SAFE DESIGNS FOR BRT SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Road traffic safety is a major challenge in South Africa and also internationally. All efforts
must be made to implement road safety initiatives, especially from a transport
infrastructure and operations design perspective. Traffic safety is an aspect that has
consistently been missing from publications and planning guides for Bus Rapid Transit.
The impact of bus systems on road safety is particularly important because they tend to be
situated along major urban arterials, which often account for severe pedestrian crashes.

Most of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Systems are retro-fitted onto existing road networks
which result in major changes to traffic patterns, especially pedestrians. The
implementation of these high capacity transit systems on any urban arterial will attract
large volumes of pedestrians to streets where risks are already high. Facilities are often
not available to provide for the changes in traffic patterns. There is thus a definite need to
design for road safety when implementing BRT systems.

Some key design elements of bus systems can significantly improve safety. The
presentation will highlight some typical design problems which are often overlooked. The
role and importance of Road Safety Audits during the design process will also be
discussed and how it should be applied. As pedestrians are high risk users in terms of
safety, the development of Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) Plans and Universal Access
Plans around BRT stations is essential. Examples of how to address safe pedestrian and
cycle routes to stations will be presented.

The overall aim of the presentation is to sensitise designers on the importance of
designing for safety during BRT projects.