

Mellowcabs to hit SA streets in 2016

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Mellowcabs are low-cost, emissions-free, electrically powered vehicles that you'll find noiselessly zipping through South African city streets in the coming months. They're not just an alternative form of transport though, they also serve as mobile billboards.

Designed and manufactured in South Africa, we interviewed Neil du Preez, inventor and founder of Mellowcabs, to learn more about these nifty little micro-vehicles.



■ *When will we start seeing MellowCabs on South African roads?*

We're launching the new model very soon as we're gearing up for full-scale production now. We're launching in a big way with at least 40 vehicles deployed in SA within the next four months. People love Mellowcabs; they are fun, efficient, and a really good experience.

■ *What inspired the modular design for MellowCabs?*

The design philosophy centred around creating a powerful, light-weight design that conveys the message that we are leaders in reinventing public transport through cutting-edge innovation, while shaping urban landscapes to welcome back natural elements. We wanted to imagine the Mellowcabs as leaves blowing in the streets, almost like living organisms floating and streaming through our concrete jungles.

We also hope that the fresh flowing lines of the new Mellowcabs will inspire advertisers to create powerful visual messages that will have a lasting impact on the public, and that we have given them a desirable and engaging platform for their creative marketing campaigns.

Joining forces with design experts Ideso, the team reimagined the short distance electric cab, seeking to create a vehicle that is at once cutting edge in terms of technology, yet be approachable and even familiar to the user. Drawing inspiration from the word "mellow", we have attempted to design a cab that would bring a smile to the faces of all who see it. It's modern and friendly and fun at the same time. The Mellowcab has a presence without being obtrusive.

The user experience for the Mellowcab has received special attention. The passengers have ergonomic command-post seating, while entry and exit are unimpeded. While seated, the passengers have a great view from the cab. They also have access to an interactive tablet mounted on the rear of the driver seat. Being transported in a Mellowcab will not just be a mode of transport, it will be an experience!

■ ***Were there any design-related hiccups during the process?***

Lol, of course. Taking a large project from concept to production-ready will always be super challenging. To make things even harder for us is the fact that we have to take so many factors into account; passenger safety, vehicle performance, roadworthy regulations and testing... the list just goes on and on.



■ ***The MellowCab is emissions-free? How does that work?***

Transportation produces approximately 23% of the global CO2 emissions from fuel combustion.

Electric vehicles running only on electricity have zero tailpipe emissions, but emissions may be produced by the source of electrical power, such as a power plant. In geographic areas that use relatively low-polluting energy sources for electricity generation, EVs typically have a substantial well-to-wheel emissions advantage over conventional vehicles running on petrol or diesel.

Mellowcabs has zero direct tailpipe emissions. However, we have indirect emissions resulting from the production of electricity process.

■ ***MellowCabs provides not just transport, but advertising opportunities. Have any big brands bought into the idea yet?***

Yes, several big brands have shown strong interest. Our vehicles will be providing positive brand recognition services in high-value areas. Plus they are cool.

■ ***How do you see MellowCabs integrating into the current public transport offering without ruffling current transport providers' feathers?***

It's a difficult market where we have to tread lightly as to not step onto any toes. Mellowcabs will typically operate in a limited urban radius of 3-4km, and will not compete with other transport systems such as trains, buses, but rather feed into and complement existing networks.

■ ***What role should design play in addressing South Africa's challenges?***

South Africa's product designers have an extraordinary situation as we are in Africa and faced with third- and-first-world problems on a daily basis. All of these problems are just begging for solutions. Solutions dreamt up for South African problems are very relevant to first all the rest of Africa, and the developing world. The first world can also learn a thing or two from us.

For more on Mellowcabs, go to www.mellowcabs.com.

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