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Will the Gautrain serve its purpose?

BRYANSTON – Only 48% of current Tshwane - Johannesburg car commuters are likely or extremely likely to use the Gautrain, which means one of the project's main objectives – alleviating traffic congestion – may not be achieved, a recent Synovate survey reveals.,.

Taxi users, on the other hand, may represent a larger user base than initially expected, with 81% of taxi users travelling between Tshwane and Johannesburg indicating that they would be likely or extremely likely to use the train.

The Synovate survey measured public perception with regards to the pros and cons of the Gautrain project conducted amongst 246 taxi-goers and 207 car drivers.

A look at the current traffic patterns between Johannesburg and Tshwane reveals that 79% of respondents travel during rush hour (including both taxi and car travellers). Car pools and lift clubs are not popular amongst car travellers; 91% of motorists indicate that they travel alone in their car. For almost half of car-commuters, the trip between Johannesburg and Tshwane takes place 5 or more times a week.

Looking at these numbers, it certainly makes sense that a solution to our N1 traffic problems should address drivers; however, it is also worth noting that 48% of drivers indicate that they

need to use their car during the day for business travel and other errands – so the Gautrain is not a feasible option for them.

Almost two-thirds of taxi-goers (64%) on the other hand, only need to get back and forth from work / university and do not need a vehicle during business hours. Approximately half (49%) of this segment travel between Johannesburg and Tshwane 5 times a week.

Proclaimed benefits of the Gautrain include projected economic savings in terms of time and accident costs. Motorists, however, do not agree. Only 57% of believe that their journey will be quicker on the Gautrain – perhaps due to the prospect of having to drive to and from the Gautrain stations in addition to the train journey.

When asked how much faster they think their journey will be, 38% of car and taxi travellers believe that the Gautrain will save between 21 and 30 minutes on each trip between Johannesburg and Tshwane.

With estimated savings in accident costs of R15 million a year listed as another benefit, only 50% of car drivers believe that the Gautrain will be a safer option than travelling in their cars. 70% of taxi users, however, believe that the Gautrain offers a safer trip.

Reduced cost of travel may be a personal benefit however, only 51% of commuters see any cost benefit from using the Gautrain. Car drivers appear to be more positive in this regard – 55% believe that the cost of using the Gautrain to get to work and back will be cheaper than the costs of using a car. Only 47% of taxi users believed that they would save any money.

According to the Synovate survey, the top three aspects **preventing likelihood of use** are:

- Safety and security on the train
- Transport to and from the stations
- Ticket cost and affordability

What would be the one thing that you believe would stop you from using the Gautrain?	Overall (car and taxi users)
Safety / security on the train	44.7%
Transport to and from the stations	16.5%
Ticket cost / affordability	15.3%
Need personal transport during the day	9.9%
Not enough incentive to change my habits	4.1%
Loss of personal freedom	1.9%
If it takes me longer to get to my destination	1.2%
Should there be too many people on the train	1.2%
Don't Know / Nothing	1.0%
Frequency of trips	1.0%
Reliability / Efficient running of the Gautrain	1.0%
Convenience of having my own transport	0.6%
I travel to more than one / other destinations	0.6%
Flexible Hours	0.2%
The proposed route does not pass near my destination	0.2%
The nature of my job would not allow it	0.2%
Source: Synovate Gautrain Survey 2006	

Car drivers also expressed the concern about ample and secure parking at the Gautrain station as well as a considerably improved bus system to provide transport from the Gautrain station to their place of work / education.

Will the Gautrain be used?

52% of drivers reported that they were unlikely, extremely unlikely or undecided about using the Gautrain!

Taxi users, on the other hand, have reported a high likelihood to use the rapid rail link, perhaps lending some credence to the complaints of Cosatu, who are arguing that focus of transport alternatives should be shifted from motorists to current users of public transport or taxis. Of those taxi travellers who said they would use the train, 64% say they will use it 4 or more times a week, and 29% said they would use it one to three times a week.

So will the Gautrain serve its purpose?

Jon Salters, Managing Director of Synovate Sub-Saharan Africa reports, "when we asked whether the Gautrain is a good idea for reducing the traffic problems on Gauteng's roads, 55% of car drivers said no!"

Synovate has released other results of this survey. Details can be found on our website (www.synovate.co.za) and include:

[Is the Gautrain a good idea? \(Gautrain opinion poll\)](#)

[Gautrain will do B-Y, but what about A and Z?](#)

[What will Gautrainers pay?](#)

[Safety on the Gautrain](#)

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