

Moving South Africa forward this Transport Month

An effective transport and logistics network is a fundamental building block for a country to be competitive within the global market.



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As South Africans conclude the celebration of Transport Month this October, under the theme “Together we move South Africa forward”, the campaign highlighted transport development and services as well as flagship projects delivered across all modes of transport including public transport and road safety.

This year, a special focus has been given to infrastructure challenges within the transport sector and how to better manage issues such as the ever-rising cost of fuel and the effects on the economy.



Transport infrastructure remains a chief vehicle for economic growth

Herbert Phahlane 16 Oct 2018



The World Bank has committed almost \$7bn towards transport programmes in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on mainstreaming climate action to improve the resilience of infrastructure. But it is not only climate change that is impacting the sector across the continent.

In South Africa, for example, deliberate train vandalism is costing the government not only in terms of repairs costs but also in lost productivity. Given how the transport industry is touted as a chief vehicle for economic growth, now is the time to combine technological innovation with uniquely tailored solutions for the country.

Grant Fraser, COO of MiX Telematics (Africa), says that one of the biggest obstacles and ever-growing challenges for the transport sector include the increasing price of fuel.

“This has created a knock-on effect impacting everything from fleet management through to the prices that consumers pay for retail items. With budgets coming under immense scrutiny, business owners need to look at ways to become more efficient using fewer resources. The focus must be on how technology can be embraced to optimise systems and operations while still delivering on expected service levels in the sector.”

Transport networks must be enhanced

Riaan Graham, sales director for Ruckus Networks, agrees and believes that for the country to realise its potential to develop smart cities for a digital world, the underlying transport networks must be enhanced through targeted investments.

“South Africa and many other countries on the continent have had many years of under-investment in infrastructure. Much of the attention was placed on the basics of maintenance, but transport networks must now be revitalised not only in this country but throughout Africa and become more efficient means to enable the creation of smart cities,” says Graham.

On the one hand, it is the physical infrastructure that needs to be developed while on the other it is about optimising transport fleets.

Fraser feels that the telematics industry has an important role to play in this regard.

“A good fleet management solution provides fleet owners with vital business intelligence to determine everything from route optimisation to driver behaviour. Data is an indispensable tool needed for any business, irrespective of size, industry, or geographic location. By unlocking the value of the data provided by a fleet management solution, operations can be further enhanced to reduce costs, improve efficiency and essentially add profit to the fleet business,” he says.



Mobility and exponential technologies

Simon Carpenter 18 Oct 2018



Building from a strong telematics base, Graham argues that mobile connectivity (especially in the context of Africa) will also be instrumental in driving change in transport.

“The continent is in many instances considered to be mobile-only. Being connected is no longer a nice to have but an imperative. The same applies to the transport and logistics networks. Mobile technologies must permeate every facet of the infrastructure of a country. Ultimately, it is about combining all available technologies, integrating them with transport and logistics, and delivering previously unthought of business insights to create a more economically active country that is positioned strongly for the digital future,” he concludes.

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