

Emaphupheni Residents Protest High Taxi Prices and Taxi Routes

By Sinenhlanhla Buthelezi

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On the 12 and 13 August 2024, residents of Emaphupheni at Etwatwa, a township near Benoni in Ekurhuleni, held a massive protest against taxi routes and high taxi prices. The protest started in the early hours of the morning of 12 August, people blocked all roads leading to Etwatwa and Daveyton. No one was able to enter or exit the area. Teachers had to skip work because they couldn't make it to school and no learning took place on both days.

The community that guarded the streets said that they were tired of these unreasonable prices and them paying twice the amount they use to pay in such a short period of time just to reach Benoni. They also added that they are tired of the constant stops on the route.

Mpumelelo Banda (17) a grade 12 learner from Phandimfundo Secondary School said he is feeling miserable that he can't go to school because he has started with his preliminary exams and he needs the extra lessons provided by his teachers. "As learners we spend most of our time at school and this strike is holding us back because now, we won't be able to cover the syllabus," continued Banda.

Some residents who were protesting on Eiselen Street, Las Vegas, were unfortunate to have witnessed gunshots from the police. These residents were singing, burning tyres, and blocking the road with big rocks and rubbish. An anonymous resident picked up the bullets as evidence, they were written "p12". He said he picked it up to show it as evidence, should the matter go any further.

Jonas Masuku, the School Government Body (SGB) chairperson at Phandimfundo Secondary and community activist said, "Something should have been done about this situation and the community was gravely affected in many ways than one, the protest was for a good cause, but schools got affected negatively."

A member of the Mayoral Committee of Transportation, Andile Ngwevu, from the city of Ekurhuleni came to Etwatwa and had a meeting with the community, he mentioned that he first had a meeting with the Taxi Association responsible for the area the Benoni Taxi Association (BTA), and they came to an agreement that'll resolve the matter. The chairman of BTA Derrick Mduduzi Mtambo addressed the community and told them they have amended the memorandum and reduced the taxi fare, Godfrey Mathebula the secretary of the BTA read the memorandum.

The community was not satisfied with the memorandum and a community member commented by saying "We want open touting as before; we do not want to start at the Las Vegas rank when going to the mall and we also disagree with having to start at Esihlahleni before going to Benoni".

The chairman then said the community is welcome to draft their grievances and send them to the office, in that way they'll find a better solution that abides with the communities demands. "The government must intervene and help us get through

this pandemic; buses are also a reliable solution because we do not adhere to the way the taxi industry operates” said Victor Masuku an activist from Etwatwa.

After the meeting with the MMC peace was restored at Etwatwa even though commuters were not satisfied with the memorandum. The city of Ekurhuleni released a media statement stating that the MMC will continue being in contact with the BTA and the community until the matter is fully resolved.

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