Making Public Transport Work for Deaf Passengers
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Most people in South Africa rely on public transport, such as taxis, buses, and trains, to travel to work and school. For Deaf people, the journey is not always easy because, without a clear way to communicate, many passengers are left struggling. Even some taxi drivers who experience hearing challenges face similar problems on the road as completely Deaf passengers.

On Saturday, 1 August 2026, Karibu! spoke to Tshepo Makgale (29), who shared his experience. He uses public transport daily to get to work.

"I have challenges using public transport because I must write on my phone and show the driver where I am going. Sometimes I do not feel safe using my device to type a message and pass it to other passengers to show the driver," he said.

To communicate, Tshepo tells the driver in advance where he needs to get off. "It is easier for me to sit in the front seat. If I sit at the back, it is challenging to pass the message."

He gets by using paper notes, his phone, or a bit of sign language.

The communication gap goes both ways. Drivers who are not completely Deaf but experience hearing loss can miss it when someone calls out their stop. Unless another passenger shouts loudly, they may drive past the stop.

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