

AftaRobot minibus taxi app launched

The newly-launched AftaRobot mobile app aims to improve operational efficiency for minibus taxi drivers and associations by providing insight into routing, rideshare capacities, and more of their workforce.



The mobile app is said to allow commuters using vehicles from the Johannesburg Southern Suburbs Taxi Association (J.S.S.T.A) to travel safely, on time, with no queue. Through the app, commuters will now have the ability to pre-order a taxi for collection at a designated location.

According to the organisation, the introduction of the app will address some of the challenges that have plagued South Africa's long-standing minibus taxi industry. It states that, from a taxi owners' perspective, there is a lack of operational visibility and control of their vehicles' whereabouts once it leaves the property or taxi rank as well as a number of inefficiencies all leading to duplicated efforts in driving routes, ultimately resulting in a loss of potential income.

Minibus industry challenges

Until now, drivers have only been aware of customers when they see them at physical locations. Commuters are unable to plan their journeys safely due to unreliable taxi schedules, pick up locations, underrepresented route planning, and uncertainty regarding availability each minibus taxi. As a result, riders have been forced to reorganise their life around public transport.

Riders have also not been able to communicate with the industry directly to provide feedback on things like drivers' safe driving habits, timeliness, and availability of a ride to their specific locations.

Says Obakeng (Obby) Morapeli Mathoko, the visionary behind the app: "Imagine, as a daily commuter, you will have the power to buffer your intentions instead of your time. In other words, you will be able to use the app to book the taxi in advance - whereas in the past you would have had to get up bright and early and possibly compromise your safety by waiting for a taxi to pass by due to unreliable taxi schedules. Taxi drivers will also benefit. As a load and route-based service, commuter behaviour and routes will now become clear, resulting in more efficient operations."

Technology

From a technical perspective, the app is based on Qualcomm-enabled 3G/4G devices with Bluetooth, beacons and other advanced wireless technologies; the entire platform consists of a suite of mobile apps running on a cloud backend.

In the next two years, Obby and his team aim to implement AftaRobot in over 10,000 vehicles, 4,000 owners, and 50,000 commuters.

"We have undergone a process to train and empower minibus taxi drivers, owners, queue marshals and minibus taxi association staff to use mobile devices to gather route activity and performance, in order to enable commuters to receive route information, estimated time of vehicle arrival and trip time more efficiently than ever before," adds Obby.

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