

Delivering on Infrastructure Maintenance for Socio-Economic Growth: Exploration of South African Infrastructure for a Sustained Maintenance Strategy

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Abstract : In South Africa, similar to nations globally, the prevailing tangible link between people and the state is public infrastructure. Services delivered through infrastructure to the people and to the state form a critical enabler for social development in communities and economic development in the country. In this regard, infrastructure, being the backbone to a nation's prosperity, ideally should be effectively maintained for seamless delivery of services. South African infrastructure is in a state of deterioration, which is leading to infrastructure dysfunction and collapse and is negatively affecting development of the economy. This infrastructure deterioration stems from deficiencies in maintenance practices and strategies. From the birth of South African democracy, government has pursued socio-economic transformation and the delivery of critical basic services to decrease the broadening boundaries of disparity. In this regard, the National Infrastructure Plan borne from strategies encompassed in the National Development Plan is given priority by government in delivering strategic catalytic infrastructure projects. The National Infrastructure Plan is perceived to be the key in unlocking opportunities that generate economic growth, curb joblessness, alleviate poverty, create new entrepreneurial prospects, and mitigate population expansion and rapid urbanisation. Socio-economic transformation benefits from new infrastructure spend is not being realised as initially anticipated. In this context, South Africa is currently in a state of weakening economic growth, with further amassed levels of joblessness, unremitting poverty and inequality. Due to investor reluctance, solicitation of strategic infrastructure funding is progressively becoming a debilitating challenge in all government institutions. Exacerbating these circumstances further, is substandard functionality of existing infrastructure subsequent to inadequate maintenance practices. This in-depth multi-sectoral study into the state of infrastructure is to understand the principal reasons for infrastructure functionality regression better; furthermore, prioritised investigations into progressive maintenance strategies is focused upon. Resultant recommendations reveal enhanced maintenance strategies, with a vision to capitalize on infrastructure design life, and also give special emphasis to socio-economic development imperatives in the long-term. The research method is principally based on descriptive methods (survey, historical, content analysis, qualitative).

Keywords : infrastructure, maintenance, socio-economic, strategies

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