

How will e-tolling change the urban landscape?

By [John Roberts](#)

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Following the protracted court battle over e-tolling in Gauteng, the government, through its agency SANRAL, intends to have the toll gantries in the province operational within weeks.



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While the rest of the country has watched and read the saga in the media, it has remained largely unaffected - but this is set to change over the medium term. The South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) has revealed that it is looking to extend the usage of Gauteng's e-tags to toll plazas throughout South Africa to prevent traffic congestion in other urban areas.

The knock-on effects of e-tolling are myriad and mostly affect the consumer, i.e. you. But how will e-tolling influence urban migration, development and current property prices? Studies conducted in the US have indicated that there was a significant change in road-use habits from logistic firms once tolling mechanisms were implemented on major routes.

Increase in traffic through residential areas

As can be predicted, where companies decided that the tolling would make their businesses less viable, alternate routes were used, resulting in a massive increase of traffic on back roads and, ironically, resulting in greater than average congestion. The study further reported that another knock-on effect, the pertinent one for property owners, was an increase in traffic through residential areas.

This factor directly led to a decline in the value of property adjacent to the tolled routes. In addition, there was a significant rise in accidents resulting in the diversion of traffic, due to a combination of higher traffic volumes and poor maintenance on the residential routes.

Inversely, property values located within convenient reach of commuter rail stations increased and it is likely that a similar scenario may play itself out in Gauteng, with more commuters using the Gautrain once e-tolls are enforced.

It is no secret that government's lack of infrastructure funding or, more accurately, the proper allocation of funding, has resulted in the decline of suburban roads, which are managed by local councils. The shift in traffic patterns resulting from e-tolling is likely to result in further degradation of suburban road infrastructure.

The full of extent of e-tolling will be revealed in the coming months, but we can be almost certain that the impact on Gauteng's social and economic sectors will be substantial - to the point of possibly reshaping the cityscape.

ABOUT JOHN ROBERTS

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