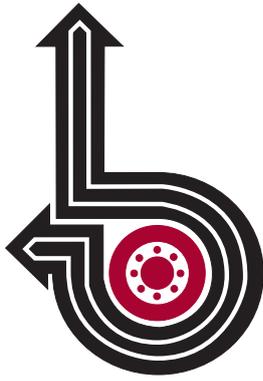


NO. 3 / 2017



SABOA BUS

VEHICLE OF COMMUNICATION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN BUS OPERATORS ASSOCIATION



AFRIWAY



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CBU imports skew bus playing field

Surviving – and thriving – as a manufacturer of buses and coaches is no easy matter. Is it even tougher for a local OEM, battling against imports, against other ‘local’ offerings which may not be quite as local as purported, and against manufacturers who focus on churning out volumes with scant regard for quality?

The challenges hammering the metal and engineering sectors in SA – cheap imports, unfair competition from countries cushioned by hefty state subsidisation, rising production and labour costs, the threat of strike action, and stagnant economic growth – have obvious ramifications for local bus body builders.

Busco member Willie van Zyl is a vociferous campaigner for local content and local production, but notes that local body building is captive to the inexorably increasing price of locally sourced steel as well as the threat of industrial action in the steel and engineering sector. Up to 98% of a Busco commuter bus is local content, according to Van Zyl, with that 2% that is not produced locally nevertheless sourced from local supply channels.

Van Zyl urges operators to take cognisance of the fact that they are transporting South Africans in their

vehicles. “How do operators expect to support international companies but expect local people to have jobs that require travel in their buses?”

If local production is not supported, there is little hope of creating the jobs that the country needs so badly. Government should be taking steps to make manufacturing for local manufacturers much easier and more cost effective, believes Van Zyl, instead of undermining local manufacture by allowing the influx of imports. Van Zyl cites the example of Swaziland, where manufacturers enjoy the benefit of electricity rebates as well as rates and taxes incentives geared to nurturing local production.

In the case of imported products, continues Van Zyl, once the customer has made the purchase he is generally on his

own, with little or inadequate support to be found. However, it is support – even more than the quality of products – that tends to determine the fate of brands, he says, noting that some of the great marques of the past are no longer around because of the failure of their support structures. Backup is a particularly important consideration in the bus segment: because the vehicles traverse the country, support has to be readily obtainable nationwide.

There’s ample evidence that staying power is a Busco hallmark: Sekhukhune Express, which first purchased 28 Predator buses in 2010, recently contracted for 24 new units. Local clearly is lekker.

Cindy Haler, Editor

On the cover: ERF UK sold its first truck in South Africa in 1934. From 1946 the company was represented by a distributor, before establishing ERF South Africa in 1964. A succession of MDs followed, with the operation in fairly dire straits by 1975: Dai Davies was seconded from the UK to determine whether it was viable for the company to continue its sojourn in South Africa. In January 1975, ERF did not possess a single order for trucks – and held no stock. Establishing and sourcing an acceptable model range was prioritised, along with expansion into the bus sector. What proceeded to emerge was a rock solid bus and coach lineup that included the Trailblazer, Super Trailblazer, Hawk, Kestrel and Kimberley, and the Cambrian coach: about 2 000 ERF buses and coaches were built, many hundreds of which continue to run on southern African roads.



SABOA BUS

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Committee continues to press for progress

By Jim Campbell

A range of informative presentations – ranging from a driver database, to a system aimed at reducing on-road risks, to a technologically-savvy ticketing solution – kicked off the recent meeting of the operations and technical committees, followed by an update on progress in tackling the various issues with which the industry continues to grapple

THE recent SABOA Joint Operations and Technical Committee meeting, held at the Premier Hotel in Kempton Park, was chaired by Des van Rooyen, who welcomed all present and accepted and recorded apologies.

He then welcomed Ray Karshagen, head of Iveco Bus, representing the meeting hosts. Karshagen gave a presentation on Iveco SA's parent company, the CNH Industrial group, and an overview of the companies within the group. These include Case and New Holland construction and agricultural equipment, Magirus emergency vehicles, Iveco/Astra heavy vehicles and the Iveco range of vehicles.

Turning to the Iveco company and its product range, Karshagen stated that globally there are 18 manufacturing plants producing light, medium and heavy as well as off-road trucks, and also a range of medium and large passenger vehicles.

The local operation, Iveco SA Works (ISAW), is based in Rosslyn, Pretoria and was established in 2014 following an investment of approximately R800 million. It employs around 330 staff, with a further 50 service and support staff.

The parts warehouse, located in Centurion and completed in 2015, currently holds in excess of 34 000 line items with a value of R132 million, and can offer a 96% service level to customers.

The Iveco SA dealer and service network has a total of 34 outlets within the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and also offers sales and support through 11 dealers to the RHD countries in southern and central Africa.

Driver Information Bureau

Karen Neary, MD of the Driver Information Bureau (DIB), described the driver database that the company has generated over the years and the benefits it can offer the bus industry. There is a diminishing pool of good, skilled heavy vehicle drivers – and statistics show that 20% of drivers cause 80% of problems.

There is no way of knowing if a driver applying for a new position may have been dismissed from a previous company as the result of a serious misdemeanour or driving incident and – for various reasons – there is no willingness for such information to be shared between companies.



Driver Information Bureau MD Karen Neary: a driver database, geared to improving driver standards and road safety, stands to benefit the bus industry

From a driver's perspective, a good driver with a stable and safe driving record is not always recognised, and evidence of this cannot easily be transferred with him to a new employer.

According to Neary, the DIB is a unique web-based solution that turns data into employment for drivers, and improved performance for transporters.

Should a driver wish to participate in the DIB system, information furnished by both his current employer and the driver is used. A grading system based

on one to five stars is developed for each individual driver and a PDE – Professional Driver Exchange – card issued to the driver, offering a number of benefits.

The transport company chooses the level of participation, which in turn contributes to the star grading awarded to the driver.

The intent of the DIB is to positively change driver behaviour: drivers benefit by way of various loyalty schemes based on his/her PDE card star rating. The overall goal is to improve driver standards and road safety. The system is positive, not punitive, and strives to be both accurate and legally compliant.

DriveRisk

DriveRisk’s Donald Urquhart gave a brief overview of the company’s driver behaviour and management solutions, geared to assisting in reducing on-road risks for both freight and passenger transport operators and the driver community.

A cab-mounted camera captures synchronised high resolution images of both a forward external view, and an internal wide angle view of the cab interior. Global Positioning Satellite



DriveRisk risk management consultant Donald Urquhart: DriveRisk has a number of corporate clients, including major bus operators, and is working with SABOA to extend its presence in the passenger industry

(GPS) data is also captured and synchronised with the camera images and actual time recording. The information is transmitted to the DriveRisk 24/7 data centre in Benoni, and then loaded to a web portal, for controlled access by the operating company to whom the vehicle belongs.

The information gathered is used to develop various reports about the vehicle and driver, which is presented

under a number of headings including Drive Report for driver and vehicle monitoring, DriveTrac for real time vehicle tracking, and DriveFuel for accurate monitoring of fuel usage on the vehicle.

Should a collision occur, the synchronised images from both cameras and a GPS location is recorded over a time frame of eight seconds before and four seconds after the event.

The company uses the data from video and caller reports to create a focused driver risk profile, allowing operators to establish a structured and proactive solution to driver management by way of real time video capture of events and driver monitoring.

DriveRisk has a number of corporate clients, including major bus operators, and is working with SABOA to extend its presence in the passenger industry, by assisting with driver acceptance, selecting a suitable action plan, and assistance with training and coaching for both company management and drivers.

TickiPay

TickiPay is a platform for the purchase and management of transactions that require ticket or voucher sales, and ease of payment

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Sam Mokoena: with its arsenal of ticketing innovations, TickiPay is seeking to expand its presence

for various products, including short and long distance bus journeys.

Sam Mokoena, managing director of the Pretoria-based company, stated that the 100% B-BBEE, South African grown company offers a number of solutions to bus companies. Under its TickiBus brand, with a focus on ticketing management for bus companies, it offers an internet and cloud based system that includes ticket bookings, secure payment, customer service, ticket management and reporting.

The system is available on desk or mobile devices to allow consumers ease of purchase and payment, via a range of computer or mobile device applications which are available via the Android Play Store or the Apple App Store.

Benefits to bus companies include the possibility of integration with existing ticketing systems, low or no capital cost outlay, increased sales channels and points of presence, and increased passenger satisfaction. Client payment options include credit, debit, and cash cards or EFT, and if the ticket transaction is through a retail outlet, payment can be made by cash.

The system also provides an easy

method to process refunds, together with improved management controls, access to strategic planning data and information, and lower operating costs.

TikiPay acts as the central control and management of all tickets sales and payments, and can generate statistical analysis and reports on sales and bus trip loading. At the time of the ticket sale, details of the ticket holder can be recorded, and fixed or open dates be applied to the ticket.

The company is hoping to have established 5 000 'point of sale' channels over the next three years, at sites such as retail stores, petrol stations, spaza shops and small corner stores.

Technical and operational matters

Following the formal presentations, issues pertaining to operating and technical matters were discussed. The chairperson briefly read through the minutes of the previous meeting on 24 May and matters arising from the meeting were discussed.

Driver database

Karen Neary of DIB was invited to the meeting in order to provide an overview of this topic, details of which are recorded above.

Driver Training Academy

This matter is still under discussion. Training material has been received from Teta and organisations have been approached to take the matter further and endeavour to formulate a business plan. Members will be kept informed as further information becomes available.

Permits for bi-articulated buses

Kathy Bell reported that all provinces with the exception of the Free State, Northern Cape and Western Cape have

indicated tacit approval for the operation of bi-articulated buses with a length in excess of the current 22 m overall dimension under 'Smart Vehicle Permits'. However, permits for these longer buses will only be issued if the operator has obtained RTMS certification.

Vehicle licence fees and CoR discs

The problem here is that licence validity is for 12 months while the Certificate of Roadworthiness (CoR) validity for passenger-carrying vehicles is for six months though both are displayed on the same disc. SABOA is looking for a satisfactory solution for this problem, possibly by way of a separate CoR disc. A meeting had been scheduled with John Motsatsing of the DoT on 22 August to discuss the matter, with the outcome to be reported back to members.

RTA and transport legislation technical matters

Ian Charlton has generated a schedule of National Road Traffic, AARTO Act and regulations, and SANRAL regulations with information on the current status of all the regulations listed on the document. This schedule was circulated.

Contracts and contract renewals

A number of issues were discussed relating to this problem, but there is still no satisfactory solution and discussions are ongoing. Members will be kept informed of the eventual outcome.

The next meeting will be 22 November, hosted by Hino at the Toyota auditorium in Sandton. Following the close of official proceedings, Iveco SA hosted a lunch for guests and visitors. ■

Strategic shift for strategic planning

By Cindy Haler

Altering SABOA's traditional strategic planning method is geared to sourcing input from as wide a base as possible. Four key issues were pinpointed during a strategic planning process that kicked off during 2016's Bus Indaba campaign

SABOA'S strategic planning has traditionally been carried out during a national session held at the beginning of the year in Gauteng, in which all Association members were invited to participate. In 2016, however, the council decided that strategic planning should take place at provincial level, in order to give more members the opportunity to participate and raise issues.

As a result, at the Association's Bus Indabas run throughout the country during 2016 participants were canvassed on challenges and issues they were dealing with. Input from the regional meetings was collated, followed by a strategic planning workshop for members of the National Council in January. Consequently, four focus areas were identified, on the basis of provincial feedback as well as input from Council members during the session steered by an independent facilitator.

The four key focus areas that the process identified, according to SABOA executive manager Eric Cornelius, are policy, empowerment, taxi intimidation and licence issues.

Policy

Policy is always a focus area, as it's such an important matter for the entire industry – and impacts on a host of other issues as well. "It relates especially to the contracting system and the uncertainties that still prevail," says Cornelius. "Many contracts expire in March 2018, but there is still uncertainty on the way forward after March because nothing is in place.

The contracts that are expiring are those that were extended initially on a month-to-month basis and subsequently moved to a longer-term basis, ranging from one to three years.

"There is still a question hanging over contracts. Are they going to be negotiated contracts, or contracts put out to tender? Will they be for a period of seven years, or 12? Those types of issues are all still up in the air, surrounding by uncertainty."

SABOA has requested a meeting with new transport minister Joe Maswanganyi to discuss this issue, as well as others identified during strategic planning. The Association is well aware that the Department of Transport (DoT) is in the throes of internal processes to secure approval for its Turnaround Plan, which is focused on obtaining more funding for public transport. The Plan hinges entirely on securing funding from national treasury. "If the department gets funding from national treasury, the way forward is much clearer. If, however, it does not, we're actually back to square one, which will probably see the continuation of short term contracts for another period of time."

Treasury has proven reluctant to provide additional funding in the past, because of lack of transformation in the industry. According to treasury, transformation entails devolving transport to the lowest level of government, namely local government. Local government, however, is simply not ready: there are no transport plans in place and there is little capacity at local level. This means that the



SABOA executive manager Eric Cornelius: the Association's strategic planning net has been thrown wider, with sessions in conjunction with Bus Indabas countrywide geared to giving more members the chance to participate and raise issues

transport function cannot be devolved to local government level – but national treasury remains adamant that this must happen before it can look at increased funding. While it's a difficult situation, Cornelius says that SABOA is hoping for success for the Turnaround Plan.

With many (if not all) provincial transport departments arguing that contracts were simply handed down to them and should be accompanied by funding, funding is provided by national treasury. It's a function of the national department of transport (NDoT) to approach treasury for the main funding

STRATEGIC PLANNING

in the shape of the supplementary grant. Although provinces have the discretion to deal with these issues, SABOA's experience indicates that they look to NDoT for guidance – and the Association believes that guidance from NDoT will be forthcoming.

One of the main issues in the NLTA is that of permits for operators: if permits had not been converted to operating licences, they expired in December 2016. SABOA had to exert pressure on the department for clarity, with the department eventually obtaining a court order enabling it to extend the validity of permits until the amendments are approved.

Empowerment

One reason for prioritising the issue of policy is because of its far-reaching effect on other issues – including empowerment. With the taxi industry and small bus operators seeking inclusion in the contracting system, a great deal depends on the funding issue, which falls under the policy banner. If more funding becomes available thanks to the Turnaround Plan, when contracts are allocated (and the impression is that they will be negotiated contracts), then the taxi industry and small bus operators are likely to secure a stake.

Cornelius is well aware that empowerment remains a sensitive

matter, but is crucial. As well as acknowledging the importance of empowerment for the industry, SABOA has an empowerment committee to look after empowerment initiatives for its members. The Association's constitution was amended some years ago to provide for SMME empowerment.

"We regard this as a very important matter for our industry, though a lot depends on the funding issue," says Cornelius. It is also important to get beyond the narrow-based view held by many small operators that empowerment is achievable solely by securing contracts from the major commuter operators. "Empowerment is much wider than just that." To create awareness of areas that have been overlooked, SABOA has embarked on empowerment workshops – with the first held in Mpumalanga gauged to be successful in establishing a common view about empowerment and what empowerment initiatives are.

At a recent National Executive Committee meeting it was resolved to establish provincial empowerment committees as members in provinces are more aware of business opportunities in their provinces than the national empowerment committee. A representative of each of the provincial empowerment committees will serve on

the national empowerment committee to provide feedback on developments.

The intention is to conduct workshops in other regions, facilitating discussions so that operators and the Association are on common ground. During the Mpumalanga session, awareness was raised that empowerment opportunities may lie in allied fields too, from tourism, to scholar transport, to starting small businesses affiliated to the bus industry, such as tyre outlets.

In addition, SABOA continues to circulate information to its branches for distribution to members as tenders are issued.

Taxi intimidation

SABOA continues to pursue solutions to intimidation unleashed by the taxi industry on bus operators – although no quick fix is in sight. A letter to former transport minister Dipuo Peters yielded the assurance that there would be no further intimidation by taxis on other modes of transport, but nothing changed. SABOA subsequently offered several proposals to the minister to aid in resolution, but made little headway. The DoT did facilitate a meeting between SABOA and Santaco and the National Taxi Alliance, during which taxi representatives said that the department's involvement was unnecessary and that bilateral talks between the two industries would suffice. However, SABOA's efforts to secure such a meeting subsequently have fallen on deaf ears.

A similarly promising meeting with the minister of police and a stakeholder manager has failed to achieve further action, while the Independent Police Investigative Directorate is prepared to act where a case has been reported but there has been no progress – but holds the view, with which SABOA agrees, that this is a regulatory problem that needs to be dealt with by DoT.

Cornelius believes that overtrading in the taxi industry is a large factor in the problem, as too many taxi operators scramble for too few commuters (a view which has been expressed in the media by a senior Santaco representative, who



Transport operators continue to grapple with a range of challenges, including policy and licencing issues, as well as the question of empowerment and growing intimidation by the taxi industry

STRATEGIC PLANNING

urged a moratorium on the issuing of permits). The problem is aggravated by the number of illegal operators, running without permits.

“There’s definitely a problem, but the department seems very reluctant to deal with it,” notes Cornelius. SABOA’s approach to the Public Protector was rebuffed on the grounds that it is a law enforcement issue, but the Association intends approaching the office again to try to provide a clearer understanding of the issue in the hope that the office will take it on. SABOA will also continue to press for progress with the new ministers of transport and police.

Cornelius emphasises the importance of members who have been the targets of intimidation campaigns to report incidents to police. “We know it’s very sensitive – particularly for smaller operators. We’re aware that they are being threatened with elevated intimidation and violence should they report cases to the police. We can understand that there is reluctance on their part, but we encourage members to report cases. At least if there is a case number, we can try to do something about it and follow up. Without any information of that nature, it becomes quite difficult.”

SABOA has compiled a report for the police on areas in which intimidation is being experienced,



SABOA collated input from members and Council representatives in the process of identifying key focus areas for the Association for 2017. This year’s round of Bus Indabas and strategic planning sessions is under way

without naming operators.

“Taxi intimidation is rife – and it’s increasing. While people will talk to you about it, they won’t put anything in writing. It’s a very serious matter and SABOA will keep pushing. We won’t stop.”

Licensing issues

The fourth focus area identified during strategic planning is licensing issues, with SABOA seeking to obtain standardisation – and lowering – of heavy vehicle licence fees across provinces.

Again, there is no quick solution in

sight, because this is largely a provincial matter and the provinces regard licence revenue as part of their income stream. However, licence fees can vary by several thousand rand from province to province, with the Western Cape the most costly, followed by Gauteng. Operators have to obtain licences in the provinces in which they operate. In the case of bus operators, this is crucial as the issuing of permits becomes highly problematic if the licence is not from the province from which the permit emanates.

SABOA is also campaigning for the issuing of separate licence and roadworthy disks to replace the current system of combining both on a single disk. While a licence disk is valid for 12 months, roadworthiness certification lasts for six months.

The third issue pertaining to permits relates to bi-articulated vehicles. Although the configuration has proven highly successful, additional permits have not been forthcoming.

“Those are the challenges we’re facing and that’s where we stand at the moment,” concludes Cornelius. SABOA’s Bus Indaba programme is currently under way, in combination again with strategic planning sessions to give members in all the provinces the opportunity to make their voices heard. ■



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SUPPLIERS

Predator's evolution benefits operators

By Cindy Haler

Throughout the evolution of Busco's Predator from a basic commuter bus to a high-spec semi-luxury vehicle, it has remained true to its roots: it's tough enough for operation in any conditions, it's built locally using local materials, its running costs are low, and it's backed by exceptional after sales and parts support and a highly experienced, passionate team

IT'S EASY to assure prospective buyers about the longevity of the bus they may be considering, but Busco has a visual record that provides compelling evidence of the durability the manufacturer claims for its vehicles.

Sekhukhune Express – which first joined Busco's Predator pride in 2010 with its purchase of 28 units – has recently taken delivery of 24 new Predator units, bodied on Scania F95

4x2 chassis. When the original units are compared to the new intake, the evolution of the vehicle is apparent, but the old units display sufficiently little wear and tear to make them difficult to distinguish from the new recruits, despite mileages ranging from 744 000 to 814 000 km.

Sekhukhune Express is a Buscor affiliate, ably steered by Anton Viljoen, Alan Parks and Leon Grobbelaar. The

operation is based in the mining town of Steelport in the Sekhukhune municipal region which straddles the border between Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The opening of the De Hoop Dam in 2014 guarantees the water supplies to sustain the region's platinum and chrome mining operations, which drive the area's economy. Sekhukhune Express provides transport for mine workers, as well as commuter transport services.

Sekhukhune Express has opted to standardise on Busco's Predator, as the bus body has proven its staying power





Sekhukhune Express buses, against the backdrop of the unforgiving terrain in which they operate

What’s noteworthy about Sekhukhune Express’s operations, according to Busco/ Busafrica member Mark Tiedemann, is the highly demanding character of the terrain. Although there is a fair road network linking most areas in the municipal region, the quality of the roads is generally poor and the bulk of Sekhukhune’s routes are on gravel.

The fact that the operator’s original 28 vehicles remain in sound condition despite the arduous operating conditions highlights the vehicles’ quality and durability, says Tiedemann, who asserts that there is little difference apparent in the condition of vehicles when old and new are placed alongside. What’s even more striking is the fact that the old vehicles have not been refurbished: they retain their original seats, which have not required retrimming, while the entrance steps and saloon are also still covered in their original material. “We’ve never had a single structural failure – or any failure, for that matter,” asserts Tiedemann. The vehicles’ durability over their eight years of operation has also ensured the retention of exceptional second-hand value.

The huge emphasis of the mines for which Sekhukhune Express provides transport was a key factor in standardising on the Predator, notes Tiedemann, along with the service the operator has received from Busco over the lifespan of the initial vehicles, as well as impressive cost of ownership

statistics, thanks to the vehicles’ reliability. “The customer has been really impressed with the new vehicles and the ‘creature features’ we’ve offered,” says Tiedemann (10 of the 24 units have been delivered and are in operation).

While the Predator has evolved from a basic commuter offering into its latest incarnation – the high spec semi-luxury Predator Supreme – it has never strayed from its initial design imperative, which was to serve in harsh rural conditions in demanding gravel road operation at maximum (or more) load capacity.

“We evolved – in response to demand from our customers – into the semi-luxury market and then up again into the high spec semi-luxury market. Even though it’s a semi-luxury vehicle,

it still has the structural integrity of a rural vehicle.”

Busco’s business comprises a balance of semi-luxury and commuter buses, continues Tiedemann, with versatility becoming increasingly important as the hiatus on the awarding of long-term contracts continues. This means that many operators are opting for dual purpose vehicles, for deployment for routine contract operation during the week but fit for special hire over weekends to enable operators to tap into additional revenue opportunities.

Tiedemann asserts that Busco has also established itself as the key supplier to the Namibian market, because of the Predator’s ability to handle the country’s



Old and new Predators blend in the Sekhukhune Express fleet

SUPPLIERS



The Predator Supreme places Busco in the high spec semi-luxury category.

dusty, challenging operating conditions – and look good in the process. “We don’t have competition when it comes to rural operations,” he says.

The Sekhukhune contract is a return to basics for Busco, as the Predator’s evolution has seen a move to features such as cloth seats, forced draught ventilation and DVD monitors to boost comfort levels. The evolution, however, has been built on the solid base that was established as the Predator went into full production in

2008: changes have been a case of fine-tuning and to enhance aesthetic appeal, as well as to ensure ease of access for servicing and maintenance.

“When we launched the Predator in 2008, we launched a product that had been well researched and developed. Through the years, we’ve learned from our customers what may be slightly better for each application. We’ve learned a lot about being more accommodating towards the mechanics, for instance, providing ease of access for

maintenance purposes. We have made the vehicle as maintenance-friendly as possible, introducing various tweaks and maximising robustness.”

Other enhancements include the introduction of fibreglass panels instead of steel in passenger and driver doors, as well as switching to LED lighting throughout for greater longevity. Ceiling and side panels are made of robust fibreglass panelling, while components are robust and durable.

Busco is vigilant about maintaining the quality of production, with components subjected to their first quality check as they enter the factory gate. “Whatever you’re prepared to accept on your production line becomes your standard, so we do not compromise when it comes to the quality and integrity of our vehicles,” says Tiedemann.

On completion, every vehicle is subjected to a 40 km gravel road test, ensuring that the vehicle will meet the operator’s requirements from day one. To Tiedemann’s knowledge, no other manufacturer takes vehicles on road test.

Another factor in which Busco takes great pride is the company’s top ranking in all the OEMs’ BBMQA scores, which analyse body builders’ quality performance.



Willie van Zyl and Mark Tiedemann: a Predator commuter body comprises nearly entirely local content – and what is not produced locally is procured through local channels

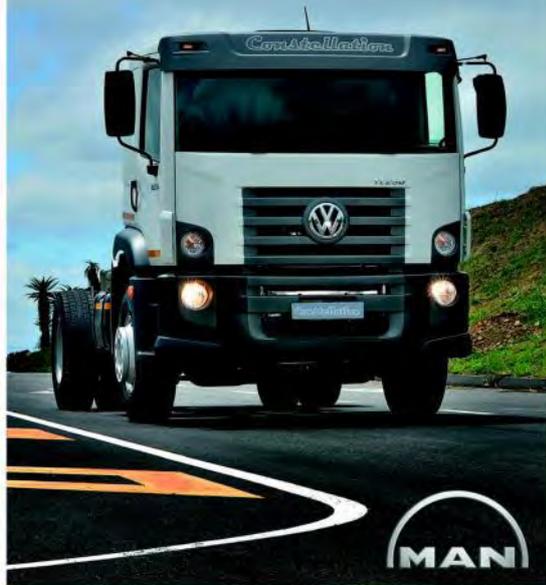
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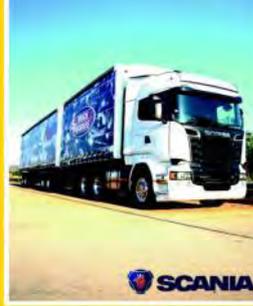


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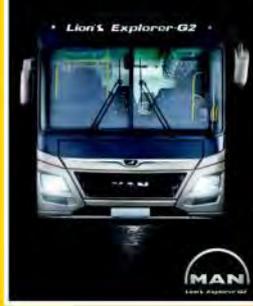


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