

# Khayelitsha train service under siege from vandals



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## **KHAYELITSHA TRAIN SERVICE UNDER SIEGE FROM VANDALS**

One hundred and twenty incidents of vandalism since November last year have cumulatively crippled Metrorail's service in the Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain areas. Sections of rail track between Langa – Wetton, Langa – Philippi, Langa – Belhar, Woltemade – Goodwood, Lenteguur – Kapteinsklip and Stock Road – Chris Hani Stations are targeted between 3pm and 4am on Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays. Signaling Infrastructure is so damaged that trains are operating under perpetual contingency measures, thus resulting in major train delays and cancellations in these areas.

Regional Manager for Metrorail Western Cape, Lindelo Matya, said that the vandalized system had been compromised by ongoing asset destruction to the point where automated train control and traffic operations in the central service area are no longer possible. Vandals have been responsible for the destruction of 4 facilities, 5 train carriages, more than 110 signals, 17 points machines, 21 track boxes and assorted cables since the start of the strike action. Twenty nine tracks are down, points are clamped in 42 areas and train drivers are receiving up to 38 manual authorisations per trip.

One hundred and seventy three trains have been cancelled and 2,503 trains delayed due to vandalism. Whilst contingency measures ensure safe operating conditions, it also leads to long delays. In some instances delays of 3 hours have been recorded, leading to commuter backlash. This excludes the consequential delays and impact on other lines, employers' productivity losses and the strike's impact on the local economy. The total cost of the strike to Metrorail exceeds R23million.

Matya explained that the rate of vandalism has outstripped the rail operator's capacity to repair assets and suppliers ability to provide sufficient stock for replacement: *'Whilst our efforts to repair and bring back trains into service in the last 6 months had materialized resulting in all required trains for scheduled services available, this has been severely hampered by these cowardly acts of vandalism'*.

To minimize delays for commuters and compensate for loss of capacity and reliability Metrorail has as a contingency re-introduced special express bus services in this area until the network is restored to its normal automated signaling operation. These special supplementary services alleviate congestion on busy routes between Chris Hani – Cape Town, Kuyasa – Cape Town, Nonkqubela – Cape Town, Nolungile – Cape Town, Stock Road - Cape Town and Khayelitsha – Cape Town. Like before the buses express between six stations and Cape Town Station during peaks and do not stop *en route*. The Khayelitsha Express has also been replaced by a bus service for the next few days.

