

## **Is transport connectivity enough, what about sustainability?**

Transport systems and infrastructure are the lifeblood of any economy. It facilitates the movement of raw materials to manufacturers and final products to market. Without it, the economy simply would not function.

However a great deal of emphasis is placed on connectivity when addressing transport needs, but what about sustainability? That is the question posed by Roger Gorham, transport economist and urban development specialist at the World Bank.

“In Latin America and Asia, sustainability is front and centre, but in Africa this is a key missing piece that needs to be brought into the national consciousness of transport debates. Africa instead has emphasised its efforts on connectivity and how to make it happen, but connectivity alone will be illusive and won’t have the desired multiplier effect,” says Gorham who will be speaking on sustainability and transport at the upcoming Southern African Transport Conference (SATC) taking place at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Pretoria from July 7-10, 2014.

Thinking of accessibility can be fleeting, but a lack of thought on sustainability as a whole could be washed up by congestion or poor air quality.

“My sense is that in post-apartheid South Africa, a large focus for the government has been on how to connect places that weren’t previously connected. The real focus now should be a shift towards understanding how to sustain those connections,” says Gorham.

Africa is at the very beginning of an urbanisation process that others have gone through, and this presents an opportunity to prevent unsustainable solutions from forming.

So, what is it that we want to sustain?

According to Gorham, focus should be placed on accessibility, natural resources, social relationships, the social fabric of cities and finance.

### **Accessibility, natural resources, social relationships and finance**

“We need to make sure that we have a climate that will behave into the future. We also require sustained human health and people need to trust in road safety. This specifically refers to vulnerable users such as pedestrians and cyclists,” says Gorham. Therefore sustainability has to be top of our agenda. More thought should be placed on the effects on the fabric of community and infrastructure. This relates to how to build roads, rail and BRT’s. The relationship between people and government is significant in this regard. . “We all know about the mayor that comes into office who thinks that they need to build something to prove that he can deliver. Sometimes this is rushed and this could create more damage than benefit,” adds Gorham. Finance is equally important. Governments need to consider whether adequate systems are in place to pay for the transport infrastructure they develop.

### **Africa’s awakening**

This is the time for Africa’s awakening around transport.

At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders, along with thousands of participants from the private sector, NGOs and other groups, came together to shape how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on an ever more crowded planet.

The official discussions focussed on two main themes: how to build a green economy to achieve sustainable development and lift people out of poverty; and how to improve international coordination for sustainable development.

At Rio+20, more than \$513 billion was pledged to build a sustainable future. It signalled a major step forward in achieving the future we want. This presents a great opportunity for Africa with the billions available for transport over 10 years.

But does Africa have a pipeline of transport projects that can take advantage of this billion dollar budget?

For more on this topic, attend the Southern African Transport Conference (SATC) taking place at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Pretoria from July 7-10, 2014.

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*The Southern African Transport Conference takes place from Monday 7 – Thursday 10 July at the CSIR International Convention Centre Pretoria, South Africa. For more information or to register book your tickets at [www.satc.org.za](http://www.satc.org.za). This year's theme – Leading Transport into the future – will look at topics that will address solutions to improve transportation in southern Africa. The conference attracts many local and international speakers.*