PARADISE ROAD

Attitudes to transport and the 2010 FIFA World Cup

With less than a year to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, improvements to public transport are one of the main anticipated benefits. In this article, URILLMA BOB, BEN ROBERTS, UDESH PILLAY and LAVERNE DIMITROV explore public perceptions towards salient transportation issues relating to the mega-event.

Transport preparations and plans remain central to South Africa’s successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. As the 2010 Transport Action Plan notes, South Africa’s road infrastructure has suffered from under-investment for many years, with inadequate transport facilities and road congestion inhibiting economic growth and development. Consequently, many major transport projects are currently underway in the country to facilitate the smooth movement of fans to World Cup events and serve the general long-term needs of the public.

The vast majority of South Africans surveyed (80%) agreed with the statement that roads will be severely congested during the World Cup. At the municipality level, the results ranged in a narrow band from 82% (highest) in the City of Cape Town to 78% (lowest) in Ekurhuleni (former East Rand). The results were similar across provinces and socio-economic groups. Respondents from higher income groups and white South Africans expressed greater concern than other groups about the likely readiness of public transport service improvements in time for the World Cup.

In all four survey rounds since 2005 respondents have been asked to identify what they consider to be the main disadvantage of South Africa hosting the 2010 World Cup. While in 2005, road congestion (at 5%) was ranked fifth among the disadvantages mentioned, this response has steadily increased in importance over the years. By 2008, 10% of respondents identified road congestion as the main disadvantage, making it the third highest ranked concern.

Disaggregated by municipality, residents in the City of Cape Town and eThekwini (City of Durban) have been more likely over the survey years to identify traffic congestion as a main disadvantage (Table 1). Increasing concern over road congestion associated with the mega-event was evident across most municipalities, with the City of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni experiencing the largest increases between 2006 and 2007.

Despite the concern about road congestion during the World Cup, most South Africans (75%) believed that it would return to normal levels after the mega-event, with 18% neutral or undecided, and only 7% in disagreement.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES AND THE WORLD CUP

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statement that public transport services would improve in time for the World Cup relative to eThekwini and the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, where the highest levels of agreement were realised (81% and 83%, respectively). This is interesting given that the largest transport project associated with the 2010 FIFA World Cup is the Gautrain project in Johannesburg and Tshwane.

The controversy over the role that minibus-taxis would play during the World Cup remained. However, 80% of respondents agreed that minibus-taxis would be able to transport spectators to games and other venues. This suggested that a sizeable majority perceived a role for minibus-taxis during the World Cup and were confident that they would be able to transport spectators to games and other venues.

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WILL IMPROVEMENTS BE PRO-POOR?

Most respondents expected that the long-term transport benefits associated with the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup would be realised by all South Africans, especially the poor who rely heavily on public transport systems.

There were significant provincial differences in the extent to which people believed that public transport improvements would be pro-poor (Figure 2). The percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement

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ranged from nearly three-quarters in the Free State (71%) and Eastern Cape (69%) to less than two-fifths in Gauteng (38%) and the Western Cape (37%). Additionally, more than 30% of respondents disagreed with the statement in the North West (38%) and Mpumalanga (34%). The finding that black respondents were more likely to believe that public transport improvements will benefit the poor (53%) compared to white respondents (36%) was also noteworthy.

RIGHT AND READY FOR 2010

While the South African public is anticipating traffic problems during the World Cup, there is a strong belief that public transport improvements will be completed in time.

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These findings suggest that planning and preparation to address anticipated problems and minimise disruptions remains a key challenge in addressing transport concerns during the World Cup. This includes ensuring benefits to the poor are realised as well as sustaining transport improvement projects. The development of a campaign to encourage and educate private vehicle owners to use public transport during the World Cup may also assist in alleviating traffic congestion during the event.

Based on these findings, Minister of Transport Sibusiso Ndebele, made the following recommendations during his 2009 South African Transport Conference address:

- There is a need for integrated transport planning aimed at alleviating traffic congestion during the World Cup.
- These developments must be sustainable beyond the World Cup.
- A comprehensive minibus-taxi strategy regulating the industry must be developed and the taxis’ role in the World Cup and beyond clearly defined.
- Infrastructure developments must benefit the poor.

Urmilla Bob is associate professor in the School of Environmental Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal; Ben Roberts is a research specialist in the HSRC’s Child, Youth, Family and Social Development (CYFSD) research programme; Udesh Pillay is executive director of the HSRC’s Centre for Service Delivery; and Laverne Dimitrov is director of research at the Department of Transport.

‘Are we producing the skills? No. I don’t think we are producing the architects, the accountants, the teachers ... or the skills of social critique. What are universities doing to provide those skills? I don’t see much of a plan.’