

PRESS RELEASE

AECOM continues to build on its track record in the rail industry

28 September 2018: Integrated infrastructure development company AECOM plays a key role in identifying the need for railway projects, conceptualising these, assessing the feasibility, undertaking the planning, designing the services and infrastructure, assisting with the procurement, and then managing the construction and quality.

An international leader in railway design projects, AECOM's recent local track record includes clinching the bid to design, procure, and manage the construction and commissioning of the Dunnottar-based Gibela Rail Transport Consortium train manufacturing facility as the main Engineering, Procurement and Construction Management (EPCM) consultant. This factory is now in production, with the first train sets being expected later this year. A particular health-and-safety achievement at this project has been two-million lost time-free (LTI) injury hours to date.

Located near Johannesburg, the 50 000 m² manufacturing facility was constructed as one of its kind in Africa. Gibela aims to deliver 580 six-car electric train units comprising 3 480 coaches planned to revitalise commuter rail transportation in South Africa.

"This new manufacturing facility is a positive and proactive initiative to increase the volume of rolling stock available in South Africa, and to replace dated technology. It will contribute towards the country's capability to create jobs locally and reduce imports, with obvious exchange rate benefits. More importantly, it helps provide the local railway market with modern equipment," **Johan Venter**, AECOM Rail Market Sector Director for Africa, comments.

"A lack of skills and capacity are probably the main factors behind the rail industry being unable to contribute to its potential towards the development of South Africa, and also Africa. Often one of the main challenges is that decisionmakers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the resources and assistance available to them from professionals and experts," Venter highlights. These comments are from Venter's perspective of his involvement with the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link, which also had a strategic objective to grow rail technology development in South Africa.

This is where companies like AECOM can play a vital role. EPCM companies are essential in large multi-disciplinary projects such as new or upgraded railway systems. These EPCM companies manage the design, procurement, and construction of such infrastructure. "One needs an enthusiastic team of experts willing to overcome any stumbling block with solutions that guarantee success, at the lowest risk and least total cost," Venter adds.

Another critical issue is planned maintenance. Engineering covers everything from identifying needs and challenges to identifying optional solutions, assessing these solutions, selecting the best one, and then implementing it to be both effective and efficient. Once implemented, it is required to apply the same skill sets towards maintenance, operations, and management to ensure continued success. Projects often do not fully meet their strategic goals due to a lack of attention to operations and maintenance.

Engineers help to focus planned maintenance. A lack of engineering involvement implies infrastructure not performing optimally. This is quite transparent in local roads and streets, where potholes, unsafe road shoulders, non-working traffic lights, and other obvious deterioration soon indicate insufficient maintenance.

This is not as evident for railway systems, as they have long design lives and impacts are noted much later. However, insufficient maintenance is becoming evident in the increased number of train

derailments, train accidents, people being killed and/or injured, and increased train delays and cancellations.

In addition, the railway network is not being extended to reach new development areas, while the popular and efficient high-speed railway systems found in most developed countries are not yet available in Africa. "A lack of rail engineering ultimately means that the quality of life for all is not improved to the extent possible, jobs are not created, economic growth cannot take place or is constrained significantly, with the effect that our people remain poor," Venter elaborates.

South Africa needs to grow its economy by nurturing the transformation of small businesses into international players. For example, AECOM itself has a formal Supplier Development Programme that assists such companies in becoming self-sustaining. However, the main challenge facing South Africa – and the rail industry in particular – is that government spend on major projects has been derailed.

It is not all doom and gloom, though. Venter mentions that recent involvement in projects in South Africa – for example, the Gibela railway electrification, Majuba Rail, the Tambo Springs terminal, and the Gautrain, as well as a large number of opportunities in Africa – indicate that some important decisionmakers realise there is, indeed, a light at the end of the tunnel if railway development can be used to promote job creation and economic development.

"As a country, we have to make inroads in attracting private-sector investment in long-term projects such as rail. We should all put shoulder to the wheel to get the economy to grow. Investing in large feasible infrastructure projects such as new railway lines will contribute significantly towards job creation and economic growth," Venter concludes.

Ends

Notes to the editor

To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click on the AECOM link to view the company's press office.

About AECOM

AECOM is built to deliver a better world. We design, build, finance and operate infrastructure assets for governments, businesses and organizations in more than 150 countries. As a fully integrated firm, we connect knowledge and experience across our global network of experts to help clients solve their most complex challenges. From high-performance buildings and infrastructure, to resilient communities and environments, to stable and secure nations, our work is transformative, differentiated and vital. A Fortune 500 firm with about 90 000 employees and involvement in some of the most iconic projects in the World, AECOM had revenue of approximately \$18.2 billion during fiscal year 2017. See how we deliver what others can only imagine at aecom.com and @AECOM.

Media Contact

Renay Tandy
NGAGE Public Relations
Phone: (011) 867-7763
Fax: 086 512 3352
Cell: 082 562 5088
Email: renay@ngage.co.za
Web: www.ngage.co.za

Browse the **NGAGE Media Zone** for more client press releases and photographs at <http://media.ngage.co.za>