



Interstate Bus Lines celebrates 40th Anniversary with 100th MAN

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Founded in 1975 by commuter bus pioneers, Abel Erasmus and Fred Kinneer, Interstate Bus Lines (IBL) is the largest passenger bus operation in the Free State province, deploying 253 buses with routes running between Bloemfontein and outlying rural areas including Thaba 'Nchu, Botshabelo, Brandfort and Soutpan. The company celebrated its 40th anniversary and the arrival of its 100th MAN bus at a gala event held at the Windmill Casino and conference centre just outside Bloemfontein on May 22nd 2015.

The event guest-list included the founding members of IBL (Kinneer and Erasmus), the executive board of IBL and MAN Truck & Bus SA Managing Director, Geoff du Plessis, as well as the Director General of the National Department of Transport, Pule Selepi. Other dignitaries included the Executive Mayor of Manguang, Counsellor Thabo Manyoni and MEC Butana Khompela (Department of Police, Roads and Transport). Executives from Caltex and Standard Bank were also present to celebrate their long-standing partnerships with IBL.

According to IBL's Chief Operating Officer, Christo du Plessis, "IBL transports between 22 000 and 25 000 passengers per day in one direction, operating services from 04H00 to 00H00 seven days a week. Our fleet of single buses and bus trains travels a total of 17 million km per annum, much of this on gravel roads."

IBL first introduced MAN buses to its mixed fleet in 2007. MAN commuter bus derivatives will towards the end of 2015 make up 45% of the IBL fleet including 74 MAN bus-trains, 34 MAN Solo buses and seven Volkswagen buses.

"MAN has played a pivotal role in our fleet rationalisation process over the last eight years. Our objective in 2007 was to standardise our fleet and enhance our technical efficiency. We have a MAN-accredited workshop which enables us to sustain a 99.8% trip cover ratio," explained Christo du Plessis.

MAN Truck & Bus (S.A.) (Pty) Ltd
Marketing & Communications
105 Andre Greyvenstein Avenue
Isando 1601

Head of Marketing & Communications
Patience Dumisani
Patience.dumisani@za.man-mn.com
Tel. +27 11. 928-6802

www.mantruckandbus.co.za
www.mantruckandbus.com/media

“MAN buses are capable of carrying more passengers than competitor models, improving our carrying capacity by 14% in the bus-trains and by 21% in the single buses. Fuel-savings delivered by our MAN fleet are another critical business benefit, with our MAN bus-trains using six litres less per 100 kilometres than our older bus-trains, while our MAN Solo buses are saving IBL seven litres per 100 kilometres travelled. IBL will in future replace all its old 65 seat and 100 seat capacity buses with MAN derivatives to optimise seating capacity and cost savings,” he added.

Both IBL’s bus-trains (115-seater) and Solo buses (79-seater) from MAN are based on the market-leading front-engine Lion’s Explorer HB4 bus chassis. The HB4 is ideally suited to commuter transport in rural areas, combining rugged construction with passenger comfort and safety features including air suspension and an advanced braking system. A Euro3 MAN diesel engine with automated manual transmission ensures optimum fuel efficiency and limited carbon emissions.

Following its management buyout in 2006, IBL has grown to become one of the province’s leading business enterprises with a broad-based empowerment stakeholding of 63% that includes employees, taxi associations and small bus operators.

Chief Executive Officer of IBL, George Mokgothu, stated: “the spirit of entrepreneurship that made IBL what it is today, continues to be nurtured in all divisions of our operation. Skills development is a key element of our strategy to offer excellent service and value for money to our customers and we now have a Merseta-approved technical training centre where we will have 55 apprentices towards the middle of the year undergoing a three-year training programme. We also have a highly efficient driver training centre that includes a medical facility to ensure driver wellness.”

MAN Truck & Bus SA Managing Director, Geoff du Plessis, said: “It is a great honour to be able to congratulate IBL on the occasion of its 40th anniversary. MAN too had humble beginnings over 250 years ago and shares the pioneering spirit that lies at the heart of IBL. We are also proud to be able to supply buses with bodies that are manufactured in South Africa in our own factory.

Every MAN bus built in the MAN factory in Olifantsfontein takes eight to nine-hundred man-hours of South African labour to deliver this fantastic product. The respect IBL has for all its stakeholders is inspirational and MAN looks forward to a long and successful partnership with the company as it moves into another 40 strong years of quality service delivery to the people of the Free State.”

The MAN Group is one of Europe's leading industrial players in transport-related engineering, with revenue of approximately €14.3 billion in 2014. As a supplier of trucks, buses, diesel engines, turbomachinery, and special gear units, MAN employs approximately 55,900 people worldwide. Its business areas hold leading positions in their respective markets.