

## Day 1 focuses on digital disruptions in transport

Digital disruptions and the effect these are having on the transport sector was discussed at Day 1 of the 2019 Southern African Transport Conference (SATC), currently underway at the CSIR in Pretoria. The theme of this year's event is "Disruptive Transport Technologies - Is South and southern Africa ready?"



L to R Kenny Kistan, company director of ATC, Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula and Prof James Maina, chairman of SATC

During his plenary address on Monday, 8 July, Dr Gustav Rohde, chief operations officer at Aurecon, spoke about how enabling technologies such as location referencing, tracking and Building Information Modelling, were radically changing transportation engineering.

Dr Rohde explained that public expectations of transport services continued to change.

"Public transport users have become connected, vocal and demanding," he said. He added that technology without user appreciation is ineffective and that a change in competencies and skills is required. "We need humanists as well as technologists, systems thinkers, storytellers and innovators."

### Minister reflects on transport disruption

Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula, provided the opening address to a packed auditorium, in which he said South Africa is somewhere between being pioneers in information technology-based mobility disruption and being late responders and adopters.

The Minister, a patron of the four-day event and exhibition, said government had pioneered the implementation of a prepaid smartcard for use in public transport for use by those without access to bank accounts.

He added that the next wave of shared and connected mobility solutions would impact the manner in which the government provided integrated and seamless public transport services.

Minister Mbalula explained that SANRAL infrastructure and platforms would be used to host mobility accounts.



## SATC 2019 to debate transport-related issues

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“In the near future, the same account will allow public transport users to pay for all mobility services, from parking to public transport to tolls, instead of having to pay separately to multiple municipal or private vendors.”

Mbalula conceded that government had to make speedy provision to regulate e-hailing services in the country.

“Government’s role is to speedily come up with new policies and laws that will render disruptive transport technologies beneficial to all, and easily adaptable to the abruptly changing environments.”

The Minister stated that as a country, we are still a long way off the transition from driver-operated to autonomous vehicles.

## Solutionist thinking

Briefing the media after his speech, the Minister said the government would find a solution to the prolonged e-tolling impasse.

“The President has established a task team, led by myself, about the options on the table. A report will be tabled before him

and from there will be given to the Cabinet,” he explained.

“We know that there are robust views that come from the treasury in terms of the fiscus and the debt that we owe. We know there are views in relation to our borrowing capacity and the bond market,” he said.

Despite this, Mbalula promised to have a solution to the e-tolling matter by August this year.

SATC continues until Thursday, 11 July and will host a contingent of international and local transport industry speakers, thought leaders, academics, students and engineers.

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