

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY: THE GREEN TRANSPORT POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Emissions from the transport sector in South Africa account for 13.3%, an increase from 10.8% in 2018, of the country's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, making them the second largest after energy. There are also indirect emissions mainly from production, refining and transportation of fuels themselves

The Green Transport Strategy (GTS), approved by Cabinet in 2018, commits the country to significantly reducing GHG emissions in the economy, primarily driven by the globally accepted sustainable development principles, for both mitigation and adaptation.

Mitigation is more imminent. The list of opportunities include: Implementation of the modal shift of rail friendly cargo from road; demand reduction measures; more efficient vehicle technologies; and alternative / lower-carbon fuels.

On the adaptation side, the most challenging global externalities in transportation, for South Africa today are two-fold; the direction the whole world is taking, putting emphasis, for example on NEV (new energy vehicles) and the pressures of the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and income inequality. Rural development and capacity building, within the careful guidance of just transition, can play meaningful and significant roles in advancing the overall objective of the GTS.

Since its approval and publication, the GTS has been implemented in various forms and at different level of government. There is also growing co-operation in planning with the OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) as more EVs (electric vehicles) powered by lithium batteries and by hydrogen fuel cells are being produced.

Neatly divided into ten 'pillars' that make it easy to track and trace impacts, the GTS is the cornerstone, a first point of reference for guidance on greening of the transport sector. Whether it has been successful or not in realising its immediate and short-term goals, remains to be tested, in the near future.