

Chapter1 The Problem

1.1 INTRODUCTION

One recent Friday night in central London, Corinne Truss spent 4½ hours driving five kilometres to one of her catering jobs. “I called the police, and they said people had been sent out to direct traffic,” she remembers. “But they where stuck in traffic” ... During the salad days of London traffic in the 1970s, when Margaret Thatcher proclaimed that “nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of the great car economy,” cars blazed through London at 12-14km/h during rush hour... Today, however, the average traffic speed in London is just over 9km/h. On some key roads, it has slowed to 2.9 km/h- slower than horse-and-cart days, slower than the rats running in the gutters...

Traffic is like water: it oozes across all available surface.” (Time : 38)

This is the truth and irony of traffic in the great cities off our globe.

This is also true in South Africa.

1.2 REMEDIES TRIED

Some desperate attempts to solve this problem included closing the city centre for cars for 2½ hours in Athens, September 2002. The aim: to encourage Greeks to use public transport. The traffic jams caused by this rough medicine made the carbon monoxide level to spike by 50%.

Another Greek attempt entailed alternate-plate driving days, where number plates are allowed every other day. This only resulted in car ownership to rise: drivers simply purchased another car with another number plate so that they could drive every day

Other examples include a charging scheme as in Singapore where each car that enters the city passes a sensor that reads a “smart card” installed in the dashboard .0,5 To 3 Euro, depending on the time of the day is automatically deducted.

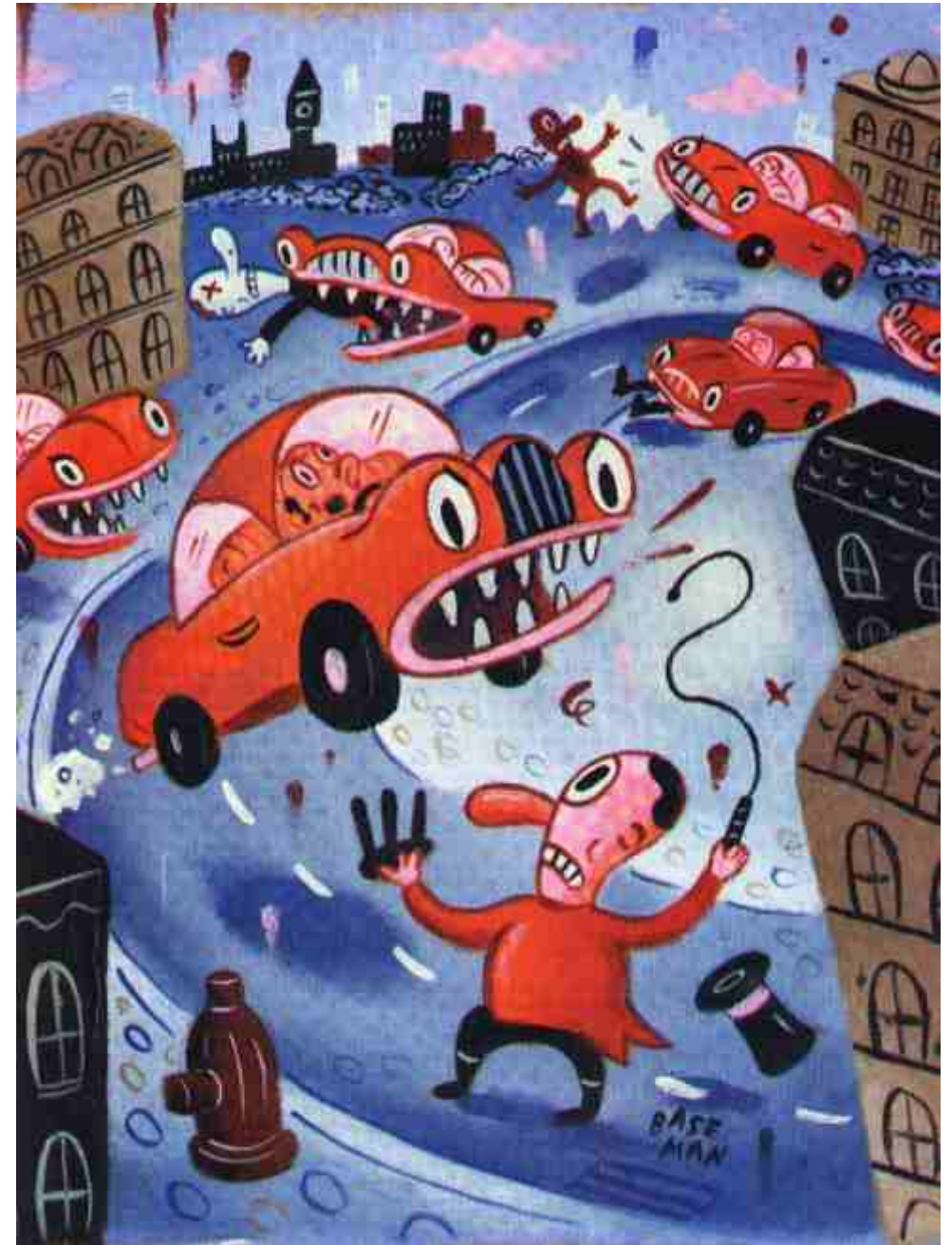


Fig 1.1 Time p36

This method seems to work, but drivers resent the system and sometimes simply pulls over to the shoulder of the road waiting for 7pm when they can get by for free.

(Time: 40)

It is evident that rough medicine is not the solution, and that the challenge still exists to find a solution for this global problem.

1.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The phenomenon of traffic congestion is also present in South African cities, especially in the Gauteng area, the economic hub of South Africa responsible for 36% of the Gross Domestic Product whilst covering only 2% of the total surface of the country.

The Johannesburg to Pretoria corridor is the fastest growing development hub in South Africa. Increasing road traffic congestion in this area is constraining the development. (Gauteng Department of Public Transport, Roads and Works, October 2002, Vol 2: 1-4).

Making matters worse are the high incidence of accidents due to factors like deteriorating roads, unroadworthy vehicles, and fraud when it comes to the issuing of drivers licenses, roadworthy tests, etcetera.

An announcement was made in February 2000 by the Premier of Gauteng Province, Mbhazima Shilowa, that could be the solution to South African and probably International traffic problems. This will be discussed in chapter two.

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Chapter 2: A traffic solution for the Gauteng area

