

# GETTING THE SPEED RIGHT

Lusaka, Zambia



Photo source: Local South

## Introduction

Zambia is using GPS technology to track speed on public service vehicles (PSV) in an effort to improve road safety. This is rooted in a government initiative spearheaded by a dedicated official who was deeply concerned about the unnecessary loss of life attributed to human error on the roads.

Angela Chansa is the Road Traffic Inspector and Fleet Safety Coordinator at the Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA), and has been the engine behind the programme from the outset.

From laying out the foundations of the system to building its reporting mechanisms, Angela has spent the last 5 years promoting the initiative. In the early years, even during her time off, she would check the dashboard to see whether or not drivers were complying. No wonder she became known as the “GPS Lady”, a name she says she wears with pride.

## Saving lives

Based on [RTSA Status Reports](#), human error stands out as a significant contributor to Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs), responsible for over 87% of reported incidents. Among these, driving at excessive speeds emerges as the primary cause of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs).

This prompted government to think of a mechanism that would target public service vehicles as they carry large numbers of passengers on a daily basis and their infractions cost many lives.

Given the limited human resources to enforce speed limits, they saw the potential solution in a relatively inexpensive technology. In 2016, a [legal instrument](#) – the Road Traffic Global Positioning System Regulations – was adopted to sanction the initiative, which was officially launched in 2019. In 2024 it continues in a slightly different format and aims to transform both public transport and trucks.

**Today, the regulations require all public service vehicles to be equipped with a tracker which gets checked regularly when vehicles go in for service and at road blocks. Additionally, traffic officers monitor speeds via cameras and are able to identify drivers who might not be utilising the device, while having the ability to intercept them on the road.**

Strict penalties are enforced for non-compliance with GPS regulations, ranging from fines and mandatory defensive driving lessons, to license suspension or revocation, and vehicle impoundment. These measures serve as strong deterrents.

## Getting users on board

To get buy-in from drivers, Angela and her team made a personal appeal, reminding them that at stake was their own lives as drivers and their families as users.

For fleet owners, they highlighted the possible savings on fuel and maintenance costs from reducing speeding.

Even though government paid costs for the first year, operators had to comply thereafter with subsequent costs. They could do this using any service provider, as long as they submitted log in details to the Agency to enable speed monitoring.

## Creating a new normal

The programme is generally considered a success because of the rapid adoption of the technology and reductions in speed.

**According to Angela “in 2019, there were 399 buses and 133 operators on GPS, which increased to 1770 buses and 540 operators by 2024”. Similarly, speed violations went down from 424 in the first quarter of 2023 to 144 in the fourth quarter.**



Angela Chansa during a TV interview  
Photo source: Angela Chansa

One of the early challenges came, surprisingly, from passengers who complained about buses going too slowly, compared to what they were used to. However, according to Angela this changed as the number of buses with trackers installed increased and the new speeds became the norm.

**These days, with the [fleet safety management policy](#), Angela explains, it is much easier to ensure that companies have a system in place. She recalls a recent conversation with an operator who proudly told her in the last month there was not even one incident of speeding.**

When asked about results and what makes her most excited, she says that seeing the drop in violations, which reached up to 90% reduction, demonstrates to her that the programme is working.

Furthermore, Angela believes that it contributes to overall road safety improvement when analysed in conjunction with other interventions such as the [night ban](#) on buses which are not allowed to operate from 10pm to 4am.

## Learning from other African cities

When looking at the future, Angela says that more data mining is what the programme needs to evolve. During the [ACRoS exchange for Cities on Road Safety](#), she says that seeing Cape Town's traffic management centre gave her some practical ideas about how to go about introducing more data-based monitoring and analysis

Angela also explained that following the ACRoS exchange, she presented a proposal to her department to introduce the idea of incentives for bus drivers, which entails recognition and healthy competition across Zambia's regions.

