

Plus 94 Poll – February 2006

Public Perceptions on the Gautrain



1. Introduction

The Plus 94 Poll for the month of February 2006 aimed to investigate South Africans' opinions regarding the construction of the Gautrain, an 80km rapid rail link system, of which about 14 km will be underground that will transport passengers between Johannesburg, Tshwane and Johannesburg International Airport. The train will run from Park Station in the Johannesburg CBD to Rosebank, Sandton and Marlboro. From there it will run to the airport after which it will travel to Midrand and Centurion, and the Pretoria Station. At the Pretoria station the Gautrain will connect to other rail services. A train trip from Sandton to the airport will take approximately 15 minutes, whilst traveling from Johannesburg to Pretoria would take about 40 minutes. Four underground stations and eight surface stations are to be erected¹.

The Gautrain will be a public-private partnership: R10-billion will be contributed by the Department of Transport and the other R10-billion will be obtained from loans and the private sector. Desired outcomes of the project include the facilitation of economic growth, contributing towards the establishment of an integrated transportation service in Gauteng, and facilitating urban regeneration the Johannesburg and Tshwane CBDs².

The Plus 94 Poll was conducted by means of a face to face questionnaire that captured the public's opinions on this massive project. A total of 1 530 respondents were interviewed across all nine provinces and race groups.

The following questions were included in the questionnaire:

- What kind of transport do you mainly use for your day-to-day travel?
- Do you follow developments in the media about the intention to build the Gautrain?
- Would you use a rail system such as the Gautrain if it were available?
- The Gautrain will cost an estimated R20 billion. Do you think that it is a good idea to spend this amount on the Gautrain project?
- Approximately how much would you be willing to pay for a roundtrip ticket between Johannesburg and Tshwane?

2. Results and interpretation

2.1 *Transport usage in South Africa*

In reference to Table 1, it would seem as if there are differences in transport usage patterns between provinces, as well as between different race groups.

¹ Davie, L. (2005a). *Gautrain construction to start end October*. Retrieved April 10, 2006 from http://www.joburg.org.za/2003/apr/apr23_gautrain.stm

² Davie, L. (2005b). *Gautrain 'still on track'*.. Retrieved April 10, 2006 from http://www.joburg.org.za/2003/apr/apr23_gautrain.stm

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Overall, almost half of the people in South Africa (48%) seem to travel by Taxi, with 30% indicating that they use their own cars. What is interesting is that Gauteng Province as well as the Western Cape seem to differ from this national trend: almost as many respondents in Gauteng indicated that they travel with their own cars (37%) as those who indicated that they travel by Taxi (39%). A mere 2% indicated that they use the existing rail service, while only 1% indicated that they use bus services.

If it is therefore the case in Gauteng Province, where the proposed rail system is to be built, that large proportions of people either travel by Taxi or use their own cars, a number of important questions are raised with regards to the Gautrain project. Firstly, if such a system were implemented, would it cost on average more or less for the individual commuter to travel with Gautrain than it would cost for that person to travel either with his or her own car or with a Taxi? If so many people use their own cars even though other forms of transport (such as bus and train services) are available, would they be willing to change to the Gautrain in order to avoid traffic, even if this might mean still using their cars and other public transport as part of the trip? This observation clearly indicates that the key to unlocking the value and relevance of the Gautrain service will be the comparative cost per trip. Overall, convenience cannot be taken as a given since the Gautrain will for most people provide a long distance link between destinations, as opposed to taking them from source to final destination.

Before implementing a new form of public transport it is necessary to review the current market demand for such a system, volumes of users of public transport, as well as people's reasons for using or not using existing services. As indicated by the Plus 94 data, only 3% of respondents in Gauteng indicated that they use existing public transport services (excluding minibus Taxis, which are mostly privately owned). In fact, as many people (3%) **walk** to their destinations. This raises another important question that would need to be addressed if the Gautrain system is to be successfully implemented: if people still prefer to mostly use Taxis to get around (39% of Gauteng respondents), would the Gautrain system really be sustainable in terms of the cost of operation? On the other hand, if people then prefer using the rapid rail link system to Taxis, what provisions are there for the losses in revenue to the Taxi industry?

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Table 1: Transport usage by province

	N	Own Car	Someone else's car (including lifts with someone in their car)	Taxi	Train	Bus	Walk	Other
	1447	29.5%	1.1%	48.4%	1.0%	3.4%	6.2%	0.3%
Eastern Cape	189	17.7%	6.5%	64.0%	0.5%	2.2%	9.1%	0
Free State	89	32.6%	3.4%	60.7%	0	0	2.2%	1.1%
Gauteng	299	36.7%	17.3%	39.0%	2.3%	1.3%	3.0%	0.3%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	294	22.8%	15.0%	43.9%	1.7%	9.2%	7.5%	0
Limpopo	113	8.0%	0.9%	83.2%	0.9%	5.3%	0.9%	0.9%
Mpumalanga	78	43.6%	3.8%	48.7%	0	2.6%	1.3%	0
Northern Cape	48	29.2%	18.8%	43.8%	0	2.1%	6.3%	0
North West	87	28.7%	18.4%	46.0%	0	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%
Western Cape	250	42.0%	8.0%	35.2%	0.4%	1.2%	13.2%	0

Table 2: Transport usage by race

	N	Own Car	Someone else's car (including lifts with someone in their car)	Taxi	Train	Bus	Walk	Other
	1445	29.5%	11.1%	48.4%	1.0%	3.4%	6.2%	0.3%
Black	756	7.0%	5.6%	73.3%	1.7%	5.4%	6.3%	0.7%
White	353	77.3%	16.7%	4.0%	0.3%	0.8%	0.8%	0
Indian	88	42.0%	33.0%	20.5%	0	3.4%	1.1%	0
Coloured	248	25.4%	12.1%	46.0%	0.4%	0.8%	15.3%	0

Table 3: Transport usage by race for Gauteng only

	N	Own Car	Someone else's car (including lifts with someone in their car)	Taxi	Train	Bus	Walk	Other
	300	36.7%	17.3%	39.0%	2.3%	1.3%	3.0%	0.3%
Black	140	3.6%	9.3%	75.0%	4.3%	2.1%	5.0%	0.7%
White	138	73.2%	23.2%	2.2%	0.7%	0	0.7%	0
Indian	8*	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0	12.5%	12.5%	0
Coloured	14*	14.3%	28.6%	57.1%	0	0	0	0

***small sample bases, results purely directional**

We can note from Table 3 that by far the largest majority of Black respondents (75%) indicated that they use Taxis to get around in their day-to-day lives, again raising the question of whether, and under what circumstances, would Black commuters opt for the Gautrain system rather than their existing

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preferred mode of transport. White respondents overwhelmingly prefer their own cars or getting lifts with others in their cars (together accounting for 96% of the White sample). In a similar vein as to the above, what would make the White commuter use a rail system rather than their own private transport? Surely convenience and safety would enter into the equation for that decision in the mind of individual users.

3.2 General perceptions of Gautrain

In general, across all provinces and race groups, most respondents did not have definite opinions regarding the Gautrain. This is not surprising as nationally, 53% of respondents were completely unaware of the project, 31% have heard of it but weren't aware of the details thereof and only 15% followed developments in the media about it. In Gauteng however, where the service is actually to be implemented, 51% of respondents indicated that they know of Gautrain but don't know the details, while 32% indicated that they follow developments about the Gautrain project in the media. Of these Gauteng respondents, the majority of White respondents (51%) indicated that they follow the story closely in the media, with 44% of White respondents being otherwise aware of the project. The majority of Black respondents (55%) were aware of the Gautrain project, but only 17% of this race group in Gauteng indicated that they actually followed developments in the media about this project. A striking 28% of Black respondents (compared to 17% of all Gauteng respondents) were unaware of the project.

Table 4: Gautrain Awareness by province

	N	Yes	Heard about the train but don't know the details	No
Total	1444	15.4%	31.4%	53.2%
Eastern Cape	186	3.8%	25.3%	71.0%
Free State	89	12.4%	44.9%	42.7%
Gauteng	299	32.1%	51.2%	16.7%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	294	7.5%	29.3%	63.3%
Limpopo	113	23.9%	15.9%	60.2%
Mpumalanga	78	23.1%	26.9%	50.0%
Northern Cape	48	18.8%	37.5%	43.8%
North West	87	28.7%	36.8%	34.5%
Western Cape	250	2.8%	15.6%	81.6%

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Table 5: Gautrain Awareness by race for Gauteng only

Total	N	Yes	Heard about the train but don't know the details	No
	300	32.1%	51.2%	16.7%
Black	140	17.3%	54.7%	28.1%
White	138	43.5%	51.4%	5.1%
Indian	*8	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%
Coloured	*14	57.1%	21.4%	21.4%

**small sample base*

In Gauteng, opinions regarding the reasonableness of the estimated cost of the project were evenly spread (47% viewing it as reasonable and 46% as unreasonable). More persons traveling with their own or someone else's cars felt that the cost was reasonable (cumulatively 55% of respondents) compared to Taxi users (54% of Taxi users indicated that this amount is not reasonable). The reason for this may be that Taxi users generally earn less than persons traveling with their own transport, and again raises the question of whether the prices of tickets on Gautrain would be competitive against prices charged by Taxis for the same trip.

Nationally, on the other hand, more people felt that it was unreasonable to spend this amount of money on such a project: only 24% of the entire sample (across all provinces and races) indicated that this was a good idea, while 39% felt it was not a good idea to spend this much on Gautrain. Understandably, all provinces except Gauteng expressed high proportions of uncertainty to this question, as the Gautrain project does not directly affect their lives.

Table 6: Is it a good idea to spend R20 billion on the Gautrain?

	N	Yes	No	Not sure
Total	1444	23.8%	39.4%	36.8%
Eastern Cape	186	4.3%	41.4%	54.3%
Free State	89	42.7%	23.6%	33.7%
Gauteng	299	46.8%	45.5%	7.7%
Kwa-Zulu Natal	294	13.6%	39.8%	46.6%
Limpopo	113	23.9%	43.4%	32.7%
Mpumalanga	78	39.7%	28.2%	32.1%
Northern Cape	48	52.1%	16.7%	31.3%
North West	87	12.6%	59.8%	27.6%
Western Cape	250	9.2%	34.8%	56.0%

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Table 7: Is it a good idea to spend R20 billion on the Gautrain by transport usage

	N	Yes	No	Not sure
	300	46.8%	45.5%	7.7%
Own car	110	53.6%	42.7%	3.6%
Someone else's car	51	56.9%	31.4%	11.8%
Taxi	118	35.9%	53.8%	10.3%
Train	7	57.1%	42.9%	
Bus	4	75.0%		25.0%
Walk	9	22.2%	77.8%	
Other	1	100.0%		

3.3 Intended usage

Overall, the majority of Gauteng respondents (58%) indicated that they would make use of the intended Gautrain rapid rail system. This seemed to be true especially for Taxi users (75%) and those who travel with other people in their cars (65%). A large proportion (33%) of people who travel with their own cars also indicated that they would use this system, although people with their own cars seem more reluctant to do so (51%) than users of other forms of transport. Such intended usage would have to be regarded in conjunction with the actual amounts people would be willing to pay for a trip on Gautrain. Among Black (71%), Coloured* (64%) and Indian* (75%) respondents, the majority indicated that they would use the system. Among White respondents however, exactly the same amount (44%) indicated that they would use the system as the amount that indicated that they wouldn't use the system.

Table 8: Intended usage by transport usage for Gauteng only

	N	Yes	No	Don't know
	299	57.9%	32.4%	9.7%
Own car	110	32.7%	50.9%	16.4%
Someone else's car	51	64.7%	27.5%	7.8%
Taxi	117	75.2%	18.8%	6.0%
Train	7	85.7%	14.3%	
Bus	4	100.0%		
Walk	9	66.7%	33.3%	
Other	1		100.0%	
	N	Yes	No	I don't know
	300	57.9%	32.4%	9.7%

* The results for these race groups should be regarded with caution, as the sample sizes are extremely small.

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Black	140	70.5%	22.3%	7.2%
White	138	43.5%	43.5%	13.0%
Indian	8	75.0%	25.0%	
Coloured	14	64.3%	28.6%	7.1%

Table 9: Intended usage by race for Gauteng only

One cannot draw conclusions from the amounts of people who indicate that they would use the Gautrain system without asking them how much they would be willing to pay for it. Obviously, everyone would want to pay as little as possible for any service. The question however then becomes: how much can people actually afford? And: how do the proposed prices of tickets compare to the cost of travel by other means?

Of those Gauteng respondents who indicated that they would make use of the service, 46% indicated that they would be willing to pay only less than R20 for a roundtrip ticket between Johannesburg and Tshwane. 20% indicated that they would be willing to pay R20, while cumulatively, 24% indicated that they would pay upwards from R20 (either R30, R40 or more than R40).

Table 10: Amount willing to pay by intended usage for Gauteng only

		Less than R20	R20	R30	R40	More than R40	Not Sure
	300	38.5%	24.7%	9.0%	4.3%	6.7%	16.7%
Yes	174	45.7%	19.7%	12.1%	3.5%	8.7%	10.4%
No	97	29.9%	29.9%	3.1%	7.2%	5.2%	24.7%
Don't know	29	24.1%	37.9%	10.3%			27.6%

All in all, R20 per roundtrip ticket between Johannesburg and Tshwane in Gautrain seems to be the threshold amount for people of all races and income groups. Regardless of their race and income, most respondents indicated that they prefer paying less than R20 for a roundtrip from Johannesburg to Tshwane and back to Johannesburg.

	N	Less than R20	R20	R30	R40	More than R40	Not Sure
Total	300	38.5%	24.7%	9.0%	4.3%	6.7%	16.7%
Black	140	42.4%	16.5%	10.1%	4.3%	11.5%	15.1%
White	138	37.0%	33.3%	7.2%	5.1%	2.2%	15.2%
Indian	8	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%		12.5%	37.5%
Coloured	14	28.6%	21.4%	14.3%			35.7%

Table 11: Amount willing to pay by race for Gauteng only

A large proportion of unemployed respondents and students (cumulatively 52%) indicated that they would use the Gautrain, followed by full time (55%) and part time workers (55%). Combined with the fact that most respondents are only willing to pay up to R20 per round trip ticket, one may wonder whether this project really is worth the R20 billion being spent on it.

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	N	Would you use a rail system		
		Yes	No	Don't know
	299	57.9%	32.4%	9.7%
Working full time	113	54.9%	32.7%	12.4%
Working part time	17	47.1%	41.2%	11.8%
Not working unemployed	86	76.7%	18.6%	4.7%
Not working retired	40	35.0%	57.5%	7.5%
Not working housewife	16	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
Not working student	27	70.4%	22.2%	7.4%

Table 13: Intended usage by working status for Gauteng only