

**TOWARDS DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING LIGHT DELIVERY VEHICLES
INTO THE RURAL PASSENGER TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN VHEMBE DISTRICT
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ABSTRACT

This study stems from premise that Light Delivery Vehicle (LDV) passenger transport is a vital but not necessarily a safe mode in rural communities such as those in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Moreover, the lack of detailed scientific data and as yet illegal status of the service inhibit efforts made to strengthen it. Nevertheless, transport authorities in South Africa are beginning to consider ways of formalising the service. The overall objective of the study was to develop a model for integrating LDV passenger transport with the public transport system in Vhembe District Municipality. It was assumed that LDVs could be a suitable mode of rural passenger transport if appropriately modified and a supporting legislative framework was developed. Specifically, the nature and extent of the service within the wider transport context in Vhembe District Municipality were investigated. A mixed methods approach was adopted, applying both quantitative and qualitative procedures and techniques of data collection and analysis. Three quantitative surveys and a qualitative case study were carried out. The latter comprised focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observations and a document study. The purposively sampled research participants comprised 100 LDV operators, 100 commuters and 69 Administrators) using the snowball technique and based on their knowledge on LDV passenger transport.

The use and operation of LDV passenger transport was observed to be an established, regular, demand-driven, sustainable and expanding reality, operating alongside other transport services, especially in remote areas. A strong relationship ($P < 0.05$) existed between the reasons given for using LDVs and the municipalities where the respondents resided. The transport service was affordable and flexible, although it was not necessarily comfortable or safe. There was a strong statistical relationship ($P < 0.01$) between the level of satisfaction with other transport services and municipalities in which they resided.

Although the informal nature of LDV transport provided some short-term advantages to operators, various stakeholders (including operators of LDV transport) indicated that the formalization of the service would lead to long-term advantages such as improved service delivery, operating circumstances and increased customer base. In addition, LDV transport

operators were ready to comply with structural and other changes the authorities required, and indicated a preparedness to work alongside existing public transport services.

Using the study's findings and available literature a procedure or model for integrating LDV passenger transport with the public transport system in Vhembe District was developed. What are its main features? However, there is need for further studies that examine whether the proposed model for the modification and integration of LDV passenger transport is feasible and plausible beyond Vhembe District. There is need for policy and legislative reforms that allow use of LDVs as passenger-carrying vehicles, which entails insistence on fitting canopies, spelling out seating capacity, proper seats, issuing route permits and other safety-related measures specified by the South African Bureau of Standard (SABS) and Occupational Health Standards (OHS).

Key words: Light delivery vehicles, rural passenger transport, framework, integrating, model