Gauteng toll roads: 86% of Gauteng motorists not willing to pay proposed rate

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Synovate speaks to Gauteng motorists on the costs and impact of proposed toll fees.

Sixty-nine percent of Gauteng motorists state that they would be happy to pay to use the toll roads if the amount is significantly reduced. This is according to the release of Synovate's poll into toll road fees conducted amongst Pretoria and Johannesburg drivers. Fieldwork took place after the assembly of the Minister of Transport's committee to review the costs of the toll roads.

Three-quarters of the respondents indicated being happy with the newly renovated highways. Overall 69% are willing to pay to use them...but not at the current proposed rate of 66c per kilometre. Only 10% of those surveyed agree that it's worth paying the rate of 66c per kilometre, whereas the overwhelming majority (86%) disagree that the roads are worth this amount, with the balance of 4% undecided. Following political and public outcry, the Minister of Transport has convened a committee to review the cost of the new toll roads. New tariffs are expected to be announced at the end of April.

When initial discussions on the toll fees began, 12c per kilometre was bandied as the amount Gautengers expected to pay. 86% of our respondents agreed that they would be happy to pay this amount, although 14% were still unhappy with this reduced rate.

Only 35% of respondents believe that the money generated from the toll fees (whatever the final amount is) will be used appropriately, such as for maintaining the highways. Not even a third (28%) believes that SANRAL will adequately manage the payment process. "This lack of trust towards SANRAL might stem from the fact that provincial governments and Gauteng residents feel that they were not sufficiently consulted about the cost of the roads or how the money would be spent at the outset," states Roger Gibbs, Synovate Director.

There was larger proportion of respondents disagreeing (49%) than agreeing (37%) that electioneering was the motive for political parties such as the SACP, DA and COSATU to denounce the system. The balance of respondents was undecided.

In terms of communication around the toll system, 57% of respondents indicated that they are fully aware of how the new toll system will work, with 42% showing uncertainty. Forty-six percent have already calculated their approximate extra cost per month. At the initially proposed rate of 66c per kilometre, R1140 is the average amount they estimated to be added to their monthly travelling costs.

Impact of the toll fees

Motorists were probed on how the new toll roads would affect them financially and in terms of their location and daily commute.

Sixty-three percent state they will be forced to use alternative routes and avoid the highways altogether, even if the fees are reduced. "Higher toll fees might be counter-productive if a high proportion of Gautengers choose to use back roads instead," states Gibbs. "This will also put heavy pressure on traffic and the roads through the residential areas of Pretoria and Johannesburg."

Thirty-nine percent foresee having to consider alternative transport arrangements. Of those considering this, only 24% state that they actually have sufficient alternative methods available to them.

Just over a quarter would consider relocating if the original toll fees are retained.

About the Survey

Synovate's Toll Road survey was conducted between the dates of 24 Feb and 2 March 2011.A total of 300 Gauteng motorists were interviewed in Johannesburg and Pretoria. 51% of those interviewed use the affected roads daily, with 24% using them 4 - 6 times per week. Respondents were asked about their awareness of the system, financial impact, willingness to pay and implication in terms of travel and place of residence.

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