020, a highly visible political disagreement emerged between the leading trade union, Cosatu, and the paratransit industry; the Union believed that the insistence on high-percentage capacities put profit before the health and safety of the workforce.


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As Manuel (2020a) put it, this was all a stark reminder that "the minibus-taxi industry [does not provide public transport ...]. It provides privatised mass transport. Taxis are owned by private, almost always informal, businesses. Government cannot dictate their operations or fares. ... Taxis are not a form of transport whose operations the government ensures for the good of all citizens. Minibus-taxi passengers are customers paying for a transport service."

CASE STUDY 1 MINIBUS-TAXIS CONTRACTED TO PROVIDE HEALTH-SECTOR EMPLOYEE TRANSPORT

Many organisations already provide employee transport using private shuttles and transport organisations. And already before lockdown, many minibus-taxi associations were beginning to successfully offer private direct trips, or feeder services to public transport.

An example of voluntary minibus-taxi reform and employee contracting, in partnership with the Western Cape Government, is that of the Red Dot and Red Dot Lite taxi service, which was launched at the start of the pandemic to transport healthcare workers safely during lockdown.

Since the launch, this service has completed around 47 000 trips for healthcare workers, driving over 730 000 km and servicing 25 health facilities across the province.

Santaco Western Cape formed an operating company, Umanyano Travel Services, with 100 vehicles, which have subsequently increased to 200. Umanyano is contracted by the Western Cape Government to provide services to frontline healthcare and other essential workers. To date the service has also provided more than 8 600 trips for people who required temporary accommodation at quarantine and isolation facilities to reduce the risk of further infections.

According to Manuel (2020b), the most promising feature of the service for longer-term minibus-taxi reform is the way in which the performance of each vehicle is monitored with an on-board tracker. Says Manuel, "The partnership has demonstrated the vital ingredients needed to drive reform: industry buy-in, good political relationships between the government and industry stakeholders, a passenger-centred demand, and a potentially low-cost subsidy model that could improve passenger experience."


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CASE STUDY 2
A RISE IN THE ROLE OF "ORDINARY" BUSES

Rail, once routinely described as the backbone of public transport in South Africa, had already lost some 30% of ridership before lockdown, but since March 2020 "has all but collapsed" (Venter, 2020). Signalling cables, steel track, sometimes entire stations, were stolen or vandalised during lockdown as PRASA seemed unable to secure its assets.

"The underlying fragility of a technology that relies on fixed assets, that are difficult to protect during volatility and upheaval, has been stunning," says Prof Christo Venter, University of Pretoria. It is difficult to see how rail will recover, he suggests, and a consequence is likely to be a long-term reduction in the role of rail.

"Classic BRT", with its segregated lanes and median stations – already under fire for its high costs and lower-than-expected riderships – also looks even less attractive now because of its reliance on fixed infrastructure. This is likely to lead to a rise in the role of buses – both large and small – with less fixed infrastructure and more flexible, lighter operational requirements.


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During Lockdown Alert Level 5 and 4 buses stood unused (photo below), but the demand returned on 1 June when Alert Level 3 was introduced (photo right).

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TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Alert Level 3 regulations in South Africa, "the return of rush hour", introduced a new element to transport complexity with the requirement to stagger the start and end times of the working day in order to flatten or spread the peak in public transport.

During Alert Level 3, construction manufacturing, business and financial services firms with more than 500 employees were required to provide or arrange transport for their employees rather than rely on public transport. Where this was not possible, firms were encouraged to stagger working times (start and end times) to reduce congestion and crowding in public transport vehicles and at ranks and interchanges to facilitate physical distancing and release operational capacity so that there would be enough public transport available (given the reduced capacity requirements).

These measures form part of Travel Demand Management (TDM), or congestion mitigation measures. Most cities and provinces in South Africa have already had TDM plans in place for a number of years. Alert Level 3 offered an opportunity therefore not only to keep workers and public transport operators safe while travelling and providing transport services but also to put into practice measures that ultimately could become the so-called "new normal" and benefit the economy and commuters in the long term.

Organisations already back at work during Alert Level 4 had introduced peak-spreading measures such as working from home, flexitime and converting shifts to 24-hour days and seven-day weeks. Organisations such as the City of Cape Town, which has had a Flexible Working Programme on the shelf for almost half a decade, were able to act fast in activating the programme.

South Africa's National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) shared guidance with business and industry as to how some proposed peak-spreading measures – particularly flexitime and four-day work weeks – could be adopted as permanent measures, while others might be emergency or shorter-term measures. Already workers who had been able to work during Levels 5 and 4 had shown themselves able to work at home without direct supervision, or during complex and challenging working conditions, and were open to negotiation about work structures.

The requirement for staggered work trips soon lost impetus once minibus-taxis were able to travel at 100% capacity. However, had this policy been successfully implemented, cities could have "locked in" pollution and road-safety gains made during lockdown, and built on these to implement their congestion-mitigation and car-competitiveness measures.

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"CHEATING" DURING LOCKDOWN

WALKING AND CYCLING

Globally, walking and travel by bicycle were promoted as particularly safe high-volume, low-carbon means of transport, in terms of social-distancing protocols.

Pop-up bicycle facilities have become increasingly common in cycling exemplar European cities and a number of US and Latin American cities, but these were entirely absent in South Africa. Instead, South Africa directed its efforts towards attempting to regulate public transport capacities, and proposing complex "peak-flattening" and costly facilities-cleansing measures. The country largely failed in these attempts and conceded in some cases to full-capacity paratransit. The authorities paid scant attention to alternatives to public transport, such as ride-share, walking and cycling.

Walking and cycling in South Africa occupy a contested space in the transport pantheon; lockdown particularly resurrected the divisive narrative in social media of cycling as exercise for the mobility privileged rather than a legitimate travel choice (see Jennings 2016; 2018; Jennings et al., 2017). Although national, provincial and local pedestrian and cycling policies and strategies exist, ostensibly to promote and support the mode as climate, health and poverty alleviation interventions, these modes were almost entirely ignored by South Africa's transport decision-makers.

South Africa once again missed its step to use the opportunity to activate its multiple walking, cycling, and climate mitigation policies, many of which explicitly aim to promote these modes to the owners of private vehicles (Jennings, 2021 forthcoming).

During the March–April 2020 lockdown, walking and cycling were expressly prohibited as exercise. So deeply entrenched is their lack of legitimacy as transport modes, that limitations on private and public transport modes were described in the regulations but no mention was made of utility walking and cycling.

Yet not only did transport authorities in South Africa engage no non-motorised transport promotion during lockdown,[5] but in one instance the Western Cape Government directed that utility cycling was prohibited alongside sport, and that walking was permitted only if you did not drive: "Only bus services, taxi services (including minibus-taxis), e-hailing services and private motor vehicles may be used to travel for these purposes during the lockdown. If you do not have a vehicle you are allowed to walk to purchase essential goods."[6]

Walking is a major mode of transport in South African cities (at least 30% of trips), although this is usually among people who do not own private vehicles. While bicycle travel in South Africa is a minor mode (at around 1% of trips), this is not because there is no latent demand but because bicycle promotion measures have fallen short, strategies are insufficiently activated and infrastructure development is frequently contested (Morgan, 2017).

Walking and cycling for essential shopping, among car owners desperate for exercise, became a "loophole" in the lockdown regulations, but potential users took to social media to ask for clarity whether this was permitted. New utility cyclists and pedestrians were routinely shamed on social media for "trying to find various ways to disobey". As a sustainability journalist wrote in response to people "going for walks, cycles, or runs [to the shops]": "the more loopholes you find and use, the longer it will take us to deal with this pandemic, and the longer we will suffer".[7] One of South Africa's professional cyclists stated that "no one in SA rides to do shopping, so they shouldn't start now".[8]

But yet again, all is not lost. As Open Streets Cape Town founder Marcela Guerrero Casas suggests, "there is consensus among mobility advocates that there might be a window of opportunity to push for the implementation of existing policies. But this window may also close as the lockdown eases and people return to their jobs and to what they consider 'normal'" (Samuel et al., 2020).

5 See also weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/a-vision-for-post-pandemic-mobility-in-african-cities
6 Western Cape Government communication reference 200402-002018.
7 Facebook (author name known), 27 March 2020.
8 Twitter (author name known), 27 March 2020.

CASE STUDY 3
BICYCLE ACTIVISTS DEVELOP "HEROES ON BIKES" CAMPAIGN FOR FOOD-DELIVERY SERVICES

Sindile Mavundla, a bicycle activist, together with two partners, had only recently founded Khaltsha Cycles, a cycle shop in Khayelitsha, when the pandemic hit. The founders of Khaltsha have a passion for cycling and, more importantly, for local community development through cycling. It is off the back of this passion that, with the advent of COVID-19 and the associated lockdown, Khaltsha Cycles changed gears and initiated "Heroes on Bikes" instead. The goals of the project were:

- To provide bicycles to essential workers to enable them to have safe, reliable and convenient transport to reach township communities
- To encourage the government and private sector to embrace and support non-motorised transport by providing cycling infrastructure and better urban planning, and incentivising those who cycle to work

The team at Khaltsha Cycles partnered with Avalanche Bicycles and key bicycle-focused NGOs – Pedal Power Association (PPA), Bicycling Empowerment Network (BEN) and Qhubeka – to raise funds for bicycle purchasing and developing the programme.

The first bicycles were distributed to essential workers in the Khayelitsha and Langa community action networks (CANs). Langa CAN, for example, runs four soup kitchens and feeds over 500 people daily. The bicycles will assist them to quickly deliver food to community members.

Community action networks have shown a remarkable emergence in diverse neighbourhoods in Cape Town (and now also elsewhere in the country). An initial objective of each CAN was to ensure that vulnerable members of the local community would be supported during lockdown. But given social and spatial inequalities in the city, their purpose soon grew to promote and show solidarity across communities. This has been expressed most strongly in the pairing of CANs in poorer and better-off areas, to support the exchange of information and ideas and ensure that essentials could be channelled to those most in need.

The process of finding and registering essential workers was made easy through an online registration and verification process. The message of this project was spread through word-of-mouth, and applications were made via the Khaltsha Cycles website. Through a simple verification process, applicants' details were checked and their essential worker status confirmed. To date the team has over 30 confirmed and verified applicants and have had to put applications on hold for now as the demand for bicycles has outstripped their ability to fundraise and provide bicycles.

Once bicycles were secured and essential workers verified, a handover date was set for the safe and sanitised handover of the bicycles. All recipients received their bicycles and accessories like a helmet, lock and pump. Each essential worker also received basic bicycle safety training and basic mechanic training.

Partnerships have become a key to the successful roll-out of this project. Through the partnership with PPA, BEN and Qhubeka and their bicycle provision contract through the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works, the "Heroes on Bikes" were able to secure an additional 20 bicycles for essential workers. A number of other key funders and partners were approached to further provide for this project in the months to come – one being a fundraising effort through Qhubeka and the Tour de France United campaign with the goal of funding 500 bicycles.

A second project is their support of local small and micro-restaurants in delivering food and services to community members within a 5 km radius of the restaurant. Basic bicycles can quickly be converted to "cargo" bicycles by attaching a crate to the carrier on the back, above the back wheel. This allows small and micro-businesses to support and service their local community with greater efficiency while maintaining and fulfilling established social-distancing norms.

By September 2020, funding had been raised to provide at least 40 bicycles to essential workers, and the bicycle teams also work with local clinics to deliver medication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the economic impact of COVID-19 responses has deepened poverty, inequity and transport disadvantage, lockdown has also accelerated the case for industry reform, more agile policies, and the necessity of nuanced communication regarding how and why we need to change our transport behaviour.

MINIBUS-TAXI REFORM

COVID-19 has added another layer of stress to the paratransit sector's already long-standing business insecurity, floundering revenue models, increasing costs and failed reform – recommendations are not new, but possibly more urgent.

"The signs of an accelerating crisis are evident," warns Nico McLachlan, consultant specialising in paratransit reform. The crisis, however, "creates a burning platform and ideal opportunity to put in place a sound long-term strategic approach – not only for the recovery of a taxi industry that existed before lockdown – but for the rebuilding of the South African public transport system with the taxi industry at its rightful place at the centre of the strategy" (McLachlan, 2020).

Rather have operators compete for the route, through formalising and contracting as operating companies, than drivers compete on the route (competing for passengers with other taxis on the road).

Such an approach should involve not so much the subsidisation under discussion, suggests McLachlan, but rather the end to unaffordable bus rapid transit and the integration of the minibus-taxi industry as a key component of the public transport network as contracted service providers. The extension of certain benefits of formal public transport to paratransit workers, such as an end to the rental and daily target system, and improved working conditions, are also long overdue. There are indications from some sectors of the minibus-taxi industry of a preference for state investment in infrastructure such as high-occupancy lanes rather than operational subsidies (McLachlan, 2020).

Fundamental reform at the level of rebalancing supply and demand is also essential. The demand decline has highlighted the oversupply of vehicles and the dysfunctional nature of route licensing.

While the paratransit industry does indeed have a central place in South Africa's public transport future, the inequity and inaccessibility that a profit-based model delivers cannot be part of it. However, COVID-19 has accelerated a shift in the balance of power between the private and public sector, and the ability of public institutes to rationally plan, coordinate and implement change has been severely challenged (Venter, 2020).

MEASURING AND MOTIVATING TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT IMPACTS

It is indeed the case that people are travelling less now than they were before lockdown. However, the reasons may be unemployment and loss of income, which have not bounced back with the easing of lockdown (NIDS-CRAM, 2020), working from home and the closure of schools and universities. It is too early to know whether trip substitution and reduced travel are permanent.

The paucity of transport-relevant data is a routine concern among researchers who work in African cities; COVID-19 has seen a vast output of reflection but less data collection, and opportunities have been lost for before-and-

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after travel longitudinal surveys. This has led to a recommendation that cities should collect household travel survey data on a continuous, in-house basis rather than on a massive, five-yearly scale, to capture nuances and impacts that are otherwise lost.

Anecdotal evidence – both in South Africa and globally – does suggest, however, that working from home – for those for whom it is possible – may be a lasting impact, driven by employee demands rather than employers.

Had cities had the flexibility, desire and power to do so, they could have introduced changes in road allocation as travel demand decreased (with public transport or high-occupancy vehicle lanes, bicycle or pedestrian lanes), or with penalties to prevent commuters from going back to their habitual modes of travel; as a pandemic response – where the private car was the ultimate social-distancing mode – this could have appeared heartless. At any other point going forward, these measures are the only way to lock in traffic reduction and congestion mitigation.

THE VALUE OF PILOTS AND EXISTING POLICIES

Pilots and existing policies emerge as key to both rapid and long-term change. Where flexi-time already existed in an organisation, these organisations were more able to extend the scope of the system; where government–minibus-taxi collaboration pilots had already shown success, these were able to be replicated to serve COVID-19 needs; and where projects and partnerships already existed, community-based bicycle programmes were able to shift focus. In Europe, for example, where cycling already has traction and where walking is already promoted as a key mode of transport, cities were able to rapidly repurpose public space and reallocate road space for people to move.

AGILE, RESPONSIVE, AND IMPLEMENTABLE POLICIES

Right at the start of South Africa's pandemic response, in early April 2020, transport scholar Ofentse Mokwena (2020) wrote that the transport sector "must question the suitability of the current policy infrastructure with respect to its equity, foresight, resilience, and responsiveness to change". Six months later, this report concludes with much the same finding:

- Government decision-making processes were not sufficiently agile or nimble to implement the temporary or "pop-up" public transport, pedestrian and bicycle lanes recommended by policy advisers.
- Likewise, neither the agility, mechanisms nor rapid consultation processes yet exist to implement emergency or temporary employee subsidisation, e.g. the subsidisation of employees who travel by minibus-taxi to enable taxis to travel at reduced capacity without substantial financial loss.

The failure to recommend or facilitate increased walking and bicycle mobility reflects South Africa's broader policy and programmatic ambivalence towards non-motorised modes, and a continued floundering in attempts to increase bicycle mode share in particular. Almost every city and province in South Africa already has a non-motorised transport policy, and Cape Town has a cycling policy; relatively straightforward resourcing, political will and a commitment to action could see these being implemented.

COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

COVID-19 is yet another reminder that knowledge and information do not necessarily translate into positive action when there are vested interests, fears, livelihoods and habits at play. Even the communication of "why" change needs to happen is not necessarily successful, as all transport users occupy a different position on a behavioural continuum of "pre-contemplation", "contemplation", "preparation" and "action" phases.

When applied to climate mitigation, where the reason-for-action is remote compared to COVID-19, it is clear that "telling" people to drive less, or walk and cycle, is not enough.

CONCLUSION

For a long-term shift towards lower-carbon, equitable and sustainable travel patterns, the provision of enabling and other mediating environments, among other things, are necessary to build a tractable, shared vision of any "new normal".

While there is a large body of scholarly work around the impact of "life shocks" on breaking travel habits and enabling travel behaviour change, these events are usually somewhat more benign than a pandemic lockdown: changing employment, career, residence or car ownership (Behrens et al., 2015). Much of this work looks at the triggers that lead to deliberate reappraisal of travel decisions; travel decision-making studies consider, for example, the role of intention to change and the stages of contemplation and action in making those changes (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983). With COVID-19, on the other hand, change was imposed and promulgated. Hoping to leverage the positive benefits – of reduced congestion, air pollution and road-traffic deaths, and walkable neighbourhoods – to motivate longer-term outcomes was perhaps naïve, particularly given that movement restrictions were experienced as punitive, policed social control.

"What [people] consider normal" (Casas, quoted in Samuel et al., 2020) is key to understanding both the urgency to act on lessons learned and the urgency transport users feel in having to unlearn new travel behaviours or impositions. Lasting change was not the purpose of South Africa's COVID-19 transport interventions; rather, it was an immediate response to first dramatically limit movement and ensure safe services for essential workers, and then to ensure safer mobility while gradually reopening the economy. In doing so, the country by and large followed international good practice as understood at the time (e.g. Dalkman and Turner, 2020).

In the early phases of the pandemic mitigation, in South Africa and internationally, the mobility restrictions fuelled substantial hope within the sustainable mobility community that the – albeit temporary – vibrant public spaces (during those "three golden hours" between 06:00 and 9:00 in June 2020 (Webster, 2020)), a lower-carbon, less motorised, less noisy and less polluted world would find shared resonance and accelerate longer-term change. But the devastating economic fall-out, and the desperation to return to work and salvage what was left, left little appetite for a visionary "new normal". When viewed from a dystopian lockdown, traffic congestion looks like the reassertion of "the economy"; travelling more often feels like being set free.

For a long-term shift towards lower-carbon, equitable and sustainable travel patterns, the provision of enabling and other mediating environments, attention to self-concepts and capabilities regarding new transport behaviours or business models, and a battery of other interventions, are necessary to build a tractable, shared vision of any "new normal".

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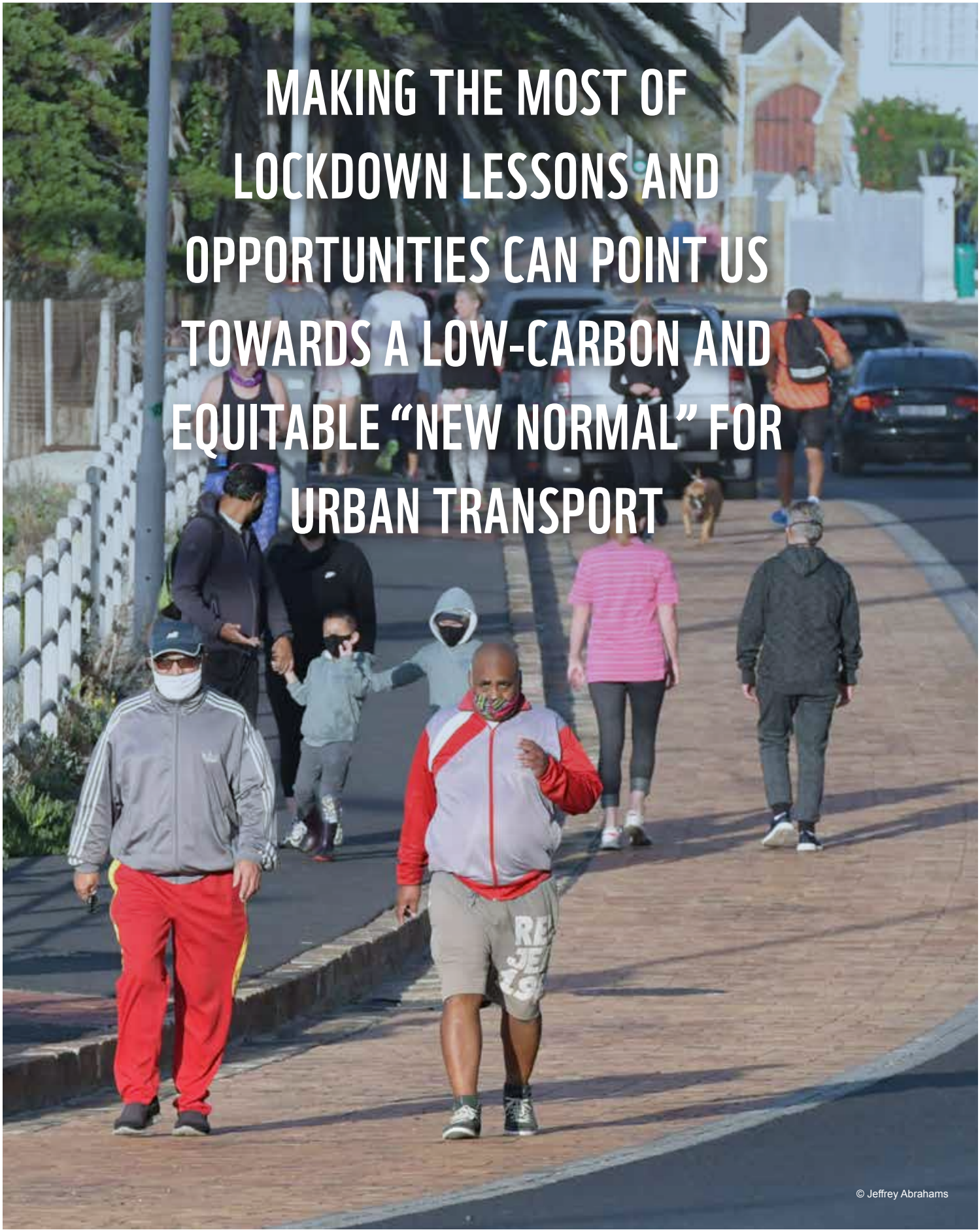
MAKING THE MOST OF LOCKDOWN LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES CAN POINT US TOWARDS A LOW-CARBON AND EQUITABLE "NEW NORMAL" FOR URBAN TRANSPORT



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