

On the move to green

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Gridlock. Traffic jam. Congestion. Every person who commutes has experienced the agony and frustration of sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic for what feels like forever.



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Given the increasing volume of cars on the road, some of the speakers at the Green Building Convention 2015 shared their views and ideas on greener options.

Change improves mobility

Leszek Dobrovolsky, Head, interchange design consultancy: Arup, says that to improve mobility in our cities we need to change and disrupt the way things are done.

He explains that there are often provocations that lead to improved mobility in cities, and advocates using existing infrastructure rather than building a new one.

For example, a major event can stimulate rejuvenation. As was the case with the Stratford International Station in London. Originally opened in 1839, the nearby stadium built for the 2012 Olympics was the catalyst to converting this station into a

hub for fast rail travel to continental Europe and a link to the London Underground.

"If we understand where the stations are, we can start understanding the city," he says.

Scale and size

Dobrovolsky goes on to say there are various approaches to reduce vehicle demand and move to modal transport.

The introduction of a toll in the highly congested Central London, for instance, substantially reduced private vehicle kilometres by 21%. The positive result of this model is that this road space can be reallocated for other modes of transport, such as pedestrians and bicycles.

"Locally, the gridlock caused by the Grayston Bridge collapse forced people to use the Gautrain. But these alternate modes of transport must have reach to where people need to go," he says.

Integrating modes

"We therefore need to ensure that national, regional and city agencies are aligned to enable a project, including a clear fee structure across the different modes," Dobrovolsky says.

Integrated transport systems also need to take social needs into consideration, such as a project in South America where creches at stations were introduced to encourage single mothers to go back to work.

"Design really matters, including using reclaimed and recycled construction tech and materials, and there is still lot of work being done. In London we are looking at inflatable structures as a means to cross the Thames," he concludes.

Ecomobility Month

In Johannesburg, road transport contributes 93% to the city's emissions, so the City of Johannesburg took a very bold step when it introduced Ecomobility Month. The initiative essentially limited private vehicle access to Gauteng's economic hub, Sandton's Golden Mile, for the whole of October.

According to Lisa Seftel, Executive Director: City of Johannesburg Department of Transport, preference was given to pedestrians, public transport and cyclists during this period to give commuters a taste of the alternatives available to get to and from work.

The city hailed the project as a success, saying people using private cars in Sandton decreased from 90% to 68%, Gautrain use increased by about 8%, people using park and ride facilities and the number of cyclists increased slightly.

The Green Building Convention took place at the CTICC from 2-6 November 2015. For more information, go to www.greenbuildingconvention.org.za.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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