

INTERSTATE BUS LINES REACHES THE NEXT LEVEL WITH TOMTOM TELEMATICS



VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Transports
over 50,000
passengers daily

The Company

Founded in 1975, Interstate Bus Lines has grown to become a leader in the public transportation sector in the Free state and operates in the area that includes Thaba Nchu, Bloemfontein, Botshabelo, Soutpan and Brandfort. The operation comprises a fleet of 253 commuter buses and 32 luxury coaches through Big Sky Coaches and employs 800 people. The company transports over 50,000 passengers daily and its buses travel more than 17 million kilometres a year.

Interstate's primary business is providing public transport services to commuters in and around Bloemfontein on behalf of the provincial government.

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management systems

The Challenge

When Imperial Holdings acquired a majority stake in Interstate Bus Lines in December 2016, the operation was already one of the best in the Free State transport industry. However, with the new acquisition, Interstate looked to boost productivity by introducing new fleet management systems based on the most modern, innovative technology. With a growing fleet, Interstate urgently needed a system that would also improve its passenger engagement and gather detailed insights on customer satisfaction. Previous tracking systems were failing to support the company's objective of safe, efficient and prompt delivery of passengers. For instance, faulty tracking devices meant drivers were at risk of getting lost and controllers couldn't identify drivers or the status of vehicles. Furthermore, the company was unable to access historical data so it could plan for the long-term, improve its service, and allocate resources daily. "We'd had a lot of problems with drivers telling us that the batteries on their tracking devices had died, which is unacceptable for us," says Robyn-Leigh Hudson, planner at Interstate Bus Lines. "From a safety and service delivery perspective, we need to know exactly who is in which vehicle and where they are at all times.



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Interstate also operates in rural areas where maps weren't previously available. This presented a challenge as Government needs companies to account for every vehicle, prove they were at a specific location at a specific time, and adhere to public transport schedules.

The Solution

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According to Hudson, it took eight months for the company to interview and find the right telematics company. When Interstate finally met with TomTom Telematics for a demonstration of the WEBFLEET fleet management and vehicle tracking system, the choice was easy. "Before we worked with TomTom, we struggled to access our data, which meant that an open API system was extremely important to us," Hudson says. "Also, we wanted a company that would be willing to work closely with us and take the time to understand our needs in a real partnership." Following a full diagnosis of Interstate's operation, TomTom Telematics compiled a comprehensive plan to meet the company's unique requirements. As Interstate has its own workshop, TomTom conducted extensive training to ensure that its team of skilled technicians and artisans were well-versed in the system. "It was refreshing to find that the system doesn't restrict how the devices are installed," Hudson says. "TomTom supplied the hardware needed to manage our business, along with the administrative passwords to access the system from the cloud, so we can fix any problems immediately as they arise. This has minimised delays and ensured our operations run at optimal levels." Additionally, the system was fully integrated with Interstate's existing fuel management system, which yielded substantial cost savings. "Ultimately the choice was an easy one to make, as WEBFLEET was the only system to meet each of our specific requirements, which included accurate tracking, updating locations every minute, and a driver identification system that doesn't rely on battery power," she says. WEBFLEET updates every 20 seconds using a card identification system for drivers, significantly surpassing Interstate's requirements. Whether used in a single car or a national fleet of hundreds of vehicles, TomTom Telematics' WEBFLEET system leads to improvements in driver behaviour, substantial fuel savings, and enables seamless connection to an ecosystem of third-party solutions, such as office applications, Bluetooth® wireless technology devices*, temperature sensors, tyre pressure monitors, barcode scanners, printers and various display terminals.