

PRESS RELEASE

CESA'S POSITION STATEMENT ON GAUTENG FREEWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Amid the furor and the fact that this matter is *sub judice*, Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA) is in support of tolling South Africa's national freeways and in particular we support the principle of user-pays for the ***Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project***.

While there are various methods to fund major infrastructure, it is imperative to weigh up the cost of providing a service and who ultimately pays for the service against the level of service provided. It is important that Government acknowledges its responsibility to provide a basic and acceptable level of service for among others; water, sanitation, housing, communication, energy, education, health and mobility. Where mobility is concerned, there is an obligation on national government, provincial government and local government to agree on the level of basic service and who provides what and at what cost.

The provision of road infrastructure for urban use is the responsibility of Provincial and Local government who work in collaboration with South African National Roads Agency Limited to provide adequate services. One of the reasons for congestion of the national routes as they bypass urban centres is that the national road networks are designed to be integrated with the urban networks allowing urban users easy access to use national road facilities which could be reserved just for long distance high speed users

We are fortunate in South Africa to have alternate roads to most, if not all our national tolled roads. The basic principle is that national freeways are designed to move large volumes of preferably high occupancy vehicles, long distances with the required level of safety, speed and emergency services which may be needed. The complication comes in when the national freeway systems pass through urban centres and 'join' with local urban traffic.

Mixed use is a sensible approach as we cannot afford the luxury of separate systems. Accordingly urban users must pay the required charges if they wish to use national freeway infrastructure with the concomitant higher level of service this infrastructure provides. Generally urban users have access to alternate road infrastructure, but these are often inadequate from a congestion, quality, safety and emergency access point of view.

CESA's position is therefore clear. For those commuters who wish to use the upgraded facilities of the Gauteng freeways which provide a higher level of service from a safety, accessibility, speed, reduced congestion, lighting and rideability point of view, the principle of user-pays by the implementation of a tolling system is the right way to go provided that there is at least one alternative available to users which meet a basic minimum level of service at no cost to users.

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