

# Smarter mobility may be the answer to curbing SA's carbon emissions

By [Ben Pullen](#)

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The Carbon Tax Act has recently come into effect in South Africa with the aim to penalise large emitters of greenhouse gases to minimise the climate risks that hydrocarbon fuels present. This, however, has a knock-on effect on consumers in the form of raised fuel prices and potentially increased living costs.



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As such, it is vital for the government to consider ways to minimise these financial implications. This is especially important in South Africa, as even in wealthier and more economically stable countries like France and Australia, efforts to increase carbon taxes were abandoned following a backlash from protesters over the rising costs.

However, according to a recent report by the International Monetary Fund, carbon tax is the best way to cut greenhouse gas emissions, as it allows for a reduction in energy consumption, favours cleaner energies and provides much-needed revenues which could be used to finance sustainable and more inclusive growth.

With this in mind, global and local backlash should not deter the South African government from implementing such policies, but should rather serve as an incentive for it to reinvest in the country by using the revenue collected from the carbon tax to support the introduction and roll-out of new smarter mobility, such as electric vehicles or increased public transport.

This will ultimately serve as a good way to hamper the use of carbon-intensive products such as internal combustion engine vehicles and provide a cost-effective, inclusive and sustainable solution for citizens.

The transport sector is a huge culprit when it comes to polluting the atmosphere and subsequently our cities, and according to [citycarbonfootprints.com](http://citycarbonfootprints.com), Johannesburg ranks as the 13th worst polluted city in the world. Therefore, in order to become a zero-emissions society, the electrification of transport is vital.

## **Implement environmentally friendly alternatives**

The good news is that the government has already begun implementing several initiatives, including the use and selection of environmentally friendly transportation alternatives such as electric vehicle fleets at the City of Tshwane, Department of Environmental Affairs and Trade and Industry in Pretoria.

Initiatives like these, as well as the continuous development of solutions such as the Gautrain, are already positive steps towards innovations away from vehicle use. Ultimately the goal would be to work towards creating an environment where vehicles are not needed and instead bikes, scooters and public transport can be used, or the vehicles that are used are either electric, hybrid or reduced through car-pooling and ride hailing services.

To do this, a shift from asset ownership to mobility as a service needs to take place, where the focus is more on mobility getting people from A to B instead of them needing to own a car. Afterall, most private vehicles spend over 90% of the life sat parked idle. As such, a lot more effort needs to go into providing a range of safe, cost effective and sustainable mobility solutions.

South Africa has already taken a bold step towards making this a reality with implementing the carbon tax and through the Department of Transport signing into law the first Green Transport Strategy. Hopefully this will continue to drive the adoption of a sustainable and economically stimulating solution to curbing carbon emissions not only in South Africa, but throughout the entire continent.

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