

Tolled you so - Peters

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Is the ANC in Gauteng, and more especially chairman Paul Mashatile, genuine in calling for electronic tolling on the province's freeways to be scrapped?



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Or did the party in 1997 advocate for a project whose unpopularity it could not have anticipated 17 years later?

It emerged yesterday that Mashatile - in his capacity as MEC for finance in 2006 - endorsed electronic tolling on its freeways to raise money for the fiscus.

Minister of Transport Dipuo Peters - in her opening remarks yesterday to the advisory panel set up in July by Gauteng premier David Makhura - quoted from a speech made by Mashatile in which he called for urban tolling to pay for the province's road infrastructure.

The ANC in the province has been on a collision course with the government after Mashatile and provincial ANC secretary Hope Papo appeared before the panel last month calling for the method of fee collection to be scrapped.

The minister hit back yesterday at assertions that the national government and primarily Sanral had forced the project on the public.

Peters reminded the panel that the provincial government initiated talks about the introduction of e-tolling on Gauteng freeways and subsequently released two reports advocating the project in 1997 and in January 1998, four months before the formation of Sanral.

According to Peters, recommendations in favour of e-tolling, which were contained in the first report, were adopted by the provincial cabinet in November 1997.

In its submissions to the panel, the ANC in Gauteng said the initial plan was vastly different to the one implemented by Sanral at the beginning of December 2013.

It said the original plan had been backed up by an extensive public transport system, but Peters said yesterday that differences between that plan and the one currently being implemented were moot.

"It is a moot point whether the province would have implemented open road tolling and electronic tolling in the manner Sanral did. But what cannot be disputed is that credit for the concepts of electronic tolling must be shared with the Gauteng province," said Peters.

The minister said while the system was "not perfect, doing nothing was not an option".

Department acting director-general Mawethu Vilana said new revenue streams were needed to maintain new road infrastructure.

To fund the maintenance of existing roads an additional R3.65 would have to be added to every litre of fuel.

Source: The Times

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