

# SAFE TAXIS CHARTER

## Preamble:

We are constantly hearing reports of women experiencing rape and abductions and all manner of abuse when traveling by taxi. While some politicians have denounced this violence, this is not enough. But unless we turn public outrage into real action by our leaders, we will continue to live in fear. Because women and children commuters expect safe, pleasant and reliable commuting in taxis and on any other public transport in Mzansi, Soul City in collaboration with other women centred organisations set out to call for contributions from South Africans on how to make the taxi industry safer for women commuters. This Charter therefore is a collection of those contributions and seeks to outline what should be done.

## Identifiability:

Women commuters must be able to tell which taxis are safe even before they board. We therefore call on the Department of Transport and all taxi associations to ensure that;

- Safe Taxis will be easily identifiable. These are those whose driver has been cleared by the Police, trained and certified as “safe”
- All drivers will be registered on a database and carry ID cards displaying their “safety accreditation”
- Every association will have its own uniform. This uniforms must be mandatory and be a punishable offence by law if not adhered to so that people can be able to identify between taxis and private cars.

## Safety and Security:

The Department of Transport together with all taxi associations operating routes in the country must prioritise women commuters’ safety. To this end;

- All drivers will have Police clearances.
  - All drivers will be vetted by doing thorough criminal checks. All those with previous sexual offences and gender based violence cases MUST be removed.
- All designated ranks will be well lit.
- There will be security in the taxi ranks who will work with a local Police station and assist female commuters at the ranks with any queries.
- Existing route monitoring by associations will be mandatory
- There must be a dedicated toll free/hotline number to report drivers
- Department of Transport will make it mandatory for employers to make available safe transport for workers who knock off late at night or early morning
- All taxis and taxi ranks will be gun free zones

## Technology

There must a deliberate leveraging on existing technology to ensure the safety of women using taxis and Public transport surveillance becomes therefore critical. To this end, government and taxi associations will;

- Invest in an application where taxi users scan drivers ID displayed on the window next to door before getting in.
- A driver rating application will be explored and used to score drivers.
- Ensure that taxis install CCTV cameras on all taxis as a prerequisite to operate and these must be monitored by an independent centre that will feed to a Police station
- The administrators can monitor taxis remotely and take action against any accidents/incidents. The video footage can also be used as legal evidence against damage or criminal action on the public transport.
- No taxi should go off-route. If they take a wrong route the central technical team must call to check why and where is the driver going.

### **Recruitment and driver development**

- All drivers to be hired and registered with their taxi association offices.
- To check all drivers against the Sexual Offences register.
- To open up the industry and create an environment that is welcoming for female Taxi drivers.
- Taxi drivers and owners will be sensitized on gender-based violence and encouraged to protect children and women.
- After conducting successful trainings on customer services, basic life skills and Gender Based Violence. Taxi operators will be issued certificates and put personalised stickers on their taxis that they are against abuse of women and children.

### **Accountability and awareness**

- Taxi associations will take greater responsibility in holding driver/owners accountable to safe practices
- There will be billboards at taxi ranks focusing on rape, harassment and law enforcement.
- The Department of Transport will work closely with the Department of Justice and Community safety in publicising all drivers/owners who been found guilty and sentenced in a court of law at all taxi ranks.
- Taxi Associations to ensure all taxis display complaints hotline information.
- Taxi Associations to produce monthly reports on how they are handling customer complaints.

## Regulation and law enforcement

The Department of Transport in conjunction with law enforcement agencies must

- Government will remove all unlicensed, uncertified taxis masquerading as “safe taxis” on the road.
- The Department of Transport together with Taxi Associations will monitor taxi routes to ensure that only taxis permitted to operate in any particular route do so to avoid taxi violence.
- Law enforcement on the roads will be beefed up and more police will be deployed to do radical taxi searches targeting various lawlessness.
- There will be harsher sentences to taxi operators who do not comply with set regulations with withdrawals of PDPs and route permits

While we recognise that we expect all of this from taxi operators/drivers/owners, we equally call on commuters to;

- Treat drivers with respect.
- Not behave in an inappropriate manner or provoke drivers
- Comply with the law

