

# Trends defining mobility in our cities

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Mobility is often described as any city's cardiovascular system where just like the heart a city needs a well-functioning system that runs smoothly with no blockages. The reality in South Africa is that the transport system is both ineffective and inefficient and is unable to cope with the demand of the growing urban population. Cities are growing so rapidly that by 2050 it is expected that 2.5 billion people will live in African cities, doubling our current population. A search for a better way of life and more income opportunities means that the attraction to cities is only going to increase.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

This explosion brings with it a host of challenges, especially in the transport sector, on which the public heavily relies. The options are plentiful and include buses, trains, bicycles, motorbikes, taxis, e-hailing services, private cars, and planes.

The trends we see taking shape as workable solutions to the challenges faced by cities include a much more collaborative effort from various roleplayers. The only means to respond to this reality is that cities must convene and converge by embracing technology, and shifting towards people-centric planning and development in order to ensure our cities support and respond to climate change and the needs of communities.

## Ensuring safe options exist

Safety in totality in South Africa remains a growing concern as crime statistics increase each quarter with no feasible solution on how to curb this problem that is crippling the country. With millions of people on the road, each day in search of opportunities safety is without a doubt top of mind for many of them.

Ensuring that people travel in a safe and convenient manner is an important aspect of quality transport. There is a unique opportunity for technology businesses to partner with the government where information and data can be used to ensure law enforcement uses mobility data and information to target how it confronts policing and what type of infrastructure makes sense in certain areas.

The introduction of e-hailing services in South Africa six years ago continues to be an important roleplayer within the broader South African transport sector providing an important mechanism for passengers to utilise across cities and towns. . Today the e-hailing industry has proven to be a great addition to the sector with the transparency and accountability it has provided.

For instance, drivers are screened before taking the wheel and part of this screening is to ensure that drivers are in possession of a professional driving permit (PrDP). As the industry continues to grow issues such as driver impersonations threaten the safety of the platforms however with interventions such as selfie verification there is hope that safety exists on e-hailing platforms.

## **Data sharing to make cities work better**

The transport industry is rich in information that can benefit cities in making informed decisions about making infrastructure work better for cities and the people that reside in them. For example, information around areas that have no lighting that makes it difficult to commute as well as potholes or badly damaged roads that cause accidents.

From a safety perspective, providing insights such as areas with the highest robberies to enable the police to put in place roadblocks and increased police visibility makes people feel safer.

## **Clearer regulation framework**

In the mobility space e-hailing has been misunderstood since its inception and many in the transport space have called for the industry to be regulated.

While a lot still needs to be done great strides have been made in South Africa with developments and progress around the National Land Transport Amendment Bill (NLTAB) an important step to establish e-hailing as a distinct mode of transport, that will enable the sector to grow and to both create economic opportunities for drivers but also provide an important option for passengers across the country to access opportunity.

As the relationships with regulators improve this will make it easier for better partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders such as the police where information will be shared to help contribute to the fight against crime.

## **Embracing micro-mobility**

Addressing urban mobility challenges in South African cities requires both public transport and spatial planning strategies. The lack of a well-functioning public transport system has resulted in an increase in cars on the road. This makes the reality of electric scooters even more possible when people are given the choice of how they choose to commute in their cities.

This will make for better micro-mobility where people will have the choice to use a scooter for a 1 km route. Given the rate

of inflation the daily cost of running a car is going up and shared transport such as ride-hailing and micromobility services, as well as other alternatives like public transport and bikes, offer a much more affordable and more environmentally friendly way for people to move around their city.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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