**NEWS ARTICLE**

Zutari paves the way for sustainable transport infrastructure

**6 October 2022:** Transportation infrastructure has a major impact on economic growth, says **Vishaal Lutchman**, MD, Transport at leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory firm [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com). “It is Tier One infrastructure that connects origins to destinations, links markets and people and facilitates growth, by the significant multiplier effects within the economy.”

As South Africa gears up for [Transport Month](https://www.gov.za/TransportMonth2022) in October, Lutchman points to how this multiplier effect starts with any new provincial road or freeway, including major rehabilitation work. “The effect of economic connectivity is what proves to be the catalyst, not so much the actual capital expenditure on the infrastructure itself,” he stresses.

Transport services is a significant part of Zutari’s professional portfolio, covering a wide footprint from South Africa to East and West Africa and the Middle East. Transportation planning is a core capability, running the gamut of roads, rail and ports. In addition, Zutari offers smart solutions to allow its clients to monitor their fleet assets throughout the country’s road network. Such smart solutions inevitably assist with sustainability at all levels in the economy.

Road design covers all structural components, while a technology section looks to provide the latest developments, as well as customised solutions for specific client requirements. A large site team oversees projects in the construction phase. “We adopt a network model to engage with our clients in all geographies,” explains Lutchman.

This allows Zutari to effectively support its clients closer to home. Its extensive geographic spread ensures proximity to its clients and, more importantly, to the issues faced in such domestic and international locations. “Being close to our clients and communities ensures our relevance is maintained and our knowledge is up to date. We choose to remain steadfast in this arrangement while others may have opted to remain in major centres,” notes Lutchman.

“Our overall focus is on high-quality output relevant to client needs. We grow our team in terms of qualifications and expertise to raise its pre-eminence. We strive to keep our value proposition at a superior level to that of our competitors,” highlights Lutchman. What keeps Zutari ahead of the race is its capability to co-create value for its clients through its multidisciplinary approach with a well led and highly engaged business.

For example, geotechnical is another service offering within transport, but which is leveraged across the board as it impacts all infrastructure. “Our designs and solutions are mostly multidisciplinary, which sees the roads team collaborate with our advisory, energy or even built environment teams due to the civil infrastructure component,” adds Lutchman.

Africa is experiencing rapid urbanisation, which is having a major impact on transport planning. “There are multiple drivers of urbanisation because each geography has its own nuances in terms of how people live, work and play. Climate change, for example, plays a big role in cross-border migration, due to drought forcing people out of certain areas and floods and destruction causing people to rethink where they are staying.

“Obviously, there is the economic value of migrating towards urban centres in search of employment. However, that is only happening because we have ignored the rural economies for such a long time. The main focus of transport planning has always been on the existing metropolitan areas,” argues Lutchman.

“We need to develop post-mining economic solutions for the country. When mines inevitably reach their end of life, people are forced to relocate.” Resources cannot be expected to sustain economic growth and diversification is therefore necessary. Thus, it is vital to link the rural economy to the urban economy and transport is key to doing so. “Our strategic planning in effect encourages urbanisation in the sense that we allow informal settlements to grow uncontrolled, which impacts sustainability in our urban areas,” says Lutchman. A new way of thinking is required to provide solutions to urbanisation.

“Adequate transport networks, coupled with a robust industrial development plan for these communities, generates employment and significantly improves the quality of life for many. What stands us in good stead is that we have plenty of land still available, albeit having issues of ownership and accessibility. We need to create economies, rather than isolated communities that, in turn, seek livelihoods in metropolitan areas.”

This is critical if South Africa is to realise two significant Sustainable Development Goals. These are SDG 9, which refers to building resilient infrastructure to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and to foster innovation, while SDG 11 focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

“If we talk about growing unsustainability in communities, transportation is an important enabler, especially if we want our communities to become a lot more stable and improve the quality of life for all,” says Lutchman. This, in turn, calls for sustained growth in terms of the National Development Plan 2050 to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. “We appear to be kicking the can down the road while we should be clawing back on already lost time.”

Sustainability of communities must be aligned with the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) to transform and restructure South Africa’s urban spaces, based on creating liveable, safe, resource-efficient cities and towns that are socially integrated, economically inclusive and globally competitive. “I am not convinced that this happening. I also think the IUDF needs to be revised to cater for more recent complexities,” points out Lutchman.

“We have growing communities living and wanting to make meaning contributions in a stagnant to declining economy in some urban metropoles. Many of those who come to metros are not aware of the economic issues. We do not create new economies. We talk industrialisation, but little is done about it. If we start thinking bigger and harder about how to create sustainable communities, and how do we make SDG 11 a tangible reality, we can go a long way to mitigate many of the issues we are currently faced with,” concludes Lutchman.

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**About Zutari**

As an engineering and advisory firm, we believe infrastructure has unparalleled potential to create enduring impact. Never more relevant, this potential can be realised only if we plan, design, deliver and manage infrastructure in ways that maximise its value. Our work in water, transport, energy, resources, and built-environment infrastructure does just this – helping to nurture thriving communities, growing economies, and healthy environments.

At Zutari we understand that radical impact doesn’t just happen; it requires more of us to connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted.

**We connect differently**. Our broad collective of in-house experts connects across traditional disciplines to provide integrated results. We collaborate with clients, partners, and end-users, leaning into diverse perspectives to create superior solutions - together.

**We work smarter**. Our people lead the industry. We draw from deep technical skills, accrued over decades, and embrace the transformative power of digital technology to find simpler, better, and more innovative ways to deliver value.

**We stay rooted**. Few can rival our local capacity and understanding. Building on solid foundations, now 90 years in the making, we are trusted to shape locally relevant solutions through our extensive footprint in Africa and the Middle East.

At Zutari our people connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted. Working in this way, we reliably deliver impact through infrastructure, making the world a better place – one project at a time.

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