

Jo'burg, Tshwane voice concerns over e-tolls

Johannesburg and Tshwane have told the R10m advisory panel charged with assessing the effect of e-tolling in Gauteng of their concerns at the socioeconomic consequences of the system's implementation on their residents.



Gauteng Premier David Makhura's advisory panel has started its hearings in Midrand with representation from organised labour unions. Image: [TruLegal Media](#)

While the 15-member e-toll panel only has the power to gather information from stakeholders, compile a report and submit it to the office of Gauteng Premier David Makhura, its establishment has raised hopes of a review. However, this is an unlikely outcome given that e-tolling is governed by national legislation.

The advisory panel's open hearings started on Wednesday (27 August) with oral submissions from labour federations.

Panel Chairman Muxe Nkondo told Business Day on the sidelines of the hearing that panellists had met Johannesburg City Manager Trevor Fowler and Tshwane Executive Mayor Kgosientso Ramokgopa to discuss the socioeconomic effect of e-tolling on residents.

"We had comprehensive sessions with management from Johannesburg and Tshwane. From Johannesburg we picked up on the need for efficient public transport systems and investment in infrastructure.

Tshwane residents deeply concerned

"The Tshwane mayor and one of their economic experts made a submission which had to do with the work-and-home distance and its impact on low-income households. They are concerned," Nkondo said.

In an interview earlier this week, Johannesburg Mayor Parks Tau said the city had made preliminary submissions to the e-toll panel.

"The premier was correct to establish the panel. It opens the conversation which was lacking at the point of implementation. It is up to us to ensure this panel assesses the full impact of the implementation of the toll roads. Those things have to be part of the debate," Tau said.

Johannesburg Mayoral Committee Member for Transport Christina Walters said that while the city welcomed e-tolling, it needed to provide adequate public transport networks to attract people who drove cars, thus reducing congestion on roads.

"We have to encourage the one person alone in the car to take to the public transport mix. That is the challenge. If we don't have a good infrastructure, we can't move goods, we can't move people and we can't move services, and will be behind the rest of the world in productivity," she said.

Survey of public transport efficiency

She said the city had outsourced a survey of about 72,000 Johannesburg households on access to, and standards of, public transport. The data showed a high reliance on taxis and underscored a need to connect networks of different modes of public transport.



Tshwane Mayor Kgosientso Ramokgopa says the residents of Tshwane are deeply concerned about the financial impact of tolls on income levels for everyone. Image: [Tshwane](#)



Member of the Mayoral Committee, Christine Walters says the city needs to provide adequate public transport networks for commuters from all walks of life. Image: [Joburg](#)

A Tshwane spokesman confirmed that the metro had made submissions, but could not immediately provide the details requested.

During yesterday's hearings, labour federations recommended a fuel levy and marginal increases in vehicle licence fees along with company tax increases to fund road and infrastructure developments instead of the adoption of the user-pays principle inherent in e-tolling.

Congress of South African Trade Unions Gauteng Provincial Secretary Dumisani Dakile said the recapitalisation of transport infrastructure had died a natural death because of business collusion in state projects to inflate prices.

He also said that since its launch, Gauteng's e-tolling system had forced some small businesses to contemplate scaling down operations or retrenching staff due to the

additional expenses.

National Council of Trade Unions Head of Policy Thulani Khumalo recommended a process to review e-tolling's effects. This could be formed by the government, business and labour, facilitated by the National Economic Development and Labour Council. A parliamentary committee could discuss the process.

Federation of Unions of SA spokesman Junior Gys proposed that tolling be scrapped and registered users of freeways be refunded for all tolls paid.

The advisory panel is due to hear from business representatives on Thursday (28 August).

Source: Business Day via I-Net Bridge

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