

# **TRANSPORT A CATALYST FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study critically discusses the issue surrounding the transport department of S.A from 1994 to 2015 looking at the performance. The study has recognised that transport is a crucial catalyst for economic development. Several studies have looked at this research topic and they figured out some of the issues that are hindering development on department of transport (DOT) and their recommendations were that the government should significantly invest in rail transport to reduce pressure on road transport. Another study also came up with that strategy of traffic calming to reduce the volume of speed on cars. Studies figured out that factors like congestion, safety, health issues and drunk driving as challenges that are driving affecting the smooth operation of the department. The recommendation of this study among others is that the department speed of refurbishing and constructing roads. In addition stop and goes along the road should be minimised through quick projects construction to avoid traffic congestion and road accidents. Since transport plays a major role in the tourism sector which in turn contributes immensely to economic growth, South Africa should improve the roads that leads to tourist destinations. The transport department should also refurbish and construct roads that goes to different rural parts of the country as this will create employment and reduce the rural to urban migration.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper is going to critically discuss issues surrounding the transport infrastructure department of South Africa, its contribution to the development of South Africa that is in terms of economic growth .It is also going to talk about some of the challenges that are being faced by the transport department that maybe hindering its development towards improving the economy through job creation. Furthermore this paper will also look at the state of the transport sector from 1994-2015 analysing if whether they were improvements or not. The study is also going to cover the social economic status of South African citizens based on the problems of poverty ,inequality, rural urban migration, health disparities and unemployment .This paper is going to conclude by discussing some of the measures that can be implemented to help the transport department to become successful and promote economic growth ,through creating employment this will alleviate poverty and reduce inequality levels ,reducing the high rate of rural urban migration and lastly developing economies of scale and scope.

## **2. THE STATE OF THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN SA**

The government played a very crucial role in giving the multi billion rand to the department of transport in the year 2011. In the year 2012 again the government gave out an amount of 66 billion rand, in the years 2013 to 2014 it accelerated to 80 billion rands (SAinfo, 2011). This offer improved the transport sector it created numerous jobs and tourism opportunities across the country. The improvement spread to urban and rural parts of South Africa. This resulted in the transport department being recognized as the world class quality. The government has worked harder towards uplifting South African economy from the apartheid inspired historical, geographical marginalization of the majority of the population and many years of under investment in the public transport sector (SAinfo, 2011).

The South African government through the transport department has focused on ensuring vibrant, effective, safe, reliable and affordable transport for the public. Some achievements on South African transport sector were greatly appreciated worldwide. The aviation infrastructure which was awarded the reports only A, was stated as the country's best performing infrastructure by the South Africa Association of Civil Engineering. According to the released report South Africa's road network developed from good to excellent with the SA national road agency, Airports company South Africa and the National Ports Authority performing extremely well. OR Tambo International Airport was listed as the best airport in Africa according to the 2011 reports and it was also part of the best three most improved airports in the world, at the world airport awards which was held in Denmark (SouthAfrica, 2011). The government planned an 18 years project aiming at developing rail transport 97 billion was budgeted to upgrade the railway over the 18 years. The money will be used to refurbish rail coaches and also improving the passenger rail system (SouthAfrica.net, 2011). The transport sector developed the Gauteng province by introducing a Gautrain as a mode of transport to optimize incorporation and ensure safe and convenient transfers between Gautrain and other public transport models

Billions of rands have been spent towards improving the road transport since 1994. In 2010 a nationwide programme was introduced in order to address road maintenance particularly on deteriorating secondary and rural roads. The program created chances for new emerging contractors and job creation across the country. The Federation International Football Association (FIFA) world cup also encouraged the government to create a conducive environment for the outsiders (visitors from other countries). The government assisted the department of transport in investing billions of rands to ensure a reliable, safe and efficient system. The investment included a customer focused and world class airport, improved train stations, upgraded coaches to luxury buses and incorporated rapid public transport networks.

## **3. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS**

In realizing the challenges that are being faced by learners who attend a distance far away from their homes, the department of transport introduced the rural scholar transport programme. In the year 2011, 360 000 learners benefited from the program nationally (Nikelwa, 2014). The department of transport has developed over the years this means the number of learners who are benefiting this year 2016 has increased

from 360000 of 2011. The department of transport and Shova Kalula in partnership with provinces and municipalities and private sectors have distributed about 177730 bicycles (Nikelwa, 2014).

The urban population is growing in South Africa and predictions state that more than 85% of the South African population will be living in urban areas come 2050. Large towns and cities have been producing more than 80% of the national gross value added and metros were growing twice as fast as other cities. Poverty continues to rise particularly in townships, informal settlements and inner cities despite the urbanization informal settlements, townships and inner cities have been experiencing extreme and increasing poverty. Rural and Urban areas are becoming increasingly incorporated as a result of better transport.

### **Economic growth**

Firstly South African citizens, municipalities and provinces should be aware of the importance of the transport infrastructure department and its contribution towards economic growth. The transport sector is a very significant component of the economy and a commonly used tool for development (Venables, Laird & Overmoon, 2005). This mostly exists in a global economy where economic opportunities increasingly related to the movement of people, goods and information. The quality and quantity of transport infrastructure often counts to the level of economic development. Highly connected networks and high density transport infrastructure are commonly associated with high levels of development. Efficient transport systems often provide economic and social opportunities and benefits that results in positive multiplier effects such as employment and additional investment (Venables, et al., 2005).

Transport sector carries a very important social load which cannot be neglected. The transportation industry can be viewed in two important perspectives namely macro and micro economic level. At the macroeconomic level the importance of transportation for the economy as a whole is that the mobility it confers are linked to the level of output, employment and income within a national economy. In many developing countries for instance the transport department contributes 12% of the GDP. The importance of the transport sector the micro economic level is that it is linked to producer, consumer and production costs. Usually higher levels of income are associated with a greater share of transportation in consumption expenses. Transportation accounts on average between 10% and 15% of household expenditures (Senguttuvan, 2006).

## **4. HOW CAN IMPROVEMENT IN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

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## **5. SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE BEING FACED BY THE SA TRANSPORT SECTOR**

The transport department is facing a challenge of deficiency in terms of capacity and reliability of transport this results in economic costs such as lower quality of life and reduced opportunities (Rodrigue&Notteboom, 1998).Inefficient transportation increases costs. The second challenged being faced is congestion caused the provision of free or low cost transport infrastructure to users .Nevertheless congestion can also be viewed as an indication of a growing economy were infrastructure and capacity have difficulties keeping up with the rising movement demands. South Africa is in desperate need of a sustainable and viable public transport system. According to the South Africa National Taxi Council taxis transport roughly 15-16 million commuters daily which is about 71% of the community public labour force. This industry is plagued with safety and health issues and a record of poor driving and death .This mainly is caused by unskilled drivers and those who drink and drive (Oxford, 2013).

The other challenge is the condition of roads particularly in the Eastern Cape Province. The South African roads lack maintenance especially those that are in rural areas. Lastly under the challenges is the issue of profitable foreign tonnage transported by road transport in the country (Henderson, 2016) .The use of road infrastructure but tonnage freight has been increasing over the past years .The increase is primarily due to fluctuations and accumulating needs of South Africa supply chains and a number of challenges faced by the rail operator such as low service levels, lack of flexibility and capital; investment delays. This puts an enormous pressure on the road infrastructure most of which is already in a bad state (Henderson, 2016).

## **6. MEASURES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPORT SECTOR**

There are complimentary measures that are designed to improve public transport. The main purpose of this design measure is to improve urban viability, improve sustainable transportation and also public transportation operations. These complimentary measures includes viable streets and traffic calming (McCann & Rynne, 2010). Traffic calming are designed to reduce the volume and speed of cars using local streets. Traffic calming is important for public transport because it helps create an environment where pedestrians can walk and bike more safely and conveniently. This makes it easier and more pleasant to reach public transport. The department of transport should create a policy measure to drive home the drunk public.

The transport sector should improve on the time taken when refurbishing and constructing roads. Stop and goes along the road should be minimized through quick project construction to avoid traffic congestion and road accidents. Roads leading to tourists destinations should be maintained regularly so as to attract tourists from abroad this will lead to economic growth as the country will be earning foreign currency from the tourists who come from other countries. The Dot should improve sea transport to avoid congestion on the road infrastructure. The transport department should refurbish the rail infrastructure multi-billion of rand should be allocated to the rail infrastructure to improve its transport systems. If the rail transport is refurbished the commercial freight tonnage will use the rail rather than straining the road infrastructure which already in a bad state. The Dot should try to upgrade the public transport networks to make them more convenient and reliable so that those individuals who use their personal cars to work will leave them home and consider going to work with Gautrain this will reduce congestion in big cities like Gauteng and Cape Town. The transport infrastructure should try to build up roads with different routes that goes to the rural parts of the country this will create employment and also reduces the rural urban migration.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The study covered some trends in the transport departments since 1994, the study also identified the crucial role which the government played during the years 2011 up to 2014 through funding the department of transport. Since then the transport infrastructure has been improving rapidly. Transportation and the mobility it confers are linked to a level of output, employment and income within a national economy. In many developed countries, transportation accounts between 6% and 12% of GDP. South Africa's transport sector contribution to GDP features at the lower end of this spectrum (Department of transport, n.d). The Dot also helped the rural learners who come far away from their homes to school by introducing a scholar transport and it provided bicycles to some other rural parts of the country. The world cup 2010 contributed to a better South Africa the government improved the transport industries particularly road airport. The study managed to identify some of the major challenges which are hindering the growth of transport infrastructure. The study then came up with some important measures which if implemented could improve the department of infrastructure.

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