

#UNITE BEHIND

A JUST AND EQUAL SOCIETY

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03 April 2024

Mr Hishaam Emeran
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Private Bag X101
BRAAMFONTEIN
2017

Dear Mr Emeran and Mr Maseko,

RE: Bring Back the Central Line

The Central Line has not been running at full capacity since 2018 due to mismanagement, corruption, vandalism, and theft. The Line is now partially reopened but less than half of the line is serviced. The current state of the service is unacceptable: trains run intermittently and, at best, once per hour. A journey from Nyanga to Cape Town takes an inordinate time of at least 1.5 hours. Trains are overcrowded. There is often no information provided to commuters as to why trains are delayed. While the new, blue trains have improved people's security, commuters still feel unsafe on stations. All stations and trains are inaccessible to many people living with disabilities.

Despite repeated promises and commitments over the past six years, PRASA has yet again failed to deliver on its pledge to return the Central Line to full operation. Most recently, GroundUp reported an undertaking by Mr Emeran, the Group CEO, that the Line will be fully operational by the end of March 2024. This deadline has been missed, yet again.

Hundreds of thousands of commuters remain in the dark about when they can return to using the Central Line. We are forced to use expensive, unsafe, and inefficient alternative modes of transport. People have to spend more than 30% of their income on alternative modes of transport. Families are separated because they cannot use the train to visit each other. People lose their jobs and cannot look for work due to high transport costs. Businesses struggle to stay afloat. Children cannot get to school. People cannot access healthcare. Without a safe, reliable and affordable public train service, our constitutional rights are infringed, with far-reaching consequences for employment, education, healthcare and family cohesion.

The situation has been exacerbated by PRASA's and the City of Cape Town's failure to address the complex issues surrounding the illegal settlements along the rail line, demonstrating a lack of regard for both the commuters' needs and the dignity of those displaced. The inadequacy of basic services provided to these communities is a testament to this neglect.

We acknowledge that the situation is complex - thousands of people must be relocated so that trains can run again. As we advocate for the swift restoration of the Central Line, it is imperative not to overlook the dignity of those who have been and will be displaced.

We have witnessed first-hand the inadequate provision of essential services at, for example, Stock Road. This is where PRASA illegally dumped thousands of people living on the Central Line in Phillippi. There is inadequate access to water - people are forced to walk across train tracks and into other areas, often paying for safe drinking water from other communities. More than 4000 people share 90 toilets - each toilet is shared by 50 people. The City of Cape Town and PRASA must take effective measures to protect the welfare and dignity of indigent families affected by relocation..

We recognize the challenges involved in restoring the Central Line, but PRASA and the City of Cape Town have had long enough. The failures by PRASA, principally, as well as the City, highlight the urgent need for a Service Level Plan (SLP) between these two entities. PRASA has stubbornly refused to negotiate the SLP.

#UniteBehind, representing a broad coalition of affected citizens, demands that PRASA take immediate, tangible steps to restore the Central Line fully. We insist on a transparent, actionable plan that prioritizes the needs of commuters and addresses the welfare of those displaced by the necessary infrastructural adjustments.

Given the gravity of the situation and the insufficient progress thus far, we are compelled to make the following additional, non-negotiable demands:

- 1. Detailed Plan for Revitalising the Central Line:** PRASA must immediately provide its current plan for the upgrading of stations along the Central Line. This plan should detail improvements in safety, accessibility, and comfort for all users, particularly for those with disabilities.
- 2. Transparency in Tender Processes:** We demand full transparency concerning the tenders issued for the revitalisation of the Central Line. PRASA must publicly disclose the details of these tenders, including the criteria for selection, the entities awarded, and the scope of work to be undertaken. This transparency is crucial for ensuring accountability and public trust in the processes that affect their lives directly.
- 3. Revised Date for Reopening:** PRASA must set and communicate a new, realistic date for when the Central Line will be fully operational again. This timeline should be based on a thorough assessment of the current challenges and include built-in contingencies to avoid further disappointments and broken promises.
- 4. Service Level Agreement with the City:** It is imperative that PRASA signs a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the City of Cape Town. This agreement must outline the responsibilities of each party in the restoration and future maintenance of the Central Line, ensuring a

collaborative approach to solving the existing challenges. The absence of such an agreement has contributed to the current state of neglect and must be rectified immediately.

The urgency of these demands cannot be overstated. The ongoing failure to address the issues plaguing the Central Line not only infringes upon the rights of Cape Town's citizens to reliable and efficient public transport but also perpetuates socio-economic inequality within the city.

On 03 April 2024, we led a march from Heideveld station (currently unoperational) to Nyanga station in support of the above demands. We were joined by hundreds of activists from #UniteBehind,

We expect a prompt, comprehensive response to these demands, signalling PRASA's readiness to take decisive action and restore faith in its ability to serve the public interest. **We demand a response to this letter by Monday, 22 April 2024.**

Sincerely,

#UniteBehind