

## **BUFFALO CITY TOURISM MASTER PLAN**

### **PHASE 4: TRANSPORTATION ACCESS & INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Grant Thornton Kessel Feinstein (GTKF) was awarded a task of preparing a Tourism Master Plan for Buffalo City, in the Amatole District of the Eastern Cape.

GTKF's proposal for undertaking the appointment included the employment of Stewart Scott (Pty) Ltd as sub-consultant for the assessment of existing access and infrastructure that is necessary to support the tourism industry.

This report is intended for incorporation as an Appendix or Addendum to GTKF's Tourism Master Plan report. The report briefly describes the existing situation with regard to both hard and soft services and identifies areas where improvements may be necessary. This applies to both the current situation and future developments.

Transportation issues covered by the report include existing passenger services, the road network, access to existing tourist facilities, terminals and inter modal facilities.

The report also notes issues related to the provision of services which impact on the tourism sector. Such services include water supply, sanitation, electricity and telecommunication.

## 2.0 EXISTING PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES

For passenger volumes, destinations and capacities also refer to Appendix A.

### 2.1 Airports & Flights

There are two major airports situated in Buffalo City, namely East London and Bulembu Airports.

The East London Airport is connected via frequent daily flights to four other major airports in South Africa namely Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban & Port Elizabeth. From there connections can be made to international air routes.

The one way ticket rates (March 2003) from East London are as follows:

- Cape Town:- R 1 526-00
- Durban:- R 1 150-00
- Johannesburg:- R 1 253-00
- Port Elizabeth:- R 911-00

The Airport's statistics division keeps a monthly record of passenger volumes for all flights. These figures were broken down according to the destination demand from the largest to the smallest. The percentages and estimated typical weekly passenger volumes for each destination are as follows:

	%	Volume (March 2003)
➤ Johannesburg:-	38	6070
➤ Cape Town:-	25	3995
➤ Durban:-	22	3515
➤ Port Elizabeth:-	15	2400

The peak business period were reported to be between April and July.

The Bulembu Airport has no scheduled flights but is used by organisations such as the emergency medical services or private operators. This airport was designed and is large enough to accommodate international flights. According to the Airport's manager, Mr M Ndingaye, proposals by the Cargo/freight Company SAS Marine are underway to upgrade the airport to be utilised as a cargo airport.

Expedition Airways is due to start its scheduled flights in 2004. According to the owner/director, Ms M Mngaza, these proposals are already in place.

The initial flight destinations from this airport will be Umtata, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg. The flights will be daily except Tuesdays and two aircraft with the capacity of nineteen passengers will be initially used. There are also plans for the future growth for this proposed operation.

Two air charter companies were found to be operating in East London Airport, namely Helicopter Transfer Services (AV8) and East London Air Services. These have no scheduled flights but are available for booking.

The Helicopter Transfer Services flights are designed by the needs of their clients and they fly throughout South Africa.

The typical return flight rates are as follows:

- Pilot & 6 passengers R 5 800+VAT per hour
- Pilot & 3 passengers R 3 200+VAT per hour

The types of aircraft that East London Air Services use are a Beachcraft baron (carries 5 passengers) and a Piper Chieftain (carries 8 passengers).

Some of the typical return flight rates are as follows:

	<u>Beachcraft Baron</u>	<u>Piper Chieftain</u>
➤ Aliwal North	R 4 600-00	R 8 940-00
➤ Durban	R 7 550-00	R 15 051-00
➤ Kei Mouth	R 2 800-00	R 3 400-00
➤ Cob-Inn	R 3 200-00	R 4 000-00

## 2.2 Ports and Maritime

The Port of East London under the National Ports Authority (NPA) of South Africa, reported that they are only involved in the importation/exportation shipment of cargo. NPA confirmed that there is no future planning in place for any public transportation by sea.

## 2.3 Rail Transport

There are two types of trips that exist from East London, the long distance and the local. The long distance trip to Cape Town (via Port Elizabeth) is only on Tuesdays and to Johannesburg (via Bloemfontein) is daily except Wednesdays and Saturdays. A 25% discount is offered to passengers over the age of 60 years.

The long distance single ticket rate is as follows:

➤ Cape Town:-	1 <sup>st</sup> Class	–	R 445-00
	2 <sup>ND</sup> Class	–	R 310-00
	3 <sup>RD</sup> Class	–	R 190-00
➤ Johannesburg:-	1 <sup>st</sup> Class	–	R 295-00
	2 <sup>ND</sup> Class	–	R 200-00
	3 <sup>RD</sup> Class	–	R 125-00

The third class is also known as the Economy Class.

Local trips run from East London Railway Station to Berlin Station on a daily basis, except on Sundays. The average overall passenger volume of 24000 per day has been reported and the maximum capacity that the train can carry is 2000 passengers (See Annexure A for further detail). There are 16 passenger stations located along the train route. The local distance train fares vary from R3-50 to R4-50 (single ticket) all along this route.

Metrorail (East London) intends extending its local trips to King William's Town in the near future.

## 2.4 Bus Services

**2.4.1 Greyhound** – This is a luxury intercity coach that travels nationally from Pretoria to Cape Town with offices in East London. Their daily trips from/to East London are listed below with rates. The maximum capacity of the coaches to Cape Town and Durban is 66 passengers, whilst to Johannesburg and Pretoria is 44 passengers. The buses operate at full capacity during the holiday season otherwise 50% during the school period.

The single ticket rates are as follows:

➤ Port Elizabeth:-	R 115-00
➤ Cape town:-	R 320-00
➤ Durban:-	R 320-00
➤ Johannesburg:-	R 295-00
➤ Pretoria:-	R 295-00

**2.4.2 Intercape** – This is a luxury coach that travels nationally from Johannesburg to Cape Town. Like Greyhound, they have offices in East London and travel daily. They have two destinations from East London, namely Port Elizabeth and Cape Town that departs/arrives daily. They do not have any tour operations or local trips. Their peak seasons is during the holiday seasons where they take trips at full capacity otherwise 50% of the bus capacity has been reported during school term period. The maximum bus capacity is 44 passengers.

The single ticket rates are as follows:

- Port Elizabeth:- R 115-00
- Cape Town:- R 305-00

**2.4.3 Translux** – This is a luxury intercity coach that operates on the same routes as Greyhound. There are two operators under Translux Coaches, namely Translux and City-to-City. The City-to-City bus has a less expensive fare compared to Translux as seen below. These buses arrive and depart daily at around the same time. The maximum capacities of these coaches vary from 46 to 67 passengers (Translux) and 62 passengers (City to City). The peak season, like Greyhound and Intercape, is during the holiday seasons where the buses operate at their maximum capacity.

	<u>Translux</u>	<u>City-to-City</u>
➤ Cape Town:-	R 305-00	R 190-00
➤ Port Elizabeth:-	R 125-00	R 75-00
➤ Durban:-	R 170-00	R 110-00
➤ Johannesburg:-	R 290-00	R 145-00
➤ Bloemfontein:-	R 190-00	R 115-00

**2.4.4 Buffalo City Municipality Bus Services** – This is the Buffalo City owned bus service. They have trips that run locally around East London suburbs from the East London CBD. They do take special local trips on request (e.g. funerals). They operate with 31 buses (40-, 45-, 50-, 60- & 65-seaters). The company is not involved in any tourism work. There are no future plans put in place to expand their services for tourism operations.

**2.4.5 Ntoyi Bus Services** – Based in Chiselhurst, this bus operator takes local and national trips. They operate with 5 (five) buses on local trips (i.e. one 48-seater, two 60-seaters and two 65-seaters) and one 32-seater bus for trips outside East London.

The local trips are from the Mdantsane Highway Taxi Rank to the bus terminal near East London Technikon. The most frequent national trip is from East London to Durban (via the former Transkei, Pietermaritzburg, etc.). Special trips occur to Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth or Cape Town. The trip to Durban is three times a week i.e. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. A special rate of R200 return ticket is offered for students and hawkers, otherwise the normal rate is R300 return ticket. The local trip rate is R4 per single ticket per person (Mdantsane to Town).

## 2.5 Minibuses and Tour Operators

**2.5.1 The Baz Bus** – The Company operates from Cape Town. They transport backpackers from Cape Town to Pretoria and return (via East London). The trips are taken five times a week. They operate with ten 22-seater semi-luxury Mercedes Sprinter minibuses. They mostly take international backpackers and for this reason their peak business seasons are November to March and June to July. They operate through these following backpackers hostels in East London : – Sugar Shack Delicatessen, East London Backpackers and Nikinana Backpackers.

The rates are as follows:

- Cape Town to East London:- R 935-00 (hop-on hop-off on the way rate); or R 340-00 (one way rate, no stopping on the way);
- East London to Pretoria:- R 735-00 (hop-on hop-off on the way rate); or R 270-00 (one way rate, no stopping on the way).

**2.5.2 Minilux** – This is a public transport company that operates between East London and Port Elizabeth (via Grahamstown). Based in East London, they operate with a one 18-seater minibus and do daily return trips to PE. The cost of a return trip is R200 per passenger. The peak business days are weekends where the minibus operates at full capacity, otherwise three-quarter full is the average during the week.

**2.5.3 SA Connection** – This is a minibus service that travels only during daytime from East London to Johannesburg and Cape Town. The trip to Johannesburg is only once a week (Wednesdays) and twice a week to Cape Town (Mondays & Fridays). Most of their passengers are elderly people as they always prefer to travel during the day.

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They operate with two 16-seater minibuses. This company also runs special local trips (e.g. schools during sports season, etc.) on request.

The rates are as follows:

- Johannesburg:- R 260-00
- Cape Town:- R 285-00

**2.5.4 Amatola Tours** – This is a tour operator company that is involved in excursions in East London and the surrounding tourist destinations. Some of the tour options are City Tours, Inkwenkwezi Private Game reserve, Shamwari Game Reserve, etc. They do also organise accommodation for tourists. Their peak business season is normally during October/November. There were no specific rates supplied for their trips.

**2.5.4 Wild Coast Holiday Reservations** – This is a tour operator company that deals mostly with the Hotel hiking trails on the Wild Coast. They operate with one 8-seater Combi and one 6-seater Condor. Their major destinations are Wild Coast, Kob Inn, Wavecrest, Trennery's and Morgan Bay. 90% of their clients are SA citizens who are mainly from Western Cape, Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal. These trips are normally run during the school holiday season.

**2.5.6 Gateway to the Eastern Cape Airport Shuttle and Tour Operators** – Based in East London, this Company transfers people to and from the East London Airport. They also guide tourists around the Eastern Cape area as well as corporate sightseeing trips. They operate with one 16-seater and one 10-seater minibuses and one private vehicle. A flat rate of R30 is charged for local trips otherwise a rate of R1,50 per kilometre is charged for trips going outside the East London area. They keep no records of their trips but some of their frequent tour destinations are Port Alfred, Kei Mouth, Haga-Haga, etc.

**2.5.7 The Airport Shuttle** – This company operates from East London to the Eastern Cape area. They transfer people to and from the East London Airport and to their destinations, e.g. Hotels. They have no frequent tourism trips but are available on request. No record on their trips is kept as their business is dependent on the Airport flights and periods. They operate with two 11-seater minibuses and two 4-seater vehicles that they use for their trips.

**2.5.8 KingFisher Tours** – This is a tour operator company that operates from East London (Kidd’s Beach) throughout the Eastern Cape area. They have trips mostly on weekends with two busses (19-seater Mercedes Sprinter and 8-seater V W Caravelle). The majority of their clients are elderly/retired people from the East London area. Typical tourist destinations they visit are Game Parks, Morgans Bay, Grahamstown, Knysna (furthest destination), etc. Typical return rates vary from R550 to R800 (incl. Accommodation) depending on the destination.

## **2.6 Metered Taxis**

**2.6.1 Buffalo City Passenger Services** - This company is a combination of the following metered taxis: Eagle Radio Taxis, Border Taxis, Call-a-Cab, Charlie’s Taxis and Van’s Taxis. No records are kept concerning their trips. Generally they transport passengers from the Airport to hotels or to where is required around the city, for example in the suburbs. They operate mostly with sedan vehicles and they do not have any scheduled trips.

## **2.7 Local Taxi Associations**

There are numerous local taxi associations operating in the Buffalo City. They are generally associated with the transportation of passengers from residential areas to industrial, business and shopping areas. Long haul routes to the major cities have been in place for some time. Expansion into the tourism sector can be seen as a logical progression for the organised taxi industry.

## **3.0 EXISTING ROAD NETWORK**

Buffalo City is served by an extensive network of national, provincial and municipal roads.

### **3.1 National Roads**

- the N2, runs from Port Elizabeth via Grahamstown through King William’s Town, traversing East London on the northern side from west to east.
- the N6, a national road which runs north from East London to Queenstown.

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### 3.2 Provincial Roads

- the R72, runs from East London south westerly to Port Elizabeth via Port Alfred.
- the R63, runs from King William's Town via Fort Beaufort to Somerset East in the west and Komga connecting to N2 in the east.
- the R352, connects Stutterheim with Tsomo in the north and to R63 near Dimbaza (via Keiskammahoek) in the south.
- the R67, links Fort Beaufort with Whittlesea via Seymour and Queenstown in the north and Grahamstown in the south.
- the R351, runs to the north from Whittlesea via Balfour and connect to R67 at Hertzog and through Cathcart to R61 near Bolotwa in the east.
- the R349, links the Kei Mouth with the N2 from the west.
- the R347, links the R72 with R346 near Fort Murray from the north.
- the R346, runs from King William's Town to R72 near East London Airport in the south and to Stutterheim in the north.
- the R345, runs from Alice through Peddie to Hamburg in the south and to Cathcart in the north.
- The R345 from the R63 to Hogsback

R72 and R67 are bitumen surfaced roads in good conditions. Most of these provincial roads are gravel roads that need surfacing as some existing tourist sites, for example Morgan's Bay, Hogsback and Hamburg are linked through these roads.

A map showing the Buffalo City road network and tourism nodes has been included in the report for reference purposes.

### 3.3 Municipal Roads

Most municipal roads that link to rural areas and to some tourist facilities are gravel roads that need maintenance. Gravel roads present major access problems in wet weather, becoming slippery and having erosion along their edges.

Comments regarding the main tourist attractions and facilities are included in Appendix B.

## **4.0 ACCESS ASSESSMENT TO EXISTING TOURIST FACILITIES**

### **4.1 General**

From Section 3 above, it is clear that road transport is the primary mode of transport for getting to and around Buffalo City. It is considered that most visitors arrive by road and access tourist facilities by road.

The provision and maintenance of a safe and comfortable road network is therefore of prime importance to the tourism sector. The Municipality is reasonably well served by national, provincial and district roads. There are areas where improved road access would be beneficial and routine maintenance is an on going function which requires attention.

### **4.2 Benefits of Good Road Access**

A well maintained road has real economic benefits for the road user and for stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Firstly, the smoother the road, the lower the vehicle operating costs. Fuel consumption is reduced and there is less wear and tear on tyres, shocks, exhausts, etc.

Secondly, there is the benefit of travel time savings. Destinations can be reached quicker, and the visitor will probably be in a better frame of mind when he gets there.

A further benefit is improved road safety. South Africa has a relatively high accident rate in world terms which has a real cost to the economy. As traffic volumes increase, improved road standards are required to prevent a corresponding increase in accidents.

Finally, it has been shown that better quality roads attract traffic. A tourist will be more inclined to visit a posted attraction if the access road can be seen to be in good condition.

### **4.3 Maintenance and Management**

A systematic management programme is essential for the proper maintenance of any road network. The management system would include day to day repairs to items such as surface cracks, potholes, traffic signals, road signs, guardrails and hazard markers.

Vegetation growth should be controlled, and stormwater drains and culverts kept free of silt and debris. These items are often referred to as routine maintenance.

In addition, periodic maintenance of the road surface is required in order to ensure the continued safety and integrity of the road. Bitumen roads need to be resealed at regular intervals of between 8 and 15 years, depending on traffic characteristics. For example residential streets carry less traffic than the R346, which in turn is a very quiet road compared to an urban freeway.

Gravel roads require regular blading and also need new gravel at intervals of between 6 and 10 years, depending on traffic, gradients and climate.

Other items requiring periodic maintenance include painted road markings, bridges (bearings and joints) etc.

To put the above into perspective, one can assume that urban roads and streets in a large town require resealing every 10 years. If there are 90 km of such streets then at least 6 km should be resealed every year just to maintain the status quo. At a cost of R 165,000 per kilometre this would translate to a minimum budget for resealing of around R 1.0 million per annum.

It can therefore be seen that the road maintenance costs for the municipality will be a significant component in its annual budget. In addition, consideration would have to be given to capital works for road improvements, for example upgrading gravel roads, safety improvements, etc.

#### **4.4 Current Road Access Problems**

A table of comments on identified main tourist attractions and facilities is included as Appendix B.

Many negative comments have been received regarding the condition of roads and streets throughout the Buffalo City. Particular areas of concern include the King William's Town CBD, some areas in the East London CBD and access roads to certain amenities.

The roads in the CBD are showing signs of stress such as cracking and potholes. There are also deformations which cause puddles in wet weather.

Gravel streets also give problems in wet weather. Erosion occurs next to steep sections of roads, stormwater drainage systems are blocked and the road surface can become muddy and slippery.

## **5.0 INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING TOURIST FACILITIES**

### **5.1 Water Supply**

It was evident from discussions with the municipal engineers that the current water supply is not seen as a limiting factor on development in the area.

East London and the surroundings are supplied from Bridledrift Dam and Nahoon Dam, whereas King William's Town, Bisho and the surroundings are supplied from Laing Dam and Rooikrans Dam. There is also Wriggleswade Dam that is under utilised and there is a back up support for these dams. The Amatole Water Resources Analysis concluded that the existing storage reservoirs of the system will meet the projected water demand to about the year 2010 if historical sequences were to be repeated.

In terms of water quality, Laing Dam was reported to have infiltration of nutrients but is constantly monitored by the Department of Water Affairs. Some comments were received from the community about the quality of water from this dam.

### **5.2 Sanitation**

Sanitation, specifically the sewage system, poses potential limitations to developments in certain areas.

Central Sewage Treatment Works, which serves Amalinda and Haven Hills, was reported to be operating at full capacity. Extensions to the reticulation network and / or additional development to these areas will result in the system having insufficient capacity.

Some of the tourist attractions use conservancy tanks because of the location to the network. Detailed assessment of the existing service must be considered before any major development could take place.

### **5.3 Electricity**

Eskom is the supplier of electricity for the Municipality. The Municipality has a distribution license for electricity.

There were no specific problems associated with the electricity distribution. However, sufficient notice must be given for any large or new development to Eskom for the upgrading of the supply.

#### **5.4 Telecommunications**

Effective telecommunications are essential for the tourism sector, with internet bookings and electronic payments becoming increasingly prevalent.

The Municipality is generally well served by Telkom's telephone landlines. Facsimile and e-mail facilities are readily available in the main centres.

Cellular networks cover virtually the whole municipal area. This is an important consideration in the event of visitors being lost or their vehicles breaking down.

With regard to safety and security, the placing of public telephones in public areas such as beaches should be encouraged. Many of the beach parking areas already have telephones but they are not consistently provided at all public amenities.

Telkom decides whether an amenity warrants a telephone, which depends on whether it is isolated and prone to vandalism. Unfortunately, the more isolated tourist amenities are less likely to be provided with telephones.

#### **6.0 TERMINALS & INTER MODAL FACILITIES**

Existing terminals are readily available for taxis, buses and trains in the municipal area. From our CPTR study of these facilities, it was found that some of these terminals need upgrading.

Important tourist inter-modal facilities are the East London Airport with its shuttle services to the CBD and surrounds as well as the two long distance bus transfer areas in East London, namely, The East London Railway Station in the CBD and the Windmill Road House in the Beach area. Local metered taxis are also utilised to assist in the modal transfer of passengers. There are no formal passenger services available at these two locations such as waiting rooms or ablutions.

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## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Existing Passenger Services**

From section 2, Existing Passenger Transport, the following can be concluded:

- Most visitors use the road to travel to Buffalo City.
- The East London Airport has the capacity to accommodate additional passengers.
- The Bulembu Airport is large enough and has the capacity to accommodate international flights.
- Expedition Airways will add value to the inland tourism with its flights that are due to commence in 2004. Cargo flights will also be made available.
- Investigations should be made concerning the utilisation of the East London Harbour for tourist purposes.
- Local taxi associations can add an advantage in the tour operations but organisation of the industry should be a priority.

### **7.2 Existing Road Network and Infrastructure**

Generally, the Municipality has a sound existing infrastructure. It is also well served by the existing road network national, provincial and district routes. However, there are some factors that may impact negatively on services to the tourism sector.

The findings of the assessment were summarised as follows:

- Roads to some of the tourist attractions need surfacing to improve access.
- District roads, in general, are gravel roads that need upgrading to improve town linkages. For example road R345 to Cathcart from Alice which is half gravel and remainder surfaced along its length.
- Some sewage treatment works are operating at capacity or nearing capacity. Investigation for new or alternative remedial measures needs to be considered.
- Bulk water supply projection for the Municipality is adequate in terms of water supply quality,
- Facilities at some of public amenities need upgrading. For example ablutions at Fuller's bay. Public telephone availability also require attention.
- Parking areas need upgrading at some of the identified attractions.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **PASSENGER VOLUMES & CAPACITY OF VARIOUS MODES OF TRANSPORT**

**APPENDIX B**

**COMMENTS ON ROAD ACCESS & FACILITIES**

**APPENDIX C**  
**CONTACT LIST**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **DRAWING OF EXISTING ROAD NETWORK & TOURISM NODES**

**APPENDIX E**

**ROAD DISTANCES AND TRAVEL TIMES CHART**