

# FleetWatch

EMag Vol 91 / 2026

South Africa's Leading  
Online Trucking Magazine

**The case  
for electric  
trucks**

**Captains of  
the Industry**

**Views  
for 2026**



***Retreading***

**Now a  
strategic  
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***Budget 2026***

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**Cover story**  
**Sustainability, safety and cost controls ..... 6**

Leadtread's winning combination.

**FleetWatch Special Report**  
**Captains of the Industry - Insights 2026 ..... 11 - 34**

OEMs share their views in response to questions from FleetWatch with regards to the year ahead.

**Budget 2026 - what this really means for transport operators ..... 36**

Gavin Kelly of the RFA shares his opinions.

**Sona 2026 - RFA calls for clarity on logistics reform ..... 40**

**Logistics crime remains a national threat..... 42**

Statistics and trends released from the Anti-Truck Hijacking Forum for the start of 2026.

**Response Opinion Piece**  
**The case for Electric Trucks..... 44**

Eric Parry of Volvo Trucks weighs in on the topic.

**Opinion Piece**  
**A new dawn or not? ..... 48**

Albrich van Niekerk of Pander Holdings ... is there a new reset in the market?

**Key trends shaping SA's bulk logistics industry ..... 54**

Reinhardt Transport Group shares four key trends set to influence the trajectory in 2026.

**Manufacturers**  
**MAN adopts a holistic approach .. 56**

MAN Truck & Bus South Africa has launched its next generation D26 Efficiency engine flagshipped in a new TGX 26.520 truck tractor – and there's lots more to tell.

**Isuzu Trucks marks 13 years ...60**

Isuzu has retained the leading position across the combined MCV and HCV segments for 13 consecutive years.

**Mercedes-Benz - 130 years on ....62**

**DAF Trucks - an engineered expansion strategy is essential .....66**

**Fuso sharpens the Canter for the last mile.....68**

**Brake and Tyre Watch .....76**

The team visited Krugersdorp for the past training exercise.



## General

**Sapics 2026 - Recovering from 'permacrisis' ..... 80**

**Naamsa - sales up but trucks face a tough road ..... 82**

**Volvo Trucks crowns 2025 Dealer champions ..... 84**

**Engen strengthens fleet with 30-strong Euro 5 fleet ..... 86**

**Electrification**  
**Everelectric - 2026 is the year for urban truck electrification ....88**  
**Two N3 electric charging stations soon to be operational ..... 90**

**Opinion: Masana - collaboration is a strategic imperative ..... 92**

**Global: Karooooo Ltd listed as on Singapore's fastest-growing companies list ..... 94**

**Global: Optimism for the recovery of the West European trailer market .. 96**

**Global: VW Delivery dominates the Brazilian medium-duty sector .. 97**

**Serco completes major expansion to Boksburg facility ..... 98**

**Bakwena advances R276-million for N1 rehabilitation ..... 100**

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## Time to prioritise trucking as critical to economic growth

**C**OMMENTING ON THE 2026 Budget delivered by Minister of Finance, Enoch Godongwana, the CEO of the Road Freight Association, Gavin Kelly, made a pertinent observation regarding the increase in the general fuel levy, which rises by R0.21 per litre for diesel. "In the main, allocated funding from the general fuel levy has reportedly not been used for road infrastructure but for other urgent priority issues such as education, water, electricity and health," he noted. "These are not incorrect priorities in themselves - but the deterioration of road networks not under the domain of the South African National Roads Agency Limited has been noticeable."

"Noticeable" may be a diplomatic choice of words. For many operators, it is an understatement. Across the country there are secondary and provincial routes in a state that can only be described as shocking - and it is precisely these roads that trucks must use daily to keep the economy moving.

Last year I interviewed Shaun van Rooyen, managing director of VR Cargo in Nelspruit, whose fleet hauls export commodities that earn the country vital foreign revenue. The company had just taken delivery of 20 new DAF XF 480 Premium truck tractors as part of a

50-unit order, bringing its DAF fleet to 299 vehicles. This represents an extraordinary capital commitment to a sector that underpins South Africa's supply chain - particularly in the wake of rail's well-documented decline. Yet despite this level of investment, van Rooyen's view was blunt: the industry is largely ignored for the role it plays.

"If the roads were better and the money went where it's supposed to, transporters wouldn't be blamed for damaged roads," he told me. "Instead, government fails on infrastructure and we carry the can." He cited the R36 between Lydenburg and Machadodorp as a case in point. "It's the worst it's ever been. And I have to put brand new R4-million rigs on that road. Then I get fined for cracked windscreens, even though the damage comes from those very roads."

The pressures are relentless. Operators who strive to maintain world-class standards are doing so while absorbing the cost of failing infrastructure and many other cost burdens. And when margins tighten under that strain, investment in assets becomes harder to sustain. That is when maintenance is deferred. That is when businesses begin to falter. The consequences ripple far beyond the transport yard.

There is irony here. Trucks are often viewed by the public as unwelcome or even dangerous. But without them, the country quite literally stops. "Without trucks, nothing moves. Fuel doesn't move, food doesn't move, commodities don't move, people don't move. This country doesn't move without trucks," van Rooyen said, echoing the RFA's slogan "Without Trucks, South Africa Stops".

Van Rooyen's frustration is not isolated. It echoes across the sector and reinforces Kelly's warning: when fuel levy allocations do not meaningfully support road infrastructure, deterioration accelerates - particularly on routes outside the national network. This must change.

Trucking cannot remain an afterthought to economic growth, logistics efficiency and job creation. It is not a peripheral industry. It is not a Cinderella sector waiting for occasional recognition. It is the backbone of the economy.

Recognising that reality means more than rhetoric. It means ensuring that fuel levies serve the infrastructure they were intended to support. It means ring-fencing road funding. It means engaging the industry as a strategic partner rather than treating it as a convenient revenue source. The question is no longer whether trucking is critical to economic growth. It demonstrably is. The real question is: when will government treat it that way?

If you want to comment on the above or add your own thoughts, please write to *FleetWatch* - email The Editor at [fleetwatch@pixie.co.za](mailto:fleetwatch@pixie.co.za).

**Patrick O'Leary**  
Managing Editor, *FleetWatch*

# Resolving the Driver Inspection Conundrum



A DECADE AGO, the industry's first mobile app for fleet engineers was launched at Euro Bus Expo 2016. This development from Freeway enabled, for the first time, the complete elimination of paper from the workshop, with digital data synchronised in real time with the central fleet management system.

However, achieving complete digitisation has been challenging, where data is required from outside the workshop – notably data from driver walkaround inspections. Defects reported by drivers are crucial to managing the workshop and are critical to the smooth operation of transport services.

Drivers are managed by transport operations and they rely on equipment such as ticketing machines or digital devices for navigation and proof of delivery. To undertake their mandatory walkaround checks, drivers often still rely on paper and where digital reporting has been introduced, existing devices are used. The result is a mismatch of different systems, further complicated by varying operator-specific reporting requirements.

As a result of these complexities, obtaining driver check data is problematic and without this data, digitisation of engineering operations is incomplete. To address this issue, Freeway has taken a multi-pronged approach by firstly creating an open environment to make it easier to extract data from external systems; secondly, by developing two-way integration with onboard devices; and lastly, by developing purpose-built apps to run on any mobile device.

Over time, Freeway realised that a driver check app could offer far more than a simple 'tick-box' solution to meet basic compliance requirements. Customers had raised concerns about burdening drivers with too many questions and were worried about the consistency and quality of data being reported. As a result, Freeway developed its Driver Walkaround Check (DWC) app that would be quick and easy to use, but with stringent data-entry controls and added performance metrics.

With the new DWC app, drivers are guided step-by-step through each inspection, with only questions relevant to the specific vehicle or asset being inspected. This customisation also extends to defect reporting, recognising that commonly occurring defects are often vehicle-specific.

To enforce a mandatory 'first-use' inspection, drivers are presented with the task at login and cannot proceed until the inspection is completed. The app also provides a full audit trail for compliance verification, with reports enhanced by photographic evidence.

Information provided through driver checks is important – a critical defect, for example, might require a vehicle to be taken off the road immediately, with serious implications for transport operations. With real-time data, defect rectifications can be immediately prioritised and intelligently scheduled to help optimise resources and productivity.

Crucially, all inspection data from the app feeds directly into Freeway's smart dashboard environment, providing real-time visibility, trend analysis and actionable intelligence. This enables management teams to streamline workshop operations, identify recurring issues and assess weaknesses in the timely capture of inspection data.

As the leaders of fleet management across Africa go paperless, the Freeway Driver Walkaround Check app provides a solution to digitising the driver walkaround check. This provides fleet operators with real-time data and analytics, improving efficiency and tightening defect reporting and tracking. ●

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In honour of his legacy, we will once again raise funds to provide much-needed school uniforms for the children of the Siyathuthuka Centre, an orphanage supporting underprivileged children in the Van Reenen Pass area. Together, we continue the work that mattered so much to Philip and make a real difference where it is needed most.



# GOLFING FOR A PURPOSE



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## Cover Story



Leader Tread's winning combination

# Sustainability, safety and cost controls

**I**n long-distance transport operations, performance is rarely defined by a single factor. For fleet operators, true long-haul performance is the result of three interconnected priorities: safety, sustainability and cost control, states Leader Tread, whose long-haul truck and trailer retread portfolio is designed to deliver consistent performance over extended distances while reducing cost per kilometre (CPK) and maximising casing reuse under real Southern African conditions.

Heavy-duty truck tyres, particularly in trailer and high-

mileage applications, are both safety- and cost-critical items. Leader Tread positions its long-haul retreads to meet these demands, delivering predictable wear, extended casing life and total lifecycle efficiency across Southern Africa's busiest freight corridors.

"Truck tyre retreading has evolved from a short-term cost-saving measure into a strategic fleet decision," states Leader Tread, adding that tyre value is increasingly being defined by proven operational metrics rather than headline mileage claims.

"Long-haul performance is about

### Tyres in landfill

◀ Discarded tyres entering the waste stream highlight the environmental cost of single-life tyre use, reinforcing the importance of retreading to extend service life and reduce material consumption while also contributing to sustainability and reduced environmental impacts.

**Long haul tyre performance is about outcomes not promises**

### Advanced designs

▼ Advanced long-haul tread designs such as the popular MM84 are engineered for reduced rolling resistance, predictable wear and improved cost-per-kilometre trailer performance in high-mileage trailer applications. It's all about long-haul efficiency linked to efficiency, mileage stability, and lifecycle value.



outcomes, not promises,” the company says. “If a tyre cannot perform consistently across heat, distance and load, it fails the fleet long before it reaches the end of its tread.”

### Safety built into the design

In regional long-haul operations, tyre integrity is directly linked to fleet uptime and road safety. Trailer tyre failures can result in unplanned downtime, secondary equipment damage and serious safety incidents, particularly on high-speed national and cross-border routes.

Leader Tread says safety is engineered into its retread designs from the outset. “We focus heavily on casing protection, tread stability and predictable wear,” the company explains. “In Southern Africa, tyres are exposed to sustained heat and long duty cycles. Any instability is amplified over distance.”

According to the company, tread patterns are designed to promote even footprint distribution and stable handling while supporting effective water dispersion during sudden weather changes. Defined groove geometry and stone-ejection features are intended to reduce debris retention and casing damage on routes where road conditions can vary significantly.



### Tread features

▲ Integrated stone-ejection features and defined groove geometry help protect the casing, maintain tread stability and support safe operation across variable road conditions. This is particularly important given some of South Africa’s real harsh road conditions and operating environments.



“Protecting the casing is fundamental,” Leader Tread notes. “A damaged casing is not only a safety risk, it is a lost lifecycle opportunity.”

### Sustainability through extended service life

In the Southern African road freight sector, sustainability is increasingly driven by operational efficiency rather than regulation alone. With rising input costs and constrained margins, extending tyre service life has become one of the most practical ways fleets can reduce environmental impact while protecting profitability.

Leader Tread frames retreading as a central component of a circular tyre lifecycle aligned to regional realities. “Retreading allows fleets to extract maximum value from a casing instead of relying on continuous replacement,” the company says. “That reduces material consumption and limits exposure to volatile import costs.”

Technical emphasis is placed on durability, controlled wear and thermal management. The company explains that tread designs supporting cooler running temperatures and even wear patterns help preserve casing integrity, increasing the likelihood of multiple successful retread cycles.

“Heat is one of the biggest enemies of tyre life in this region,”

### Tyre failures

▲ Tyre-related failures can result in costly downtime, secondary damage, and serious safety risks.

Leader Tread adds. “Managing it effectively improves safety, sustainability and long-term cost outcomes.”

### Savings measured in cost per kilometre

While safety and sustainability are critical, fleet decision-making ultimately centres on financial performance. Cost per kilometre remains the dominant benchmark, particularly in trailer positions where tyres are expected to deliver high mileage with minimal intervention.

Leader Tread says its long-haul retread strategy is built around predictable wear rates and extended service intervals. “Predictability allows fleets to plan maintenance ▶ 8

**Heat is one of the biggest enemies of tyre life in the Southern African region**



►7 around routes, loads and turnaround times,” the company explains. “That matters when vehicles are covering long distances between depots.”

Reduced rolling resistance and stable tread performance are cited as contributors to incremental fuel efficiency gains, an increasingly important consideration as fuel prices continue to pressure regional operators. Consistent wear patterns also reduce the risk of premature removals driven by irregular tread behaviour on mixed-quality road networks.

“Looking only at purchase price misses the real picture,” the company says. “Total lifecycle value includes fuel impact, maintenance demand and casing reuse, not just kilometres travelled.”

### **Designed for real-world Southern African conditions**

Southern African long-haul routes expose tyres to sustained running times, heavy loads, uneven surfaces and frequent debris. These conditions place continuous stress on tread design, compound selection and manufacturing consistency.

Leader Tread says its development process prioritises real-world

application feedback from fleets operating under these conditions. “Our designs are shaped by how tyres perform day after day on actual routes, not idealised environments,” the company explains.

Incremental gains in design consistency and quality control, the company argues, deliver measurable benefits when multiplied across thousands of kilometres and multiple vehicles.

“Small improvements become significant when they are repeated across an entire fleet, and that is where true long-haul value is built,” says Leader Tread.

### **Long-haul aligned**

Retreading is no longer viewed as a compromise in Southern African truck fleet operations. When supported by disciplined manufacturing processes and appropriate design, retreads can deliver performance aligned with the demands of long-haul transport.

Leader Tread positions its long-haul retread offering around a clear operational objective: “Our focus is simple,” the company concludes. “Keep fleets moving safely, extend casing life and deliver measurable savings over distance.” □

### **Skiving station**

▲ A skiving station. Skiving is a step in the tyre retreading preparation process where superficial damage, cuts, punctures, and debris are removed from the tire casing.

**Editor’s Comment:** For Southern African fleets, tyre decisions are shaped by realities that extend well beyond laboratory benchmarks. Heat, distance, road quality and cost pressure demand solutions that deliver predictability over time rather than short-term gains. Retreading has become a strategic tool in this context, particularly in trailer applications where lifecycle value matters as much as the truck-tractor. Leader Tread’s emphasis on engineered casing protection, designs to control tread wear and quantified real-world performance reflects a broader industry shift – one where tyres are judged not by claims, but by evidence of how reliably they perform kilometre after kilometre on Southern African roads.

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**SCANIA**



\*Image for illustrative purposes

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# OEMs look ahead

**On February 28**, the United States and Israel launched co-ordinated military strikes against Iran - a development with immediate and potentially far-reaching global consequences, particularly for energy markets. It is important to note that the responses featured here were received before these events unfolded. However, this does not diminish the opinions expressed for, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the outlook for South Africa's transport sector appeared cautiously manageable although certainly not without its bumps. The industry was already navigating a landscape shaped by rapid change across markets, technologies, regulations and supply chains, both locally and globally. Against this backdrop, *FleetWatch* invited leaders from truck manufacturing OEMs to share their perspectives on the year ahead through a set of questions covering expectations, priorities and challenges for 2026. The response was amazing and we thank the people featured on this page for the time and trouble they took. Disappointing, though, was the lack of response from the Chinese brands. They are selling in the market so why not join the conversations in the market. That said...read on. The insights are extremely valuable.



**Maretha Gerber**, President & Group CEO, Daimler Truck Southern Africa.



**Jan Aichinger**, Managing Director, MAN Automotive (South Africa) Pty Ltd



**Filip Van den Heede**, Managing Director, UD Trucks Southern Africa



**Erik Bergvall**, Managing Director, Scania Southern Africa



**Mark Gavin**, Sales Director, DAF Trucks



**Mpho Nkhumeleni**, Department Executive: CV Sales, Isuzu Motors South Africa

**Patrick O'Leary**, Managing Editor



**Itumeleng Segage**, General Manager, Hino South Africa.



**Volvo Truck South Africa, from left:**

**Eric Parry**, Senior Manager Sustainability; **Reshie Balkisson**, Director: Servicemarket & Business Development; **Onica Ndlovu**, Director Commercial Offer and Used Trucks

# Q1

Lower-priced new entrants gained traction disrupting not only the new-truck segment but also reshaping the used-truck market.

Maretha Gerber  
President and Group CEO  
Daimler Truck  
Southern Africa

▼ Mercedes-Benz  
Actros

### What are the biggest challenges facing the South African trucking sector in 2026 and which of these worry OEMs the most?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** We saw the market decline begin in 2024, with many customers delaying fleet renewals as economic pressures intensified. At the same time, lower-priced new entrants gained traction, disrupting not only the new-truck segment but also reshaping the used-truck market. This shift has fundamentally altered the competitive landscape and accelerated price pressure across the industry. The biggest challenge for 2026 will be to reset and fully adapt to these new market dynamics.

**Segage (Hino):** The following are the five structural pressures facing the South African sector in 2026: Logistics inefficiency and infrastructure decay (roads, ports, border posts); rising operating costs (fuel, tyres, insurance, finance); reform; crime and cargo security; macroeconomic volatility, weak GDP growth and exchange-rate swings. For OEMs, the biggest concern is volume volatility combined with cost escalation. When fleet replacement cycles stretch due to weak confidence, the entire ecosystem - dealers, parts, workshops - feels it.

**Gavin (DAF):** Cost discipline, operational resilience and infrastructure reliability will define 2026. Fuel continues

to represent the single largest operating expense for most fleets, while exchange-rate volatility places sustained pressure on vehicle and parts pricing. With road transport moving the vast majority of South Africa's freight (in excess of 85%), the burden on national road infrastructure remains significant. From an OEM perspective, the priority risks are uptime, fuel quality consistency, safety performance and regulatory certainty - particularly around emissions standards and broader freight-logistics reform.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** The South African truck market remains closely linked to overall economic performance. According to the South African Reserve Bank, GDP growth is forecast at 1.4% in 2026 and 1.9% in 2027. We therefore anticipate modest truck market growth broadly in line with these projections. However, the industry is also experiencing pockets of artificial growth that do not necessarily reflect underlying economic fundamentals. In addition, the continued policy drive to shift freight from road to rail is likely to place some pressure on Extra-Heavy Commercial Vehicle (EHCV) truck tractor volumes. For OEMs, the key concern is ensuring sustainable, demand-driven growth rather than short-term market distortions.

**Bergvall (Scania):** The biggest challenges in 2026 include deteriorating road infrastructure, rising operating costs, fuel price volatility, energy supply instability and policy uncertainty around rail and emissions. For OEMs, inconsistent fuel quality and regulatory misalignment remain key concerns, as these factors directly influence technology choices, vehicle durability, warranty exposure and long-term investment planning.

**Aichinger (MAN):** Challenges: Qualified drivers, deteriorating road infrastructure, road safety, uneven level playing field among OEMs, the delay in policy advancement (length and weight legislation) and the implementation of Euro 5/6).



**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** The most significant pressures remain: slow economic growth; rising input costs (fuel, insurance, parts, finance, etc.); ports congestion; and policy uncertainty around emissions and energy transition. For OEMs, the biggest concern is customer sustainability. When fleet operators struggle with margins, the entire ecosystem feels it. At UD Trucks, our focus is therefore on supporting customers through improved uptime, predictable maintenance costs and lower total cost of ownership - not just selling vehicles.

► **HINO 700** – hauling a moving floor trailer.



### What positives or opportunities should the trucking sector be focusing on in 2026, despite the current pressures?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** In 2025 OEMs adapted to the changing commercial vehicle landscape and in 2026, it is about streamlining our business and processes, building more resilient, future-focused business models, turning constraint into a catalyst for smarter and more competitive growth. Although it sounds easy, we know there is a lot of hard work ahead this year.

**Segage (Hino):** Despite the pressures, there are strong fundamentals which will unlock some opportunities. Road freight remains the backbone of South Africa's economy and this is positive for the trucking sector. Growth in e-commerce and regional cross-border trade will continue to support medium-duty truck volumes. Fleet professionalisation is improving. We are beginning to see more data-driven operators, as well as increased focus on total cost of ownership (TCO) rather than list price.

The opportunity lies in efficiency gains. Fleets that invest in driver training, telematics, maintenance planning and fuel optimisation can materially improve margins even in a slow economy. Hino SA understands this requirement and offers driver training to fleets and supports the need to utilise data for fleet efficiencies through the Hino connect offering.

**Balkisson (Volvo Trucks):** Connectivity is a very important part of the transformation of this industry. With the use of advanced analytical methods and AI, we can analyse large amounts of data and use the findings in our product development. We can develop new products and services that benefit our customers, and make transportation more productive, more sustainable and safer.

**Gavin (DAF):** Productivity. Fleets that use telematics properly, manage driver behaviour and enforce preventative maintenance can materially reduce fuel burn and downtime. Fleet renewal, when aligned to the correct duty cycle, still delivers lifecycle savings. Professional, compliant operators will continue to win contracts from risk-conscious customers.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Signs of economic stabilisation are encouraging for the transport industry. Improved consumer confidence, rising disposable income and the possibility of further interest rate relief could stimulate trade activity and freight movement. For fleet operators, 2026 presents an opportunity to strengthen operational efficiencies, modernise fleets and invest in technologies that enhance productivity and cost control. A disciplined, forward-

# Q2

**Growth in e-commerce and regional cross-border trade will continue to support medium-duty truck volumes.**

Itumeleng Segage  
General Manager  
Hino South Africa

looking approach will position operators well for medium-term growth.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Despite current pressures, the trucking sector remains resilient. Mining, agriculture and regional trade continue to drive freight demand. There is also a growing shift towards professional fleet management, data driven decision making and structured maintenance contracts. Customers are increasingly focused on total cost of ownership, vehicle efficiencies and uptime as well as sustainability, which aligns

with Scania's long-term solutions-based approach.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** Fleet renewal cycles as operators move away from aging vehicles and growing awareness of Total Profit Over Lifetime (TPOL) versus upfront price. There is also a greater appreciation for reliability, parts availability and service agreements. Customers are prioritising long-term value over short-term savings - which aligns strongly with UD Trucks' philosophy.

## Q3

**With renewed focus on shifting freight from road to rail, do you realistically see road transport losing meaningful volumes to rail in the medium to long term, or is this still more policy than practice?**

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** This has been a key topic in the automotive and logistics sectors for some time and it's encouraging to see policy finally moving in the right direction. However, despite this momentum, we don't anticipate a major shift of freight from road to rail in the medium to long term. For now, it remains more of a policy ambition than a practical, large-scale reality.

**Segage (Hino):** Rail reform is necessary and welcome. However, realistically, in the medium term, road freight will remain dominant. Rail can and should recover bulk and long-haul corridor freight but reliability must improve dramatically. Security and

turnaround times must be competitive. Private sector participation must be scaled. Road transport offers unmatched flexibility. We see rail as a complement, not a replacement.

**Ndlovu (Volvo Trucks):** It is a well-known fact that the South African road freight industry is a major contributor to the local economy and the development of the country and its infrastructure. The number of trucks on South African roads has increased over the last few years due to a decline in freight rail volumes. On the N3 Toll Route, for instance, heavy vehicles make up more than 30% of traffic.

We anticipate that road freight will always remain important in the areas of, for instance, construction, agriculture, daily commodities, consumer goods, courier, whereas rail could possibly play a greater role in running automotive cargo (car carriers), petroleum (chemicals) and containers.

At this stage, we do believe it is still more policy than practice but Volvo Trucks South Africa remains supportive of the government's investment in the country's rail networks as we believe rail forms an integral part of the solution to a better logistics industry - and subsequently to the enhancement of the local economy.

**Gavin (DAF):** The policy objective of increasing rail's share of freight is clear and strategically sound. However, the pace of execution and service reliability remain the

▼ **DAF Trucks:**  
Productivity should be a strong focus of operators in 2026.



determining factors. Until rail consistently delivers predictable scheduling, security and corridor performance, road transport will continue to serve as the backbone of South Africa's freight system - particularly for time-sensitive, flexible and first- and last-mile distribution requirements.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** While the road-to-rail strategy is an important national objective, we do not foresee a significant contraction in the overall truck market. Instead, we expect to see shifts within segments. Volumes in Medium and Heavy Commercial Vehicle (MCV and HCV) categories may strengthen, while EHCV truck tractors could experience some softening. Road transport will continue to play a critical role in first- and last-mile logistics, where flexibility and reliability remain essential.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Road transport will remain dominant in the medium term.

While strengthening rail is important for the economy, operational and reliability challenges mean a significant modal shift is unlikely in the near future. Road and rail should be complementary, not viewed as competitors. Efficient road transport remains critical for time sensitive freight.

**Aichinger (MAN):** The shift will have an effect. However, the process will not come overnight and it will add positively to South Africa's international competitiveness which, in the long run, will add to economic growth - which in return will benefit all sectors including the trucking. So, despite a short-time negative impact, the long-term positive impact will prevail.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** South Africa's economy relies on flexible, last-mile and time-sensitive delivery; a more integrated intermodal approach is the ideal outcome. We see rail as complementary, not competitive.

**With the introduction of Euro 6 technology locally, Volvo Trucks is responding to the growing local demand for cleaner transport solutions in South Africa.**

Eric Parry  
Senior Manager  
Sustainability  
Volvo Trucks South Africa

### South Africa remains on Euro 2 emissions standards while Europe moves towards Euro 7. How does this gap impact environmental outcomes, vehicle technology and South Africa's global competitiveness?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** The gap between South Africa's Euro 2 standard and the Euro 6 levels used globally limits the introduction of modern, cleaner engine technologies that require low-Sulphur fuels not yet widely available locally. This results in higher emissions, slower environmental progress and reduced competitiveness, as fleet operators and OEMs cannot fully access advanced, efficient global technologies. Closing this gap is essential for cleaner air, technology alignment and keeping South Africa competitive in global logistics and manufacturing.

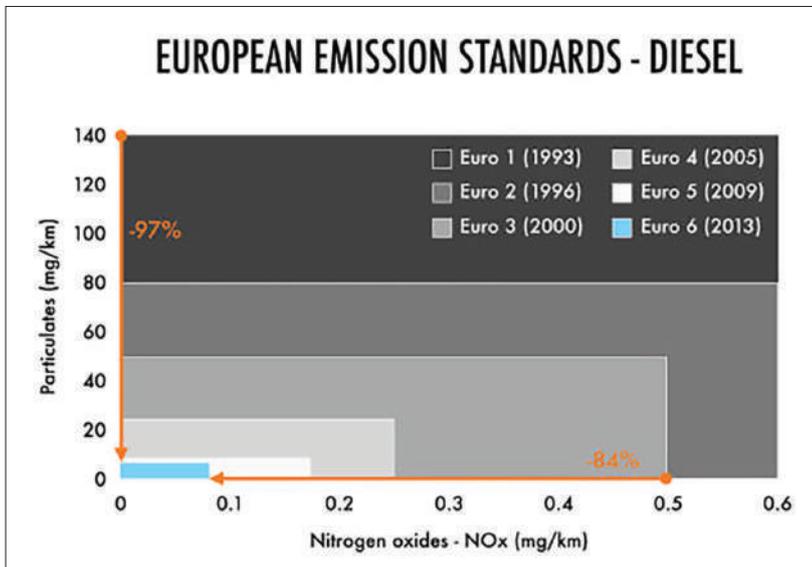
**Parry (Volvo Trucks):** To handle the transition to zero-emission vehicles amidst uncertain regulations, Volvo Trucks is investing simultaneously in battery electric, fuel cell electric and combustion engines that run on renewable fuels.

In 2025, Volvo Trucks South Africa announced the introduction of Euro 6 technology on its original long-haul icon, the Volvo FH. While we continue to offer Euro 3 and 5 engines, we actively explore and introduce new technologies that have



▲ VOLVO FH in Euro 6 guise.

# Q4



▲ This graph supplied by MAN shows the NOx and Particulates reductions on Euro 5 versus Euro 2. Europe is moving towards Euro 7. South Africa is still on Euro 2.

been thoroughly tested for local operating conditions, to ensure our customers have access to the latest innovations.

Notably, the Euro 6 standard represents a substantial improvement over the current Euro 2 standards regulating both passenger and commercial vehicles in South Africa. With the introduction of the Euro 6 technology locally, the company is responding to the growing local demand for cleaner transport solutions in South Africa.

This innovation embodies our commitment to reducing environmental impact and providing solutions that meet the evolving requirements of our customers. In addition, the advanced engine technology incorporated into the FH Euro 6, also offers enhanced power and torque characteristics, resulting in improved overall vehicle performance.

When it comes to fuel, it's not just about how much you can save but how much you can do with every litre. Achieving the perfect balance between fuel savings, drivability and performance, whilst considering the environment, is no easy task. The Volvo FH Euro 6 is in direct response to this.

The fuel quality has improved in SA with 10ppm being the optimal choice for Euro 6, now becoming increasingly available across the country.

**Gavin (DAF):** The gap limits environmental progress and technology adoption. Advanced emissions systems require compatible fuel and infrastructure. Without that ecosystem, OEMs cannot confidently deploy global-

spec technology at scale. It also affects competitiveness where multinational customers expect higher ESG alignment.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** South Africa's continued reliance on Euro 2 Standards - technology originating in the mid-1990s - limits the introduction of advanced global technologies, including certain driver-assistance and emissions systems. Progression to cleaner fuel standards is essential from both an environmental and competitive perspective. The anticipated Clean Fuels implementation will enable broader introduction of Euro 5 and higher technologies, improving emissions performance and safety standards.

Isuzu has already introduced selected Euro 5 models within the MCV, HCV and EHCV ranges. Our Euro 5 technology utilises a Diesel Oxidation Catalyst (DOC) system, which does not require exhaust gas additives, making it practical within the current local operating environment.

**Bergvall (Scania):** The gap between South Africa's Euro 2 standard and Europe's move towards Euro 7 limits the introduction of the latest low emission technologies. Without aligned fuel standards, advanced emissions systems cannot operate as designed. This slows environmental progress and places South Africa at a disadvantage in terms of global competitiveness and technology adoption.

**Aichinger (MAN):** The impact on the environment is huge as it is not only emissions on Euro 2 that are higher. Introducing Euro 5 would lead to significant improvements, i.e. 62.5% reduction on CO<sub>2</sub>, 71.4% on NOx and 86% on Particulates (see accompanying graph on NOx and Particulates reduction on Euro 5 vs. Euro 2). Also, later technologies come with more fuel-efficient technology leading to lower fuel consumption and thus lower emissions. South Africa, even among the BRICS countries, is the last country to not have introduced at least Euro 5. With the exception of Russia - for obvious reasons - all other BRICS countries have moved to Euro 6 (or equivalent) as the minimum standard.

In addition, it is widely known that even other technologies, such as safety features, are packaged with emission

packages in the vehicle development and engineering process. By that, the lower emission standards even have a broader impact on the quality of vehicles supplied.

### **Van den Heede (UD Trucks):**

The emissions gap highlights structural challenges in South Africa. Lower emissions standards potentially limit access to the latest engine technologies and environmental gains. It also creates complexity for OEMs operating globally, as we must adapt products to local market realities.

### **Fuel quality and inconsistency remain a concern. How does this affect engine durability, emissions systems and warranty exposure in South Africa compared to global markets?**

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** South Africa's reliance on Euro 2 and Euro 3-grade fuel - combined with persistent fuel-contamination issues - places significant strain on newer engine technologies. Higher Sulphur levels and inconsistent fuel quality accelerate wear on injectors, pumps and emissions-related components, reducing durability and driving up operating costs. Compared with markets operating on cleaner Euro 5/6 fuels, this also increases warranty risk, as many component failures stem from poor-quality fuel rather than manufacturing defects.

**Segage (Hino):** Inconsistent quality leads to increases maintenance complexity, raises warranty exposure and limits latest-generation engines. The engineering calibration on our Hino trucks is such that it accounts for variability of the fuel quality to ensure durability.

**Gavin (DAF):** Inconsistent fuel quality increases risk to injectors, combustion efficiency and emissions systems. For OEMs, it complicates diagnostics and can increase warranty exposure. Clear fuel specifications and disciplined sampling protocols are essential.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Fuel quality remains a significant concern. Variability in fuel standards can negatively affect sensitive mechanical components within modern fuel systems and emissions

From a broader perspective, cleaner emissions are not only about regulatory alignment - they are also about protecting our environment and securing a more sustainable future for the next generation. At UD Trucks, this aligns closely with our purpose of contributing to a Better Life. Progressing toward global standards would support the transition to cleaner fleets, enable the introduction of more advanced technologies and ensure that environmental responsibility and economic growth move forward together.

equipment. Failures resulting from contaminated or substandard fuel are considered consequential damage and are typically not covered under warranty. This increases operational risk for fleets and underscores the urgent need for consistent fuel quality standards.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Inconsistent fuel quality increases the risk of component wear and failure in modern engines and after treatment systems. This affects durability as well as uptime and will increase maintenance costs and warranty exposure compared to markets with stable Euro 5 or Euro 6 compliant fuel. Consistent high quality fuel supply reform remains essential for technology advancement.

# Q5

▼ **ISUZU FTR CNG DUAL FUEL** - gas and diesel model.



# Q6

**Aichinger (MAN):** According to our information the legislation with regard to fuel standards is changing from 01.07.2027 onwards. That is not that far in the future. If that standard is applied, then there is no reason for not changing the emission standard accordingly. Yet so far there is not a confirmed date for a new emission standard. Most of the MHCV

manufacturers would be ready for Euro 6. Jumping Euro 5 would not be an issue.

Talking about the current fuel standard, we see a lot of decontamination of fuel leading to higher cost when it comes to pre-filters and service intervals of filters to protect the engines and ensure longevity. Again, it is an additional burden for South African manufacturers and operators.

### While Europe pushes electrification and hydrogen, what propulsion technologies are realistically viable for South Africa over the next 10–15 years, given energy and infrastructure constraints?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Electric and hydrogen propulsion will both have a place in South Africa over time, but their uptake is likely to be gradual. Given the country's current energy and infrastructure constraints, widespread adoption may occur later than anticipated. In the near term, battery-electric trucks may become viable in specific, controlled operations, particularly short- to medium-distance distribution where charging can be centralised.

Hydrogen could eventually suit long-haul applications but only once the required refueling and production infrastructure is established. For the next 10-15 years, the reality is that adoption will depend heavily on how quickly South Africa can expand its energy capacity,

improve grid stability and build the necessary support infrastructure.

**Segage (Hino):** Europe is moving rapidly toward electrification and hydrogen. Our view is that South Africa must be pragmatic. The realistic outlook is that clean diesel (Euro 5/6 equivalent) will remain dominant in heavy-duty long haul. Hybrid solutions will be viable in urban and distribution segments.

Hino is currently piloting hybrids units in such operations. Battery-electric will be possible in metro, return-to-base operations but constrained by grid reliability and charging infrastructure. Hydrogen has long-term potential and the solution Hino is seriously considering for extra heavy models - but infrastructure and associated costs remain a challenge. Our transition must balance sustainability with economic reality.

#### ▼ MAN TGX 18.560



**Parry (Volvo Trucks):** All the possible technologies have potential in South Africa. In the shorter term we will see ICE still dominant in the longer haul operations. We would expect to see a rise in biofuels and natural/biogas powered trucks. An increase will be seen in Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) for short haul and regional work. The BEV share will start to grow faster once the legislation is adapted to accommodate the physical weight and dimension limitation imposed by the physics of batteries. Hydrogen has a longer time horizon, limited by the refuelling infrastructure needed.

**Gavin (DAF):** Over the next 10-15 years, modern diesel remains dominant.

## INSIGHTS 2026

Battery-electric is viable in return-to-base urban applications. Gas may work in corridor-specific operations. Hydrogen remains longer-term due to infrastructure and cost constraints. South Africa's transition will be pragmatic, not ideological.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** South Africa's strong solar resource makes battery electric vehicle (BEV) solutions increasingly viable, particularly in defined urban or return-to-base applications. The primary constraint remains the capital cost of charging infrastructure. As technology advances and costs reduce, electric vehicles are likely to gain traction in specific segments. Hydrogen propulsion may also become viable in certain heavy-duty applications. South Africa is well positioned in the emerging green hydrogen value chain and as production and distribution costs stabilise, hydrogen could form part of the long-term solution.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Over the next 10 to 15 years, advanced diesel technology will remain the primary solution in South Africa. Renewable fuels and biodiesel blends present practical transitional opportunities. Battery electric vehicles may be viable in specific urban or fixed route applications where charging infrastructure can be controlled. Hydrogen will require significant infrastructure and energy reforms before it becomes commercially viable at scale.

**Aichinger (MAN):** Diesel engines will dominate the market still for quite some while. However, one must differentiate between various operations. Also, in Europe city and commuter buses are showing the biggest progression when it comes to the introduction of eMobility. In 2025 more than 50% of all newly registered city buses in Europe have been battery electric, as it is the simplest use case. The buses all return to the same depot at night and by this, only one set of infrastructure and charging facility is needed to operate them.

The same can apply to South Africa, especially when it comes to commuter buses, the vehicles are mostly operated in the morning and the evenings. As such, during daytime, with the enormous amount of sun energy available in South

Africa, these buses can be charged by solar energy, sustainably and cost efficiently.

The next best use case is truck distribution operations. Also, in this segment, the vehicles return to the same depot which makes the investment affordable and the logistics manageable.

Long hauling will definitely be a long shot as it requires massive investment in charging infrastructure. In addition, all the vehicles offered in the market currently offer lower ranges than a typical diesel engine driven truck. The main reason for that is that the driving hours in the markets for which these trucks are designed are far more regulated than in South Africa, i.e. the battery packaging is designed to complement the legal driving hours, using the resting hours for charging.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):**

While Europe is moving rapidly toward electrification and hydrogen, South Africa's reality over the next 10–20 years will be a multi-technology transition, shaped by energy availability, infrastructure readiness and governmental policies and standards.

**The most viable approach for South Africa is a phased transition.**

Filip Van den Heede  
Managing Director  
UD Trucks Southern Africa

▼ **Euro 6 UD Quester garbage truck.** South Africa is still on Euro 2.



### Fair competition benefits customers and the industry

Itumeleng Segage  
General Manager  
Hino South Africa

Diesel will remain a critical part of the freight landscape but with a strong shift toward higher efficiency, lower emissions and compatibility with cleaner fuels such as renewable diesel and biodiesel blends. These solutions allow for immediate CO<sup>2</sup> reductions without requiring large-scale new infrastructure.

Electrification and hybrid solutions will play a targeted role, particularly in urban and regional operations where routes are predictable and energy can be managed through depots, microgrids or on-site renewables. However, widespread long-haul electrification will remain limited until charging networks significantly improve.

Hydrogen offers long-term potential for heavy-duty transport but in South Africa,

it is more realistically a longer-term solution, with near-term development focused on export and industrial applications rather than domestic trucking.

From a UD Trucks perspective, the path forward is technology-neutral and practical, driven also by affordability of the new technology for the transporter and end consumer. The most viable approach for South Africa is a phased transition, driven by higher emission standards (Euro 5) and combining cleaner internal combustion engines, alternative fuels and selective electrification, hence ensuring emissions reduction while maintaining reliability, affordability and economic competitiveness.

# Q7

**Chinese truck brands - more favourably priced than traditional brands - are rapidly gaining market share locally. Where exactly is the competitive playing field not level, and what needs to change to ensure fair competition across all OEMs?**



**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Not everything in life is created equally and the same is true for brands. The question should not be whether or not the playing field is equal but more importantly, whether customers are getting fair and equal value over the full life-cycle of a truck.

What matters more than the upfront price of a truck is how well a truck performs over time, its maintenance needs, durability, fuel efficiency, parts availability, safety features and the level of after-sales support. These factors ultimately determine whether a vehicle meets an operator's operational and financial requirements.

While certain brands might be more favorably priced, DTSA will not reduce or compromise on the value of our trucks, that is why we are "Trucks You Can Trust" and "Simply Better Trucks" and why customers globally have trusted us for 130 years.

**Segage (Hino):** Competition is healthy. All OEMs should meet identical regulatory, warranty and compliance obligations. Fair competition benefits customers and the industry.

◀ Sitrak is one of the Chinese originated trucks making inroads into the South Africa market.

**Gavin (DAF):** The question is not about competition - healthy competition strengthens any industry. The real issue is consistency of standards. A truly level playing field requires uniform enforcement of homologation requirements, comparable aftersales support capability, clear warranty accountability and consistent in-use compliance.

Competitiveness should ultimately be measured over the full lifecycle of the vehicle, not on the purchase price alone - particularly where long-term support structures differ.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Naamsa's Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) Committee is engaging on competitive parity within the industry.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Scania welcomes competition. A level playing field requires consistent homologation

standards, emissions compliance, safety requirements and aftersales obligations across all brands. Fair competition depends on equal regulatory enforcement and comparable long-term support commitments in the market.

**Aichinger (MAN):** Chinese manufacturers can import vehicles as CBUs cheaper than other Asian and European manufacturers can supply them. The main reason for that are direct and indirect subsidies (for example, subsidised rates for electricity for their plants) by the Chinese government for the manufactures.

In addition, while Asian and European manufacturers have invested in local production hereby ensuring jobs and local content, most Chinese trucks are imported. The South African Government should give priority in all direct purchasing and all indirect subsidies, including subcontracting to locally produced vehicles.

**Competitiveness should ultimately be measured over the full lifecycle of the vehicle, not on the purchase price alone**

Mark Gavin  
Sales Director  
DAF Trucks

### As operating costs rise, how should fleets rethink total cost of ownership and what mistakes do buyers still make when comparing brands?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** The idea of total cost of ownership exists to remind fleets that a lower up-front price can become far more expensive over time if you take into account the purchase price, fuel consumption, maintenance and service costs, repairs and downtime. One of the biggest mistakes buyers still make, especially in tough economic conditions, is focusing purely on the purchase price instead of the next five years of operating costs. Buying cheap can work out far more expensive in the long run.

**Segage (Hino):** As costs rise, fleets must evaluate the fuel efficiency over lifecycle, service intervals and uptime, parts pricing consistency, residual value and driver productivity. The common mistakes include, overweighting the purchase price, ignoring the resale value, underestimating downtime cost and not factoring telematics-enabled efficiency gains. A cheaper truck can become the most expensive asset if uptime suffers.

**Ndlovu (Volvo Trucks):** A common

mistake that buyers make is to focus on the sticker price when comparing brands. There are more considerations such as fuel efficiency, maintenance and more importantly, the resale potential of the brand. Volvo Trucks is known for having a strong resale value in the market because of the durability and longevity of the product.

There are also other parts of the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) calculation which are not always measured by all transporters, such as uptime. The cost of waiting for parts to be available for repairs is often underestimated. Another common mistake made by transporters is simply comparing the CPK rate received from one OEM to another, without considering the related benefits.

Our customers always come first. We provide complete solutions, whether through transport solutions, maintenance or the financial products we offer. We ensure that our transport solutions meet their specific operational needs and are tailored to the respective segments within the local industry.

Using connectivity, through its Uptime

# Q8

### Fuel efficiency, uptime, service contracts, residual value and driver performance have a significant impact on profitability

Erik Bergvall  
Managing Director  
Scania Southern Africa

▼ **Scania 500 R 6x4 Highline** - ideal for general cargo transport.

Solutions, Volvo Trucks ensures higher uptime, which is critical for customers facing economic pressures.

We believe in building partnerships with our customers. It is more than just handing over the keys to a new truck. It marks the beginning of our journey together, as we work hard to ensure that each vehicle remains productive, efficient and an asset to their business. This is done through ongoing communication, dedicated support, service and parts..

Each truck has a unique vehicle optimised service schedule linked to the route and application. This is calculated at the point of quoting and sales. The vehicle's operation determines the POC (power operating condition) that ultimately determines the required maintenance and intervals. This is also monitored by connectivity and will be updated as and when required.

**Gavin (DAF):** TCO must be measured per kilometre or per ton-km delivered - not purchase price. Fuel efficiency, uptime, residual value, service network strength, and driver behaviour drive real cost. Buyers often underestimate downtime cost and overestimate warranty equivalence across brands.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Operators should regularly review fleet replacement policies based on kilometres travelled, years in

service and operational performance data. Leveraging telematics, maintenance records, etc. using advanced Business Intelligence (BI) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can help identify the optimal replacement 'sweet spot'. Initial capital cost should never be the sole decision-making factor. True total cost of ownership encompasses fuel efficiency, uptime, maintenance, residual value and overall productivity and must guide purchasing decisions.

**Bergvall (Scania):** As costs rise, fleets must evaluate total cost of ownership as well as the efficiencies of the vehicle, not only the acquisition price. Fuel efficiency, uptime, service contracts, residual value and driver performance have a significant impact on profitability. The most common mistake remains comparing purchase price without quantifying lifecycle operating costs.

**Aichinger (MAN):** The biggest impact on TCO is mostly forgotten when it comes to TCO definition. Most operators will not include down-time to their TCO calculation, yet every single day of down-time represents a cost to the operator.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** Fleets need to move beyond purchase price and evaluate the total economic value of a truck over its full operating lifecycle. At UD Trucks, we often speak about "Total Profit Over Lifetime" rather than only total cost of ownership. This shifts the mindset from minimising upfront spend to maximising long-term return.

Key considerations should include: fuel efficiency over five to seven years; preventative maintenance planning; parts pricing and availability; vehicle uptime and workshop turnaround time; driver performance and telematics optimisation; and residual value at replacement cycle.

The most common mistake buyers still make is comparing brands primarily on initial capital outlay. A lower purchase price can quickly be eroded by higher fuel consumption, unplanned downtime, inconsistent parts supply, or poor resale value. A truck is not simply a cost item - it is a revenue-generating asset. When uptime, reliability and predictable maintenance are prioritized, the vehicle contributes to profitability throughout its lifecycle. That is the lens through which fleets should evaluate procurement decisions in today's cost-sensitive environment.



### Parts availability and uptime are critical. How resilient are OEM local supply chains to global disruptions, exchange rate volatility and shipping delays?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Every OEM has its own supply chain management system therefore I cannot generalize. At DTSA, however, customers can be assured that we do not experience any global disruptions. Furthermore, our approach is intentionally designed for resilience and responsiveness. We have a unique parts model where the primary focus is having the part as close to the customer as possible.

Stock is managed centrally and placed at the dealer closest to the customer. This centralized model ensures consistency, reduces fragmentation and enables faster, more accurate distribution. Our priority is clear: to keep our customers' trucks on the road by ensuring the right part reaches the right place at the right time.

**Segage (Hino):** Hino SA sources replacement parts and lubricants primarily from Japan, other far eastern countries and South Africa. Together with Toyota South Africa, Hino SA operates one of the most advanced Parts Distribution Centres in Southern Africa - the Toyota Africa Parts Centre (TAPC) located in Atlas, Gauteng. Parts are brought in by sea freight or, in special cases, by airfreight. They are then distributed to dealers across South Africa, BLNE countries, and some African markets by trucks operated by subcontracted parties.

The logistics are designed to ensure a 96% delivery rate to the ordering dealer within 24 hours, ensuring that customers experience minimal downtime. Our Hino dealers receive at least one parts delivery daily with dealers in Gauteng often receiving deliveries twice a day.

As part of the global business environment, we face on-going challenges within the global freight and supply chain networks. These challenges - including container shortages, port congestion and logistical delays - can occasionally lead to extended lead times for certain parts. Despite these external factors, our aim is always to minimize the impact on customer operations, and we will make plans to source any delayed part via emergency chain alternatives available to us. No supply chain

is immune but localization and strategic stockholding improve resilience.

**Balkisson (Volvo Trucks):** As a global player, Volvo Trucks is navigating global market volatility - often characterised by fluctuating demand and supply chain constraints by focusing on regional flexibility, a diversified product portfolio and versatile service business. Volvo Trucks is continuously investing in and strengthening its regional value chains to better adapt to local market conditions and reduce dependency on global disruptions.

Volvo Trucks has a dedicated Regional Distribution Centre in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, housing more than 55 000 parts. The aim of the centre is to deliver services with world-class operational excellence, in an efficient and sustainable way, thereby reducing costs, disruption and environmental impact. We also aim to constantly ensure the global availability of aftermarket parts to dealers and end-customers at the right time, the right place and at the right cost.

**Gavin (DAF):** Improved but still exposed to global logistics and currency shifts. Resilience depends on local stocking strategy and dealer network depth.

As part of the global business environment, we face on-going challenges within the global freight and supply chain networks.

Itumeleng Segage  
General Manager  
Hino South Africa

▼ **Hino 700 2845** –  
in a side-tipper mining  
operation.



**Our vehicles are not simply imported replicas of European or global models.**

**Maretha Gerber**  
President and Group CEO  
Daimler Truck  
Southern Africa

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Global supply chain disruptions have affected parts availability across the industry. Isuzu has responded by increasing local stockholding to mitigate extended lead times. At Isuzu, uptime remains central to our customer commitment. We continue to maintain one of the strongest parts fill rates in the industry in support of our brand promise: 'With you, for the long run.'

**Bergvall (Scania):** Scania has strengthened local and regional parts warehousing and regional support to improve resilience. While global supply chains remain exposed to exchange rate volatility and shipping disruptions, strong forecasting, local inventory strategies and digital monitoring have improved stability compared to previous years.

**Aichinger (MAN):** Typically, well-established brands will have a safety stock

in their stock holding to ensure that they are not affected by that. In addition, at MAN we have developed four different part lines. At the top of the range it is MAN original spare parts, followed by MAN, which are our remanufactured parts. The next level is the so-called line 360, which are localised parts and lastly - our latest edition - is used parts, which we are sourcing by disassembling used trucks. Especially the last three parts segments are helping to counter exchange rate volatility as well as global disruption.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** Global disruptions have tested OEMs extensively. UD Trucks benefits from: global manufacturing support; structured parts forecasting (LPA); and strong dealer networks. Exchange rate volatility remains a challenge, but supply chain visibility and planning have significantly improved post-pandemic.

## Q10

▼ **Mercedes-Benz Actros** – deliberate engineering choices are made to support real-world operational needs.



### Poor road infrastructure and harsh operating conditions define South African trucking. To what extent are trucks sold locally engineered for these realities?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Mercedes-Benz Trucks and FUSO Trucks are purpose-engineered to meet the unique demands of South African roads and operating conditions. Our vehicles are not simply imported replicas of European or global models. They undergo local adaptation and specification refinement to ensure durability, reliability and performance in challenging environments. For example, the Mercedes-Benz Actros sold in South Africa features a different front bumper and headlamp design compared to its European counterpart, providing increased ground clearance for rougher terrain and uneven road surfaces. We also offer certain models with steel rather than air suspensions.

These are deliberate engineering choices to support real-world operational needs. In addition, our product engineering team works closely with dealers and customers to continuously validate and refine model specifications. This collaboration ensures our trucks are configured to suit local applications, load profiles, climate conditions and industry requirements.

**Segage (Hino):** South African operating

conditions are among the harshest globally. It is for this reason that the trucks we sell as Hino South Africa are calibrated and specified for these realities. We are also mindful of the fact that some of our trucks are operated outside of South Africa where conditions are even worse. Therefore, our global platforms are locally validated and not simply imported unchanged.

**Balkisson (Volvo Trucks):** With an assembly plant in the country, Volvo Trucks South Africa has the skills, capacity and expertise to conduct local tests before introducing any product into the market - some of the toughest evaluations in our industry. The outcome of these tests focuses on quality, which can be seen in the entire development chain, including design, engineering, choice of materials, manufacturing, sales and aftermarket services. Although these engines and trucks are designed in Europe, they are carefully adapted to withstand the unique demands of the South African climate and road conditions. The quality and technology integrated into all the Volvo Trucks ranges have been rigorously tested to ensure longevity and performance.

**Gavin (DAF):** Global platforms are robust but correct local specification is critical. Cooling capacity, filtration, suspension and duty-cycle alignment determine performance. Application engineering matters more than brochure specification.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Although some brands sell imported truck as they are, Isuzu trucks destined for the African market undergo rigorous localisation and reliability testing. Isuzu maintains a dedicated team of local engineers focused specifically on adapting products for African operating conditions. Before launch, Isuzu trucks undergo extensive regional validation to ensure durability under demanding road, climate and load conditions.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Vehicles sold by Scania in South Africa are specified for high axle loads, harsh operating conditions and demanding ambient temperatures. However, infrastructure deterioration increases mechanical stress and maintenance requirements. Continuous adaptation to local conditions is essential and is a constant focus.

**Aichinger (MAN):** When designing MAN trucks, we intensively test the new vehicle generations always considering various climate and operational conditions. Whether being for hot countries or for Arctic conditions, whether for on-road or off-road conditions, packages are developed for an MAN truck to cope with regional or country specific factors.



An example for an adaptation to the South African conditions is the specialised air filtration, a cyclon filter only used in conditions with a higher dust than usual, such as is found in South Africa especially during winter months. Using usual paper filter systems, the filter would get clogged too fast and would either lead to higher fuel consumption or to a need for cleaning and exchanging the filter more often.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** Vehicles supplied locally are adapted for durability, suspension resilience, cooling efficiency and chassis strength. Engineering for reliability in tough environments is central to our product philosophy.

▲ **MAN TGS** – South Africa is still on Euro2.

**Packages are developed for an MAN truck to cope with regional or country specific factors.**

Jan Aichinger  
Managing Director/  
Executive Director  
MAN Automotive  
(South Africa) Pty Ltd

### With driver shortages, skills gaps and rising accident rates, what responsibility should OEMs take beyond vehicle supply to improve safety and driver competence?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Safety is a shared responsibility between OEMs, fleet operators and government. Each plays a crucial role in building a safer transport ecosystem. From an OEM perspective, our first obligation is to ensure that every vehicle we supply meets or exceeds South Africa's safety regulations. This is the foundation. However, at DTSA we believe our role extends well beyond compliance and the delivery of safe products. Even

though it is not a legal requirement, we view driver training as essential to improving overall road safety and fleet efficiency.

A well-trained driver not only operates the vehicle more safely but also helps reduce accidents, improve fuel consumption and protect other road users. This is why DTSA invests heavily in driver training initiatives, support programmes and knowledge-sharing with fleets and drivers.

# Q11

**OEMs have a responsibility that extends beyond vehicle supply. Isuzu was among the first to introduce Automated Manual Transmission technology locally to enhance drivability and reduce driver fatigue.**

**Mpho Nkhumeleni**  
Department Executive:  
CV Sales  
Isuzu Motors South Africa

▼ **VOLVO:** Every detail in the cab is meticulously designed with the driver's comfort and convenience in mind.

Better-equipped drivers contribute directly to safer roads and we see it as our responsibility to support that outcome wherever we can.

**Segage (Hino):** OEM responsibility extends beyond selling trucks. We must support driver training initiatives, increase advanced safety systems in the trucks we manufacture and ergonomic cab designs. Safety has to be shared between OEMs, operators, regulators and insurers.

**Ndlovu (Volvo Trucks):** A critical shortage of skilled commercial vehicle drivers is one of the contributing factors to the country's high accident rate. Volvo Trucks, therefore, believes that training remains instrumental in efforts to improve road safety.

Even in a modern truck, the driver remains the most crucial safety system. Therefore, we continue to invest in cutting-edge vehicle technology, offering a suite of sophisticated, tried-and-tested active safety features designed to support the driver. These features are essential to reduce or prevent accidents and injuries.

For professional truck drivers, the cab serves as more than just a workspace; it is a home away from home. Every detail in the cab is meticulously designed with the driver's comfort and convenience in mind. Features such as the adjustable steering wheel, customisable seat adjustments, comfortable sleeper bunk bed, ample storage, fridge, air conditioner and multiple charging ports ensure that drivers can stay connected with their loved ones. Each

feature is thoughtfully tailored to reduce fatigue and enhance the overall driving experience.

Volvo Trucks is passionate about crafting a driver experience that fosters a comfortable, safe and enjoyable environment that not only supports a productive journey but positively impacts the driver's life. By prioritising the needs of our drivers, we aim to create a sense of well-being and satisfaction that extends beyond the drive itself, recognising the profound impact it can have on their overall quality of life and ultimately, the success of our customers.

Volvo Trucks also offers ongoing driver training that are tailored for each customer's unique operations, fleet combinations and industry sectors. In 2019, Volvo Trucks South Africa introduced Iron Women, a training programme that is aimed at enhancing training and enhancing the capacity of female professional drivers and to ultimately enable them to contribute to their future employers' fleet safety, profitability and efficiency. With truck driving today a gender-neutral task, we believe this programme is addressing gender parity in the sector through the employment of highly determined, well-trained female drivers, while creating job opportunities for SA women in economic plight.

**Gavin (DAF):** We must go beyond vehicle supply. Driver training, telematics-based coaching, safety system education and fleet manager enablement are essential. Road safety is a shared responsibility across OEMs, operators, and regulators.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** OEMs have a responsibility that extends beyond vehicle supply. Isuzu was among the first to introduce Automated Manual Transmission (AMT) technology locally to enhance drivability and reduce driver fatigue. In addition, Isuzu offers structured driver training through our Driving Academy, equipping fleet customers with the skills required to maximise safety, efficiency and vehicle longevity.

**Bergvall (Scania):** OEM responsibility extends beyond vehicle supply. Scania invests in a continuously improving extensive dealer network, driver training, fuel efficiency coaching, safety technology and telematics solutions that support safer



## INSIGHTS 2026

and more efficient operations. Improving driver competence and safety is a shared responsibility across the entire value chain.

**Aichinger (MAN):** Modern safety systems are definitely helping to ensure improved road safety and OEMs are offering a wide range of safety features in modern trucks. However, it is a combination of safety features and infrastructure which is required for safety features to operate optimally. The large number of potholes, for example are leading to the effect that drivers and operators are disengaging the so-called lane assist system, as potholes typically appear in the usual driving line. To avoid hitting potholes, drivers are steering the trucks out of the usual driving line and consequently, are “fighting” with the lane guard assist which is designed to keep them in the middle of the road. Still the most important “safety feature”, is driver training. Continuous driver training is not only adding massively to the latest technologies of modern trucks and is leading to more forward-looking driving styles but it is also leading to better TCOs as drivers still have a huge impact on the truck’s TCO. At MAN, we take ownership of our part in ensuring drivers are well equipped to drive safely by offering our customers Driver Training via our ProfiDrive Academy as a value add with each purchase.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** OEM responsibility extends far beyond simply supplying vehicles. At UD Trucks, we believe

our role is to actively contribute to safer, more professional and more sustainable transport operations. This begins with engineering - equipping our vehicles with advanced safety technologies designed to support drivers in real-world operating conditions.

However, technology alone is not enough. We invest in structured driver training initiatives that promote defensive driving, fuel-efficient techniques and vehicle care. Through our driver competitions, we reinforce professional pride, technical competence and safety awareness, celebrating excellence while encouraging continuous improvement across fleets.

Our commitment also extends to transformation and inclusion. Through programs focused on training women truck and bus drivers (Ultimate Women Program), we are helping to address skills shortages, improve professionalism in the sector, and create meaningful economic opportunities. These initiatives are not only about access - but they are also about raising industry standards. In addition, our partnerships with training institutions and industry stakeholders allow us to contribute to long-term skills development aligned to the realities of the South African market. Improving safety is a shared industry responsibility. In addition, we use technology to skill our drivers through My UD Fleet that measures the driving style to set KPI’s, identifies shortcomings and areas of development for the driver. The new UD SmartCam that will be introduced in our vehicles built from 1 April will warn drivers when it comes to fatigue, distraction and dangerous lane changes.

**Improving driver competence and safety is a shared responsibility across the entire value chain.**

**Erik Bergvall**  
Managing Director  
Scania Southern Africa



◀ **Scania** – driver training  
in progress

# Q12

## Security is now a core specification requirement

Mark Gavin  
Sales Director  
DAF Trucks

### Cargo crime and vehicle hijackings are persistent risks. How are OEMs adapting vehicle design, factory-fit security and telematics to South Africa's crime environment?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** All Mercedes-Benz Actros truck tractor models and selected Fuso models assembled at our East London plant are equipped with factory fitted fuel theft protection as standard. On certain models of our long-haul Actros range, the Multimedia Cockpit and MirrorCam system, which not only enhance driving safety but also act as an additional security aid, allows drivers to view their surroundings from inside the cab when stationary.

In addition, selected Mercedes-Benz Trucks include Fleetboard as standard. This telematics platform has become invaluable in detecting unauthorized stops, fuel-loss events and other irregular activity, giving operators an extra layer of protection in South Africa's high-risk environment.

**Segage (Hino):** Hino Connect provides real-time GPS tracking and positional monitoring of vehicles. Geo-fencing and

movement alerts so fleet managers know instantly if a vehicle enters or exits defined routes or unsafe areas. There is also tracking and recovery support that ties into local recovery services, at an additional cost. This helps with rapid location of stolen vehicles and stolen loads. OEM-integrated systems are usually harder for criminals to locate and disable compared to aftermarket devices.

**Gavin (DAF):** Security is now a core specification requirement. Factory-fit security, telematics integration, geofencing and control-room compatibility are increasingly non-negotiable in South Africa's operating environment.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** OEMs collaborate closely with reputable local engineering firms to develop and integrate factory-approved security enhancements and protective accessories. Telematics integration, tracking capability and engineered security solutions form part of a broader risk-mitigation ecosystem designed to address South Africa's operating environment.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Cargo crime and hijackings remain a serious risk. Scania integrates factory fit telematics, geofencing, remote immobilisation and data sharing capabilities to support customers and recovery partners. Security is incorporated at specification stage rather than treated as an afterthought.

**Aichinger (MAN):** As the requirements from our customers are very specialised in terms of their security preferences, we do not add factory-fit security features. However, during the PDI process we assist customers with their specific security requirements.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** Vehicle and cargo security are critical considerations in markets where fleet assets operate in higher-risk environments. For OEMs, this requires a proactive approach - embedding protection into the



vehicle from the outset rather than treating it as an aftermarket add-on.

At UD Trucks, security is integrated into our broader safety and uptime philosophy. Our vehicles are equipped with: UD Connected Services (our standard telematics platform), providing real-time visibility and tracking; an anti-fuel siphoning device fitted as standard across the range; remote monitoring capabilities that support proactive intervention; and the new UD SmartCam that will be introduced in our vehicles built from 1 April will provide footage for accidents and other risks.

Telematics plays a central role in strengthening both asset security and operational control. With UD Connected Services fitted as standard, fleets have access to live tracking, geofencing, route monitoring and performance insights - and we continue to enhance these capabilities in line with evolving customer needs.

Designing with local operating realities in mind ensures that vehicle, cargo and driver protection are embedded at factory level. Ultimately, protecting assets is about safeguarding uptime, supporting business continuity and reinforcing long-term customer confidence.

### Are insurers and OEMs aligned when it comes to anti-theft technology, tracking and vehicle recovery, or is the industry still working in silos?

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** While there's no formal industry-wide alignment, we regularly collaborate with customers' tracking and recovery providers - and these partnerships have delivered strong, positive results. This shows that when insurers, OEMs and service providers work together - even informally - the outcomes are far more effective than when each operates in isolation.

**Segage (Hino):** Alignment is improving but is not perfect. OEMs, insurers and tracking companies need shared standards, agreed security benchmarks and data-sharing frameworks. When collaboration improves, premiums will stabilise and recovery rates improve.

**Gavin (DAF):** Alignment is improving but fragmentation remains. Better integration between OEM telematics and insurer requirements would reduce duplication and improve recovery outcomes.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** There is increasing alignment between OEMs, insurers and certified security technology providers. Approved anti-theft, tracking and recovery systems are validated to ensure reliability and compliance. Where certified systems are installed, operators may benefit from reduced insurance premiums, reflecting growing collaboration across the value chain.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Collaboration between insurers and OEMs is improving, particularly

around improved tracking technologies and data integration. Greater alignment on risk modelling and vehicle data sharing will further strengthen prevention and recovery outcomes.

**Aichinger (MAN):** Vehicles can be tracked and data can be shared in case of theft, but more can be done to build bridges between the various stakeholders concerned.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** Alignment around tracking standards, anti-theft technology and data sharing can improve recovery rates and reduce insurance costs. The ecosystem functions best when insurers, OEMs and fleet operators collaborate rather than operate in silos.

# Q13

▼ There is increasing alignment between OEMs, insurers and certified security technology providers but consensus is that more can be done.



# Q14

An area we feel more fleet owners can explore is productivity services.

Reshie Balkisson  
Director: Service market &  
Business Development  
Volvo Trucks SA

**Telematics is no longer regarded as a 'nice-to-have' but rather a 'must have'. How effectively are South African fleets using the data, and what are the biggest missed opportunities in fuel efficiency, safety and predictive maintenance?**

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** The biggest missed opportunity is a lack of consistent engagement from operators. Fleets that actively use our Fleetboard telematics unlock major gains and often describe it as a game-changer. But many others rarely log in and once we show them the insights available, they openly acknowledge they could have leveraged the data far more effectively.

**Segage (Hino):** Telematics adoption has increased significantly. However, many small to medium fleets use only basic tracking and are missing opportunities to benefit from predictive maintenance using fault-code analytics, driver behavior coaching linked to fuel consumption, route optimisation.

**Balkisson (Volvo Trucks):** Heavy commercial trucks of today are sophisticated vehicles filled with advanced software systems, like those in passenger cars. Connectivity is at the core of this development. More than one million connected Volvo trucks are now on the road worldwide and in South Africa we have close to 9000 vehicles that can make

use of the company's full range of services. Using connected services, we can support our customers and the drivers in so many ways - optimising uptime, lowering energy consumption and making the entire truck operation more efficient and safer.

Volvo Trucks offers connected services within two major areas: Uptime and Productivity. Uptime services involve using wireless connectivity to, for example, monitor and track vehicles remotely and anticipate potential faults, with the goal to optimize truck operation and reduce downtime. The wear on important components in the truck can be monitored, enabling an optimised service plan and ensuring the vehicle gets the right service at the right time. Uptime services also include updates of the trucks' software over the air to avoid unnecessary workshop visits.

An area we feel that more fleet owners can explore is productivity services. With Volvo Trucks it is about improving customers' operations and reducing costs, for example, through fleet management systems and planning tools. The services also include providing drivers with solutions that can improve fuel efficiency and safety, as well as infotainment and convenience features.

With road safety being a major issue in South Africa, a missed opportunity could be the full adoption of Volvo's connected solutions that contribute to improving driver behaviour and overall road safety. With the Positioning Service & Safety Service customers can use this to follow everything from the position of the truck to detailed information about the driver, load and type of vehicle. The safety service also allows the fleet controllers to monitor truck speed, harsh braking, and unsafe driving behaviour and when the driver chooses to override the safety package. This allows the owner to intervene and to coach and correct the driver's behaviour

**Gavin (DAF):** Not consistently. The biggest missed opportunities remain fuel efficiency, predictive maintenance and



## INSIGHTS 2026

structured driver coaching. Data only adds value when operationalised.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Telematics has evolved into a core operational tool. ISUZU trucks are equipped with factory-fitted telematics, enabling seamless activation with approved service providers. While many operators use telematics effectively to enhance operational efficiency, the greatest opportunity lies in applying BI and AI analytics layers to convert raw data into predictive insights. These advanced analytics drive predictive maintenance, fuel optimisation and improved safety outcomes.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Telematics is widely adopted but not always fully utilised. The greatest opportunities lie in predictive maintenance, structured driver coaching and fuel performance benchmarking. Data must translate into operational action to deliver measurable savings.

**Aichinger (MAN):** In most cases customers are utilising the data to their advantage. However, we believe that more customers should look at incentives for their drivers as this will lead to better fuel consumption, vehicle longevity and improve overall safety on the roads.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** The real differentiator is not access to data - it is how effectively that data is used. In many cases, telematics remains a reporting

tool rather than a decision-making tool. The biggest missed opportunities lie in: predictive maintenance - using fault codes and vehicle health data to intervene before breakdowns occur; real-time driver behavior coaching - correcting harsh braking, excessive idling, or over speeding before it impacts safety and fuel costs; fuel optimisation benchmarking - comparing routes, loads and driver performance to reduce consumption; and proactive downtime management - planning workshop visits around operational schedules instead of reacting to failures.

At UD Trucks, our UD Connected Services platform is designed to move fleets from visibility to action. Fitted as standard, it provides real-time vehicle tracking, fuel consumption data, driver performance insights, fault code alerts and maintenance planning support. This enables: early identification of potential technical issues; structured coaching conversations based on objective data; improved fuel efficiency through measurable behavior change; and better service planning aligned to OEM specifications.

When telematics data is integrated into daily fleet management processes - rather than reviewed retrospectively - it becomes a powerful profitability and safety tool. Ultimately, telematics insights should not just tell you what happened yesterday; it should help you prevent tomorrow's breakdown, reduce today's fuel bill and continuously improve driver safety. That is where the true value lies.

**When telematics data is integrated into daily fleet management processes rather than reviewed retrospectively, it becomes a powerful profitability and safety tool.**

Filip Van den Heede  
Managing Director  
UD Trucks Southern Africa



◀ The general consensus from respondents is that telematics systems are being adopted but are not being used to their full potential.

### Q15

**Inconsistent enforcement of overloading and roadworthiness regulations undermines compliant operators and distorts competition.**

Mpho Nkhumeleni  
Department Executive:  
CV Sales  
Isuzu Motors South Africa

**Weak enforcement of overloading and roadworthiness is often blamed for distorting the market. How much does inconsistent enforcement undermine compliant operators - and what role should OEMs play in pushing for better regulation?**

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Inconsistent enforcement of overloading and roadworthiness undeniably undermines compliant operators by allowing non-compliant fleets to operate at lower costs and gain an unfair advantage. Furthermore, unroadworthy trucks pose a serious safety hazard for all road users and public.

To improve this, all stakeholders must advocate for stronger, more consistent regulations. OEMs already engage with industry bodies and government and they should continue using every platform available to push for stricter, fairer enforcement that protects both operators, the wider industry and general public.

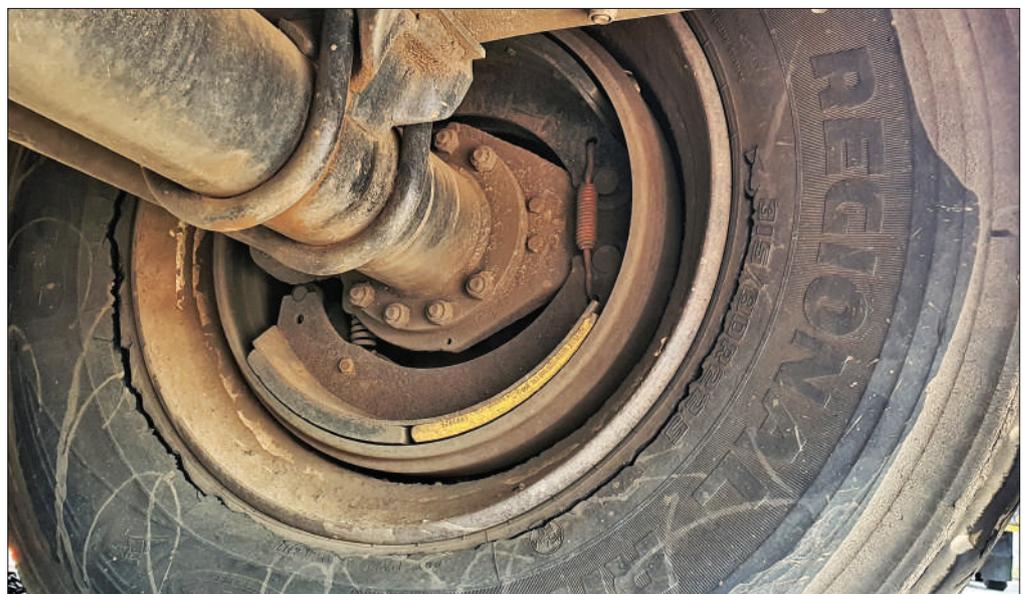
**Gavin (DAF):** Inconsistent enforcement distorts competition. Overloading and poor roadworthiness undermine compliant fleets. OEMs should advocate for consistent enforcement and refuse to enable non-compliant specification practices.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Inconsistent enforcement of overloading and roadworthiness regulations undermines compliant operators and distorts competition. OEMs continue to engage

with law enforcement agencies to provide technical guidance on assessment of vehicle conditions. Through our dealer network, we are also able to identify premature wear patterns and structural defects that often indicate overloading - 'metal tell-tales'.

**Bergvall (Scania):** Inconsistent enforcement of overloading and roadworthiness distorts the market and disadvantages compliant operators. Scania supports industry efforts to strengthen enforcement and regulatory consistency to improve safety and fairness.

**Aichinger (MAN):** We are co-operating closely with Government and authorities when it comes to defining legislation, providing them with vehicle specific documentation as well as with training material. In addition, as part of our driver training, we are also educating drivers on road safety including correct loading of trucks and securing loads on a truck. Via naamsa, we are providing the Government - on a regular basis - with an industry aligned view how further improvements could be made and are also providing them with best practice examples from our markets.



► The *FleetWatch* Brake & Tyre Watch training project has highlighted over the years the large number of unroadworthy trucks operating on the roads.

**Do you feel Government is aligned with the needs and challenges of the trucking sector? Many feel that this sector remains a 'Cinderella'.**

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):**

Government faces an enormous mandate, spanning multiple regions and industries and it's understandable that many sectors, not only trucking, often feel like the "Cinderella" of national priorities. That said, the needs and challenges of the trucking sector are not yet fully aligned with government actions and several critical issues remain insufficiently addressed.

As an industry, it's essential that we continue to ensure road freight stays high on the national agenda. The sector underpins South Africa's entire supply chain and without sustained, focused attention on infrastructure, regulation and operating conditions, the broader economy feels the impact. Our role is to keep advocating constructively, providing data-driven insights and reinforcing why trucking must remain a strategic priority for the country's growth and competitiveness.

**Segage (Hino):** There is engagement but more structured collaboration is required. The trucking sector underpins economic activity, yet policy often lags operational reality. Greater public-private coordination is essential, particularly on infrastructure, fuel standards, freight reform and safety enforcement.

**Gavin (DAF):** Policy direction is becoming clearer, which is encouraging. The opportunity now lies in accelerating implementation. For the sector to unlock sustainable growth, it requires predictable regulatory pathways, reliable infrastructure

performance and consistent enforcement across the freight ecosystem.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** There are areas where legislative reform is required, particularly to accommodate electric and other carbon-neutral vehicles. Regulations relating to vehicle weights and dimensions will need updating to ensure fair and practical integration of new propulsion technologies.

**Bergvall (Scania):** On-going engagement with Government is critical. The trucking sector underpins economic activity across South Africa and the region. Greater policy certainty, infrastructure investment and fuel reform alignment would strengthen long term sector stability. It is important to understand differences between e.g. the passenger car industry and the commercial vehicle industry to ensure implementation of the right policies to both industries.

**Aichinger (MAN):** We have a recent example where government has improved in terms of speed of implementation. We were advocating that CKD kits for electric commercial vehicles should be equally custom exempted as for combustion driven vehicles. For whatever reason, this was not the case. However, before the end of 2024 legislation changed based on our request and CKD kits for electric driven commercial vehicles are now also custom exempted. At the same time, there are still open topics, such as the already mentioned weight and length adjustment, the exhaust emission standard change to Euro 5 or even better to Euro 6, etc. where we would need similar speed in decision making.

**We are co-operating closely with Government and authorities when it comes to defining legislation.**

Jan Aichinger  
Managing Director  
MAN Automotive  
(South Africa) Pty Ltd



◀ **Isuzu Trucks** has a comprehensive range spanning Medium and Heavy commercial Vehicles.

**Our industry has weathered many winds of change in recent years but each one has shaped us, strengthened us and taught us to navigate with greater purpose.**

**Maretha Gerber**  
President and Group CEO  
Daimler Truck  
Southern Africa

### The last words ... general comments

**Gerber (Daimler Truck):** Our industry has weathered many winds of change in recent years, some gentle, some fierce but each one has shaped us, strengthened us, and taught us to navigate with greater purpose. And now, in 2026, it brings with it a fresh horizon, wide open with possibilities to serve all who keep Africa moving.

**Segage (Hino):** South Africa's trucking sector is resilient. Despite infrastructure strain, crime and economic headwinds, fleets continue to adapt and innovate. The future depends on collaboration across OEMs, operators, regulators and financiers. If we focus on efficiency, safety, fair competition and gradual technology advancement, the sector can remain a powerful contributor to economic growth. At Hino South Africa, our commitment remains simple: deliver durable, reliable trucks backed by strong after-sales support, engineered for South African conditions and aligned to long-term sustainability.

**Gavin (DAF):** The defining issue for 2026 is professionalism. Fleets that manage cost per kilometre, invest in people, use data intelligently and partner with strong dealer networks will outperform - regardless of economic headwinds.

**Nkhumeleni (Isuzu):** Trucking remains the heartbeat of the South African economy. Professionalism across the sector is essential. South Africa has operators who maintain world-class standards and others who are what are called "back-yard" operators. The disparities in compliance and operational discipline contribute to avoidable breakdowns, congestion and accidents. A collaborative approach between OEMs, operators, regulators and infrastructure authorities is essential to building a safer, more efficient and more sustainable transport industry.

**Bergvall (Scania):** The South African trucking sector is evolving rapidly. Sustainability, digitalisation, infrastructure constraints and new market entrants are reshaping the landscape. Long-term success will depend on strong partnerships between OEMs, fleets, regulators and industry bodies to build a safer, more efficient and more competitive freight ecosystem.

**Van den Heede (UD Trucks):** The trucking sector is resilient. Despite economic headwinds, operators continue to adapt and innovate. For OEMs like UD Trucks, the focus remains clear: delivering reliable products; strengthening dealer networks; supporting customer uptime; and investing in long-term partnerships. Sustainable growth in South Africa's transport sector will depend on collaboration, practical policy and a shared commitment to operational excellence. □

◀ No matter the challenges, this industry is a vital contributor to South Africa society and its economy.



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# What this really means for transport operators

**By Gavin Kelly  
CEO, RFA**

**S**outh Africa's 2026 Budget has been cautiously welcomed by business but within the road freight sector, the reaction is more measured than celebratory. While tax threshold adjustments and SMME relief offer breathing room, increases in the general fuel levy and unresolved structural questions around rail reform temper optimism.

In this opinion piece, Gavin Kelly, CEO of the Road Freight Association (RFA), examines what the Budget really means for transport operators, small fleet owners and the broader logistics value chain - and why implementation, not intention, will determine whether the sector strengthens or stumbles. Over to you Mr Kelly....

## **Budget 2026 - Road Freight, Reform and the Reality Check**

South Africa's 2026 Budget lands at a pivotal moment for the road freight sector. There are encouraging signals in the numbers - but also familiar structural concerns. As an industry that quite literally carries the economy, we look beyond headline relief to ask a harder question: will this Budget strengthen logistics competitiveness, or merely postpone deeper reform?

## **From windfall to warning - tax relief built on commodities**

The Road Freight Association notes that the planned additional R20-billion to be taken from individual taxpayers has been dropped - thank goodness for that. This is largely due to the commodities boom that has saved our necks. (Editor's Note: With the bulk of export commodities hauled to ports by road in the absence of an efficient rail network. Thanks truckers). The question is: what does that mean for 2027 should the commodities boom have long disappeared?

Another question remains as to whether that “boon” will still disappear into the deep, dark pit of government spending.

Both personal income tax brackets and capital gains tax thresholds have been raised in line with inflation - a very good sign and another relief for the average citizen.

More importantly, asset disposals for small businesses will be exempted up to a maximum of R15-million. SMMEs make up 80% of our Association’s membership - this exemption is vital for their sustainability and growth.

Similarly, VAT and turnover tax thresholds will be raised for micro businesses to account for inflationary pressures - a huge “win” for another portion of our membership. This means those businesses have a fighting chance to grow - something we have debated and discussed with various government departments for at least a decade.

It is important to understand that cash injections - initial funding - do not guarantee business stability and growth. The real key to sustainability lies in building bulkheads - strong protections to ensure that assets appreciate and the business develops securely.

This latest step puts us on the right path. It allows cash-starved but capital-rich businesses to grow with some protection before they become exposed to fuller and further-reaching taxation.

**The “general” fuel levy - who really benefits?**

The largest levy faced by the road freight sector has to be the “general fuel levy”. Yet there are a plethora of so-called “stealth taxes” in vehicle sales, including carbon taxes, visible tolls, licence fees, permits and special tariffs for specific operations, municipal compliance and registration tariffs for dangerous goods - both transported and warehoused - as well as parking and special use areas within local authorities.

The problem is the word “general”. The levy goes more

to other aspects of government expenditure than to the infrastructure used by the purchasers of fuel. Is that not what it is meant to be - a user levy?

In the main, allocated funding from the general fuel levy has reportedly not been used for road infrastructure but for other urgent priority issues such as education, water, electricity and health. These are not incorrect priorities in themselves - but the deterioration of road networks not under the domain of South African National Roads Agency Limited has been noticeable.

The wording is important: “general fuel levy” as opposed to “road fund levy”. Perhaps that is where it has all gone wrong.

Thus, here we go again with an increase in the general fuel levy. It is being raised by R0.21 per litre for diesel. The impact may not be felt immediately. However, we now import finished product due to our refineries having gone offline - so that relief may be temporary.

One of the reasons given for the increase is the Road Accident Fund. The RAF has an incredible capacity to absorb vast quantities of taxpayers’ money without really offering much in return.

**Rail reform or rail rhetoric? Structural conflicts remain**

In his Budget Speech of 25 February 2026, the Minister of Finance noted: “In logistics, we are dismantling bottlenecks in rail and ports that have throttled exports and raised the cost of doing business. Our intention is to bolster public-private investment in rail operations while retaining state



**Reality versus ‘visions’:**

**“Aspirational projects such as high-speed rail links and public-private partnerships risk diverting attention from urgent investment in roads, rail and compliance that the sector truly needs.”**  
**Gavin Kelly, CEO of the Road Freight Association.**

Gavin Kelly  
 CEO, RFA

ownership of rail infrastructure. The objective is to move goods faster, cheaper and more reliably.”

There are a number of hurdles with this approach - not least whether moving freight by rail will in fact be less expensive than by road. In most cases, there will still be road freight legs before and after rail links.

In addition, with Transnet still owning the infrastructure - an arm’s-length state-owned enterprise with a new name - and still operating trainsets on the same ▶ 38

▶ 37 rail routes, how will the private sector be guaranteed a fair chance when it becomes obvious they are outperforming Transnet? If we quote the phrase “Operation Vulindlela” often enough, will that ensure efficient implementation and operation?

Just like the unbundling of Eskom, the time has come - as the Association has said for the past two decades - for Transnet to be privatised, or for route concessions similar to toll roads, if real change is to occur. Transnet cannot be the referee and a competitor at the same time.

There have recently been media opinions about the actual profitability and real cost savings of rail transport. The clincher is consistent volumes across a reliable and dependable rail system - continuous volumes, reliable scheduling, sustainable train capacities and secure cargo across the entire rail offering.

**Public-Private Partnerships - priority or distraction?**

It is clear from the budget proposals that government is placing increasing responsibility for traditionally tax-funded infrastructure projects at the doorstep of private business, through Public-Private Partnerships.

**S**ome of these projects - such as high-speed passenger rail links between Gauteng and Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and even within the Gauteng “mega-metropolis” concept - are not what the country needs right now. Are these vanity projects, or opportunities for further troughs for feeding loyal cadres?

The criminal prosecution system is teetering on the point of collapse. Service levels at local police stations, prosecution rates through the courts – cases need to reach the courts first – and the rampant operations of various mafias within specific sectors and industries all point to deeper structural priorities.

With the sugar industry reportedly on the verge of collapse and media suggesting more than 50 000 jobs at risk, should this not rank higher than building a high-speed rail link? The logistics network needs direct investment - and the role of private players needs to be understood, welcomed and protected from state ravaging and misuse. Is that possible?

Partnerships should be leveraged to ensure compliance, fairness and sustainability. The road freight sector is already ravaged by operators who choose not to follow the prescripts of the Labour Relations Act, the National Road Traffic Act and other key legislation that should create a level playing field. The symptoms are poorly maintained vehicles, undocumented foreign drivers, dangerous driving habits and corruption in many forms.

PPPs must focus on ensuring fair access to well-maintained infrastructure, adherence to the rules and equitable contribution to the development of both the state and business.

**Reform, not rhetoric - a logistics reality check**

The Association notes that the general financial standing of the country is improving - and that should not be dismissed. However, it is time for government to acknowledge that it is not in the



business of logistics in this context. That role should be left to private sector experts who have proven capability. The state’s role is to ensure compliance with the rules, allowing all participants to operate fairly and freely within the sector.

Now is the time to rehabilitate dilapidated roads through the fuel levy - not merely to refer broadly to infrastructure projects at local and regional levels, or to note that SANRAL maintains a defined set of roads. SANRAL cannot be responsible for all roads.

Alongside this, key rail links should be concessioned - similar to toll routes - and the ends of those routes, whether ports or land borders, must be able to move volumes efficiently and effectively, with scope for growth. We are already losing volumes through Beitbridge and the Port of Durban to other ports in the African sub-continent due to the poor operation of our assets.

The time for incremental adjustment has passed. What is required now is structural reform, implemented with intent.

**Editor’s comment:** Kelly’s assessment reflects a familiar tension in South Africa’s logistics debate. Treasury is signalling fiscal consolidation and reform, yet structural contradictions remain embedded in freight rail, fuel levy allocation and infrastructure prioritisation. For local trucking, the message is clear: marginal tax relief is welcome, but operating costs, compliance distortions and infrastructure reliability remain the real battleground. If the state is serious about logistics-led growth, execution will matter more than rhetoric - and the private sector will expect measurable change, not incremental adjustment. □



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### **Deteriorating roads**

▲ SONA 2026 needed to clearly list the next interventions to support and grow real development in 2026 such as deteriorating roads which disrupt supply chains. This was lacking says RFA Chief Executive Gavin Kelly.



**by Gavin Kelly CEO, RFA**

# **RFA calls for clarity on logistics reform**

**A**s the voice of South Africa's road freight sector, the Road Freight Association (RFA) represents thousands of operators responsible for moving the bulk of the country's goods - linking ports, railheads, warehouses, retailers and manufacturers across the economy. Its members sit at the coalface of logistics dysfunction and reform alike. In response to President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2026 State of the Nation Address (SONA), RFA Chief Executive Gavin Kelly has delivered

a pointed assessment of what was said - and, critically, what was not - about the future of logistics. Here is Kelly's opinion piece.

### **SONA 2026 and the state of logistics in South Africa**

The Association listened with keen ears and bated breath for the waypoints to be listed by President Ramaphosa following his creation some 18 months ago of the National Logistics Crisis Committee (NLCC), formed solely to address the collapse of the

state-controlled infrastructure and operations of the country.

One would have thought, at least, that the President would have read the reports that dutifully came across his desk during 2025 - and that the massive steps that had been taken (well there was massive spending, so...) would at least have been outlined.

That would have given an “easy” follow-through to the next steps that would be happening (with timelines) - not just wide cursory references to what was planned. In that approach, there is no change at all. Vast generalisations of where we (could) be heading and what is planned.

There is no doubt that the country faces four major challenges - water, electricity, crime and the movement of goods and people efficiently and effectively around and through the country to underpin economic activity (development, growth, sustainability and inclusion).

While some comments were made around singular events, there were many aspects that have remained in the background and are not brought into the light for sharp review - and repair/ correction (specifically from a road freight perspective):

**Challenges in the labour environment**

- Severe shortage of experienced and new drivers due to the poaching of experienced and “incident free” drivers by countries around the world (and in the African region);
- An aging workforce (common ages for drivers are the higher 40s and into the 50s).
- Poor management of work and rest periods (there have been some horrendous cases during 2025);
- Intrusion by systems that undermine rates and routes;
- Increasing health issues (vision, hypertension and stress, diabetes and obesity) due to

aging drivers, long hours and conditions on the road;

- High cost of skills development & basic training;
- Reliable/dependable driver burnout (overused);
- Lack of appetite from younger generation to follow a career as a freight driver.
- Retaining the experienced drivers (find opportunities “outside” the sector).
- Numerous supply chain disruptions (congestion at ports and intermodal facilities, deteriorating roads, unusually severe floods that have destroyed logistics points, increasing political/social unrest and protests).

**Increased business rescue/ closure/distress**

- Spiraling operating costs (fuel volatility, insurance risk rates, new technology often “required/ demanded” by overseas customers).
- Severe price increases in CAPEX related expenditure for fleet maintenance and/or replacement.
- Key challenges facing road freight operators: Infrastructure bottlenecks, intense pressure to meet rising freight demand while facing sustainability by being pressurised to move

loads for lower and lower rates; regulatory hurdles that can potentially “kill” road freight - AARTO, corruption in authorities, cargo hijacking and theft, licensing (driver and vehicle) and permit hurdles.

While these are all very focused on the road freight sector, they remain core to operational dysfunction and it is critical that these be addressed.

The developments in the Transnet space are the initial tentative steps towards the sustainable intermodal and symbiotic freight logistics chain that has been spoken of so often.

SONA 2026 needed to clearly list the next interventions to support and grow real development in 2026. This was lacking. A lot of the burden is placed on the private sector to implement. However, the clear roadmap from the President still seems to be missing.

While rail integration in a sustainable and reliable manner is key to future logistics success, the road freight sector will play its role (as it always has) in assisting to enable the whole road freight and intermodal link to road freight (rail, sea and air) to work - together - to ensure South Africa becomes the hub that those using freight logistics networks will want to use.□

**Editor’s Comment**

Kelly’s SONA critique lands at a pivotal moment for South Africa’s freight economy. While government continues to signal reform - particularly within Transnet and the broader intermodal arena, the operational burden still rests heavily on road freight operators who cannot pause investment, driver hiring or fleet renewal while policy clarity catches up. The RFA’s position is unequivocally all about practicality rather than politics. Without firm timelines, regulatory certainty and visible infrastructure recovery, operators are forced to factor risk mitigation costs into every kilometre moved.

If South Africa is serious about positioning itself as a regional logistics hub, road freight cannot remain the silent shock absorber of systemic decay or reform delay. It carries over 80% of the country’s goods and underpins every supply chain conversation about growth, exports and inclusion. The message from the RFA is clear - partnership requires predictability. The next phase of reform will need to move beyond aspiration and ‘broad brush stroke’ political rhetoric (empty promises) to measurable execution.



# Logistics crime remains a national threat

**Confirmation that logistics crime remains a national strategic threat requiring co-ordinated industry and law enforcement co-operation and engagement is evidenced via an update on national logistics crime released by the national chairperson of the Anti-Truck Hijacking Forum for the period 01 January 2026 to 16 February 2026. Here are the worrying trends covering trucking, cargo, port and rail.**

**A**ccording to the update, logistics crime remains high and organised with truck hijackings, cargo theft and rail infrastructure theft continuing to impact national supply chains. Syndicates are targeting commercial fleets, high-value loads and key transport corridors.

### **Truck Hijackings & Cargo Theft**

- Approximately 30-35 truck hijackings per week nationally.
- Business-owned and logistics vehicles remain primary targets.

### **Highest risk areas**

- Gauteng (major hotspot).
- KZN (Durban logistics routes).
- Mpumalanga and Free State corridors.
- Increasing activity in Western Cape.

### **Common tactics**

- Spotters at depots, truck stops and ports.
- Following vehicles from loading points.
- Blue-light impersonation and coordinated attacks.

**The N3 corridor remains a national crime hotspot corridor.**

### **Port & Rail Infrastructure Crime**

- Continued theft of rail cables and infrastructure, disrupting freight movement.
- Rail disruptions increasing dependency on road transport, raising hijacking exposure.
- On-going organised syndicate involvement confirmed.

### **Cargo Theft Trends High-risk cargo includes**

- FMCG products.
- Electronics.
- Fuel.
- Food & beverages.
- Retail goods.

### **Criminals targeting loads from**

- Distribution centres.
- Ports.
- Major logistics corridors.

**Telematics systems can assist to combat crime – no longer a nice to have, but a frontline defense.**

**National Hotspot Corridors**

- N3: Gauteng ⇄ Durban.
- N4: Gauteng ⇄ Mpumalanga.
- N1: Gauteng ⇄ Free State ⇄ Western Cape.
- N2: Western Cape ⇄ Eastern Cape.

**Forecast (next 3 months)**

Truck hijackings are expected to increase moderately with cargo theft remaining high risk. Commercial fleets are expected to remain priority targets and infrastructure theft will continue impacting logistics. □

**EDITOR'S COMMENT**

**SOUTH AFRICA** is battling a crime scourge on multiple fronts and as the data makes clear, the logistics sector is firmly in the firing line. For decades, truck hijacking has been a highly organised, well-funded criminal enterprise. The difference today is that the industry is no longer standing still. Since the early 1990s, telematics providers have steadily developed sophisticated counter-measures. What were once optional extras are now indispensable - not only for crime prevention and vehicle recovery but for real-time visibility and tighter fleet control. But let's be clear: logistics crime is not a minor irritation. It is a national strategic threat. It disrupts supply chains, drives up costs and undermines economic stability. Combating it requires determined, coordinated action between industry and law enforcement.

*FleetWatch* has witnessed the commitment of structures such as the Anti-Truck Hijacking Forum, where dedicated professionals share intelligence and work collectively to push back against criminal networks. However - and this is the uncomfortable truth - collaboration alone is not enough if individual operators fail to play their part. Hoping you won't be targeted is not a strategy. Every transport operator has a responsibility to implement the strongest possible safeguards. Telematics systems are no longer a "nice to have". They are a frontline defence. When a vehicle is hit and recovery teams are deployed, accurate, real-time data can mean the difference between recovery and total loss. Enough is enough. Protect your assets. Strengthen your defences. And when the call comes, make sure the good guys have the tools they need to act fast and - more important - to help keep them safe.



▲ Food and beverages remain high risk cargo.

## OPINION

### RESPONSE FROM VOLVO

# The case for electric trucks

by Eric Parry  
Senior Manager  
Sustainable Solutions  
Volvo Group



▲ Volvo has been showcasing its range of electric trucks around the country since the launch of the Volvo FM in 2023.

**Following an Opinion Piece written by Albrich van Niekerk in a previous FleetWatch eMag in which he questioned the viability of battery electric powered trucks for the South African market, Eric Parry, Senior Manager Sustainable Solutions of the Volvo Group Southern Africa, who has led Volvo's electric vehicle 'charge' into the market since the launch of the Volvo FM in 2023, has put together a response which we publish below.**

**First, though, we encourage our readers to view the piece submitted by Van Niekerk which was headed: "Electric trucks - The spoiled child of a misguided dream" Here is the link. <https://fleetwatch.co.za/fleetwatch-article/electric-trucks-the-spoiled-child-of-a-misguided-dream/>. Once you have read that, here's Parry's response to that piece....**

**More than a "Luxury Experiment."**

WITHIN THE SOUTH African transport sphere, the discussion around alternative drivelines and their impact on the environment and the local transport sector is a complex and multi-faceted one. Which is why I believe it can't be reduced to a single, simplified narrative. Several important factors

are often overlooked, and it is worth addressing both the valid concerns as well as the potential misunderstandings.

For more than a century, the internal combustion engine (ICE) has been the main power source for vehicles and industries worldwide. Insisting that ICE is the only backbone, is both outdated and strategically risky, especially



## OPINION

### RESPONSE FROM VOLVO

when it comes to decarbonising heavy commercial transport, fleets, logistics and goods movement.

#### Lifecycle emissions favour electrification.

There are several peer-reviewed LCAs (Life Cycle Assessments) that show battery electric heavy commercial trucks produce substantially fewer greenhouse gas emissions than their equivalent diesel counterparts. A major study in Europe found that battery-electric trucks emit “63% less Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions than diesel”.

(<https://theicct.org/publication/lca-ghg-emissions-hdv-fuels-europe-feb23/>)

Taking South Africa’s coal-heavy electricity mix into consideration, lifecycle assessments still show large emissions reductions for electric trucks. This is because most emissions occur during vehicle use, not manufacturing. As the grid gradually adds renewables, these benefits grow exponentially.

#### Infrastructure is scaling, not stalled.

It is no longer accurate to say heavy-duty charging infrastructure “does not exist on any meaningful scale.” While infrastructure is still developing, deployment is accelerating rapidly and multiple studies have shown that electric truck charging networks are expanding at a pace consistent with adoption.

Research show that Europe already has 937 heavy commercial vehicle charging locations, including 313 sites with ≥350 kW chargers, forming a strong foundation for future growth.

(<https://alternative-fuels-observatory.ec.europa.eu/general-information/news/heavy-duty-electric-truck-charging-infrastructure-europe-eafo-data-update>)

Global researcher, McKinsey projects that there will be more than 300 000 truck-capable charge points

in Europe by 2030, backed by €40B in planned investments, indicating massive near-term scalability.

(<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/automotive-and-assembly/our-insights/building-europes-electric-truck-charging-infrastructure>)

**IT IS IMPORTANT** to note that in South Africa, a large proportion of fleet operations return to base daily. So, depot charging provides a practical starting point for most operators, as it does not depend on a nationwide public charging network right away. Infrastructure critics underestimate how quickly charging networks evolve when the combination of regulation, OEM investment and freight operator demand all align.

As renewable energy penetration increases, EVs naturally become cleaner over time. Diesel trucks do not improve with age.

#### Batteries are not a terminal liability.

As with any new technology, battery manufacture and material supply chains require improvement. In addition, recycling technologies and processes are rapidly advancing

and thus reducing environmental burdens. As battery recycling grows, it can also create and establish local industries that reduce reliance on imported raw materials.

Right now, the emissions due to battery manufacturing are steadily improving due to the industry’s sustained move towards gigafactories. Gigafactories matter because they consolidate production in one highly efficient site, cutting energy use and subsequent emissions. In best-practice facilities, the carbon intensity drops by ~25 kg CO<sup>2</sup> when compared to traditional factories.

([https://www.porsche-consulting.com/sites/default/files/2024-11/gigafactory\\_giga-challenges\\_c\\_porsche\\_consulting.pdf](https://www.porsche-consulting.com/sites/default/files/2024-11/gigafactory_giga-challenges_c_porsche_consulting.pdf))

Battery materials are recyclable and trending toward ethical sourcing, while fossil fuels are extracted and burned just once. Batteries from heavy commercial ▶ 46

#### Actros 300

▼ Many OEMs are looking at battery electric trucks for practical use in South Africa. Daimler Truck entered the arena in 2024 with the launch of its Actros 300.



## OPINION

### RESPONSE FROM VOLVO

**The future does not require operators to choose between keeping ICE engines forever or leaping into a fully electric fleet overnight. It requires using each technology where it makes the most sense.**

► 45 trucks can also be re-packaged at end of life into battery storage for industrial, commercial or residential applications - potentially giving an additional 10 to 12 years of useful life before needing recycling. This is an excellent opportunity for localisation.

#### **Cleaner combustion fuels have a role.**

Synthetic fuels and hydrogen are promising but currently inefficient, costly and not competitive for road freight. Synthetic fuel production costs are higher than both fossil fuels and electricity.

#### **DHL/Electric Volvo**

▼ In August last year, DHL Supply Chain launched a Superlink electric truck pilot in partnership with Unilever and Volvo Trucks South Africa with the intention of testing the future of sustainable freight in the country.

Environmental impact depends heavily on green-hydrogen and clean electricity availability for synthetic fuel manufacture. As an example, with the current EU grid mix, synthetic fuels show no clear CO<sup>2</sup> advantage over fossil fuels.

(<https://www.mdpi.com/2673-4591/113/1/77>)

Synthetic fuels are far more viable in aviation, maritime transport and legacy fleets but not for road freight where BEVs are more efficient and cost-effective.

#### **Reliability of EVs.**

Real-life operational data and research show that electric trucks are dependable. They are mechanically simpler, require less maintenance and have demonstrated stable performance in daily operations. Minimal constraints like charging, payload and range in cold weather are real but they do not equate to systemic mechanical failure or inconsistent uptime.

The evidence shows that electric trucks are currently the most dependable and reliable zero-emission technology available, more so than fuel-cell or synthetic-fuel combustion systems.

As illustration, in Oct 2025 Volvo's Electric trucks had reached 250 million kilometres in global customer operations, not testing km's, actual customer usage. And, still going strong!

(<https://www.volvotrucks.com/en-en/news-stories/press-releases/2025/oct/milestone--volvo-s-electric-trucks-reach-250-million-kilometers.html>)

#### **Opportunity within Constraints.**

Internal combustion engines built the backbone of modern logistics. However, the freight sector is steadily shifting toward cleaner technologies. Electric trucks are no longer experimental. They work, they scale and, in many applications, they already make financial sense for many fleet operators.

For many, South Africa's unstable electricity supply, grid constraints and infrastructure gaps can make this transition feel unrealistic. Yet these challenges are exactly why early and targeted planning is essential.

The future does not require operators to choose between keeping ICE engines forever or leaping into a fully electric fleet overnight. It requires using each technology where it makes the most sense.

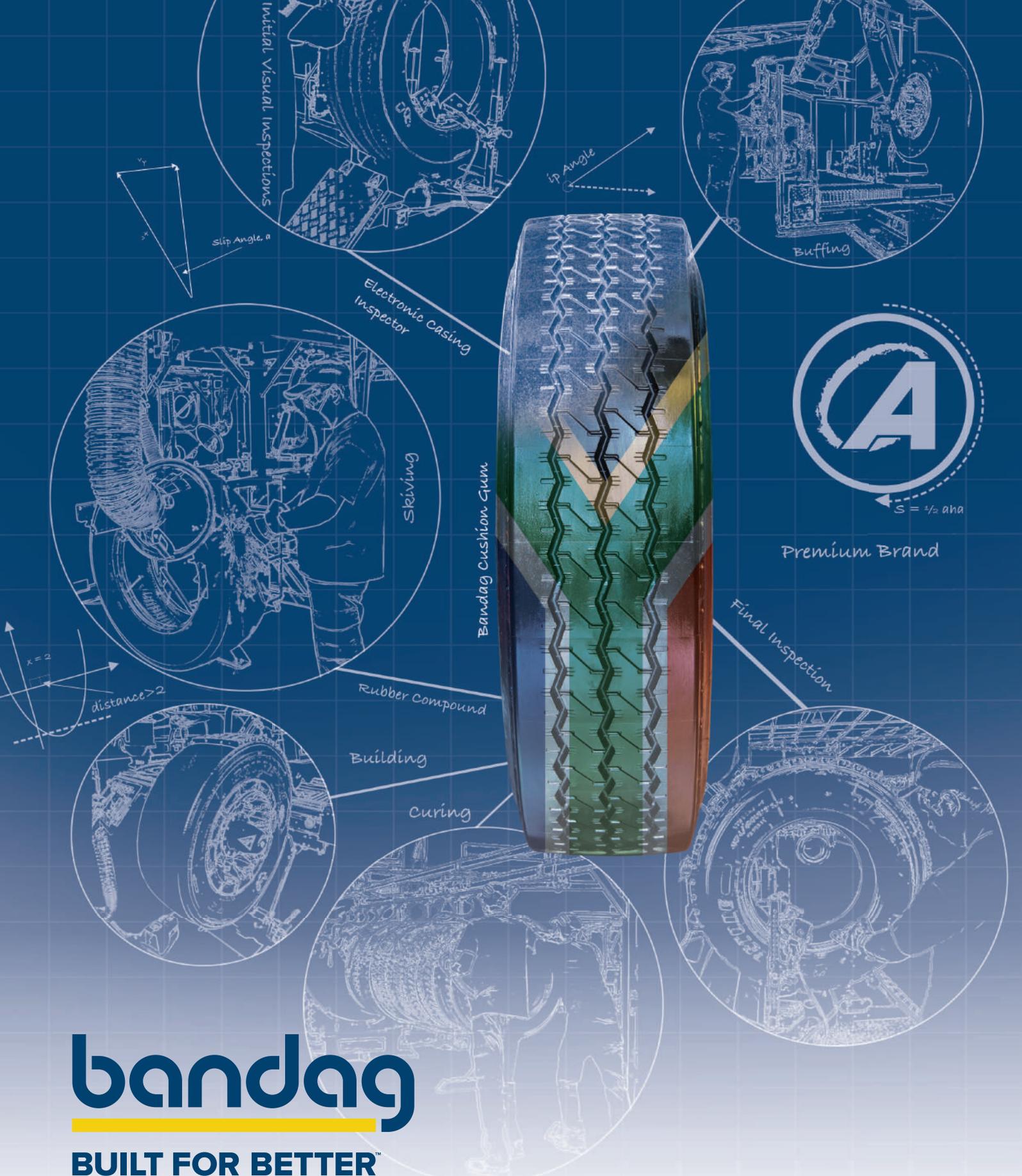
Battery electric trucks should be deployed in predictable, high-impact routes like urban and regional delivery. Infrastructure and recycling systems should be built steadily. Hydrogen and synthetic fuels should be reserved for specialised long-haul or heavy-payload operations.

This is a pragmatic, evidence-based pathway that fits South Africa's transport reality. It positions the industry for competitiveness, resilience, and cleaner growth, without ideology or unrealistic expectations. □



#### **SHARE YOUR VIEW**

If you would like to add your comments and thoughts to the debate, please email  
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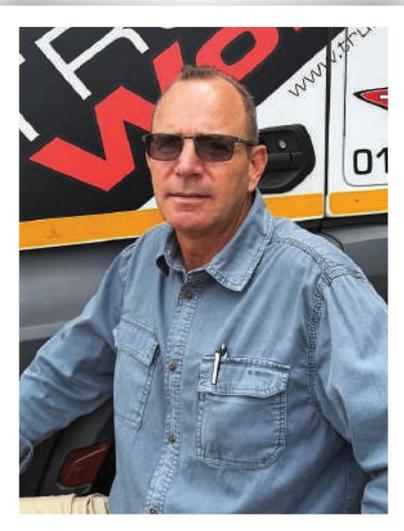
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▲ It is highly unlikely that rail will meaningfully impact on road freight volumes in the next five years – infrastructure has deteriorated too severely.

# 2026: A new dawn...or not?



**By Albrich van Niekerk,  
Group CEO – Pander  
Holdings (Pty) Ltd**

**A**fter what can only be described as the longest down-cycle in modern trucking history, the South African transport industry is finally showing signs of normalisation. For the first time in two years, there is a noticeable uptick in vehicle sales, RFQs (Request for Quotations) and perhaps most importantly, market sentiment. Operators are cautiously engaging again. Fleets are talking about replacement rather than survival. The panic that defined the post-Covid years is slowly giving way to pragmatism. But this is not a boom. It is a RESET.

## **The damage of our delayed Covid**

The true impact of Covid on our

industry was not immediate - it was delayed, prolonged and brutal. We have seen:

- Numerous transport businesses close their doors.
- Persistently tight cashflows among survivors.
- Significant job losses.
- An oversupply of drivers in certain segments.

Many operators who are still standing today are doing so through sheer resilience rather than profitability. Balance sheets remain fragile and confidence - while improving - is far from robust.

## **Will rail really change the game?**

Every recovery cycle brings renewed optimism around rail. The

## OPINION PIECE

reality is less encouraging. While there is talk of reform and private sector participation, it is highly unlikely that rail will meaningfully impact road freight volumes in the next five years. Infrastructure has deteriorated too severely, operational capacity has been eroded and execution remains inconsistent.

For the foreseeable future, road freight will continue to carry the backbone of South Africa's economy - whether it is ready for that responsibility or not.

### The real concern: Financiers in the reset phase

The biggest concern in this next phase is not demand. It is the behaviour of financial institutions.

As the industry resets, the critical question is this: Will financiers partner with their clients or retreat behind rigid, pre-Covid risk models? Transporters need:

- Cashflow-sensitive facilities.
- Realistic restructuring options.

- Credit decisions based on forward viability, not historical distress.

If banks and financiers treat this recovery as if nothing has changed, they risk strangling the very operators who kept supply chains alive during the worst of times. We have explored this tension before, whether financiers are knights in shining armour or devils in disguise. In 2026, that question becomes even more relevant.

### A cautious optimism

There is reason for guarded optimism. The industry is leaner, more disciplined and far more aware of its vulnerabilities than before. But this recovery will not be driven by hype or aggressive expansion. It will be driven by measured decisions, disciplined operators, and financial partners willing to evolve. 2026 may well mark a new dawn - but only if the lessons of the last cycle are not ignored. □

**2026 may mark a new dawn – but only if the lessons of the last cycle are not ignored**

### Do you agree?

**Editor's Comment:** If readers would like to comment on this opinion - whether to agree or disagree on any of the points made or add your own views on the 2026 outlook - you are welcome to do so. Email your comments to The Editor: [fleetwatch@pixie.co.za](mailto:fleetwatch@pixie.co.za).



▲ Will financiers partner with clients on aspects like credit decisions or retreat behind rigid pre-Covid risk models?



## Retread Realism

# Bandag SA draws a line on cheap imports.



**South Africa's replacement truck and bus radial (TBR) market has shifted decisively towards imports. Today, imports account for more than 70% of the replacement TBR segment, with over 60% of all new TBR tyres sold locally made in China. This scale is reshaping tyre procurement and the economics of running a fleet.**

For Bandag Southern Africa, the issue is no longer where a tyre is made, but how it is built – and whether it is designed for multiple lives.

"It is a market of both opportunity and pressure," says Monal Naik, Marketing Manager at Bandag SA. "Importers are responding to fleet budget constraints by offering lower-cost alternatives, but rising anti-dumping duties are also increasing competitive tension."

The numbers may favour imports, but the long-term performance equation is more complex.

### Price versus/cost

Fleet decisions remain highly price sensitive. "Price is the primary driver," Naik says. "Local manufacturers and established international brands invariably cannot compete on price alone with the lowest-priced imports."

He also points to a persistent misconception in the market:

"There is still a belief that fitting a new tyre – even a low-cost import – is better than retreading. In reality, that is not necessarily the case. A properly engineered Bandag retread can outperform many new tyres and offers a far more sustainable solution for the transport industry."

The distinction, he emphasises, lies in construction quality rather than country of origin.

### Not all imports are equal

Naik is clear that the debate should not be oversimplified. "Not all imported tyres are inferior, and not all are low-priced. Some Chinese-manufactured tyres offer good retreadability and solid performance – but they are not the cheapest options in the market."

The concern centres on low-specification products built down to a price point.

Premium new tyres typically feature four to five steel belt packs beneath the tread, strengthening the casing and improving wear performance. By and large, cheaper imports contain only three.

"Reducing the number of steel belts lowers the manufacturing cost, but it also shortens the tyre's lifespan," Naik explains. "If you compare the mass of a premium tyre with that of a cheaper import, you can sometimes see a difference of between 3 and 7 kilograms."

"We have seen that lower-quality imports tend to experience higher casing failure rates than premium products. In some cases, the tyre fails early in its new tyre life, before it can even be retreaded."

### The erosion of retreadability

South Africa has long been regarded as a retreading-friendly market. Yet Bandag's internal data suggests a steady decline in retreadability over the past decade. Retreadability refers to the number of times that a used new tyre can be retreaded and is one of the ways used to determine the quality of tyres.

"We have recorded a gradual year-on-year decline in retreadability, with an overall reduction of around 25% between 2014 and 2024," says Naik. "This trend closely aligns with the steady increase in lower-cost imports entering the market."

**With over 60% of all new TBR tyres sold in South Africa imported from China, fleet managers need to rely on trusted data to avoid risky procurement.**





▲ Bandag SA assists fleets with data collection and analysis to support informed tyre-buying practices.

▲ Truck tyre retreadability declined by approximately 25% between 2014 and 2024 as a result of low-quality imports.

Even in 2024, when total replacement volumes increased, imported new tyres were the primary beneficiaries.

“Despite growth in overall replacement tyre volumes, the imported category was the main winner. Retreads and legacy brands both declined. We are seeing more tyres sold without a corresponding increase in kilometres travelled, which suggests that certain imported products are delivering lower mileage performance.”

For the retreading sector, inconsistent casing quality directly reduces output and undermines long-term sustainability.

### Regulatory pressure and loopholes

Bandag also highlights challenges around enforcement. “In some instances, brands have changed their declared country of origin by shifting factory sources, effectively bypassing anti-dumping duties,” Naik adds. “However, the underlying quality concerns remain.”

The downstream impact is environmental as well as economic.

“These tyres enter the market, may or may not complete a single service life and often end up in landfill without being retreaded,” Naik says.

With limited waste tyre processing capacity in South Africa, that adds to an already strained system.

### Total cost of ownership – the real metric

For Bandag, the debate ultimately centres on total cost of ownership. “A poor initial tyre choice may appear cost-effective at purchase, but reduced mileage and the loss of retread potential will affect operating budgets over time,” says Naik.

Retreading, by contrast, conserves resources and extends casing life. “Retreading a casing requires significantly less oil and energy than manufacturing a new tyre,” he adds.

Procurement culture, however, remains divided. “There will always be a segment of the market focused solely on upfront price. Our focus is different. We concentrate on reducing total cost of ownership by emphasising sustainability, reliability, quality and performance across the entire supply channel,” says Naik.

### A data-driven way forward

Naik’s advice to fleet operators is pragmatic rather than ideological: “Test the products in your own operation. Conduct full life-cycle evaluations and assess the environmental impact of the tyres that you choose. We can assist fleets with data collection and analysis to support informed decision-making.”

His broader message to the Southern African trucking and tyre sectors is succinct: “The industry must promote sustainability by prioritising new tyres that are designed to be retreaded.”

The influx of imported tyres is unlikely to slow in the short term. But as Bandag Southern Africa frames it, the real dividing line is not local versus imported – it is single-life consumption versus engineered longevity.

“In a sector where business efficiency is measured in cost per kilometre and total cost of ownership, the price-versus-quality decision is what determines whether a truck fleet limps along sadly or cruises safely, sustainably and profitably down the road,” Naik concludes. □

## Retreading incentives in the EU

In Europe, truck fleets that integrate retreading into tyre management benefit from lower total cost of ownership, stronger ESG credentials, alignment with circular economy policies, and:

- Tyre retreaders benefit from stable, predictable demand where municipal and public fleets operate under binding procurement criteria that support retread adoption.
- Better recognition of environmental benefits in corporate fleet sustainability reporting.
- Indirect financial incentives for fleets via inclusion in green procurement scoring and sustainability frameworks rather than direct subsidies.
- Expanded producer responsibility policies that discourage landfill disposal of tyres and support extended lifecycle solutions.

South Africa could apply the same principles. If procurement rules rewarded lifecycle value instead of upfront price alone, fleets would naturally prioritise durability and retreadability. Clear green tender criteria and stronger tyre waste enforcement would help shift the market towards safer, more sustainable and cost-effective tyre management.



# Key trends shaping SA's bulk logistics industry

**A**ccording to industry indicators, 2026 is already shaping up to be a pivotal year in the bulk logistics industry, with trends emerging that influence how goods are moved across the country, from pit to port and across borders. Infrastructure investment, economic stability and increased investor confidence have set the stage for a more resilient bulk logistics sector in South Africa and across the region. As mining output increases and trade corridors expand, the bulk logistics sector is playing a more strategic role in supporting this growth.

With this as background, the team from Reinhardt Transport Group (RTG) - one of Southern Africa's largest and most established bulk logistics operators with a fleet of more than 1 000 specialised vehicles transporting over 18 million tonnes

of bulk commodities each year - has outlined the four key trends they feel are set to influence this trajectory this year.

Coming from this group, the trends are worth noting for RTG has built a strong reputation as a trusted logistics partner to the mining, agriculture, construction and industrial sectors, with specialist expertise in commodities including chrome, coal, manganese, fertilisers and ferrochrome. Here they are...

## **Mining sector increases demand for local logistics**

As the global appetite for key minerals - such as manganese, chrome, and lithium - continues to grow, reliance on the bulk logistics sector expands alongside it. Demand for critical minerals is expected to increase considerably by 2030 - ▶ 55

## **TransMac**

◀ TransMac is one of the 10 integrated divisions through which the Reinhardt Transport Group operates. The others are Reinhardt Transport, Amalgamated Bulk, BM Hauliers, Chrome Carriers, Matola Logistics, Nkwe Bulk, S Hauliers, Insimbi, and RT Loaders.

## **Chrome Carriers**

▼ Chrome Carriers, the specialist bulk transport division of Reinhardt Transport Group, provides dedicated bulk haulage solutions that connect mines to smelters and export corridors. As global demand for chrome, lithium, and mineral commodities grows, the depot's strategic location ensures responsive, high-volume transport support for industry stakeholders.



## **Amalgamated Bulk**

▲ Situated near the Lebombo-Ressano Garcia border, the Amalgamated Bulk depot supports Reinhardt Transport Group's Maputo Corridor operations. Such integrated bulk transport services, including staging, warehousing and fleet coordination, enhance reliability across SA-Mozambique trade routes.

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**Richards Bay**

▲ Reinhardt Transport Group's closed storage warehouse facility at Richards Bay integrates storage, cargo handling and port-linked logistics to streamline export operations. Positioned close to one of Southern Africa's busiest bulk terminals, the facility supports the growing mining sector demand while ensuring supply chain resilience.



**Maintenance & refurbishing**

▲ Reinhardt Transport Group's Technical Services provides comprehensive in-house maintenance, repairs and refurbishments across the fleet. By retaining full technical control, the group strengthens operational resilience, reduces downtime and safeguards consistent performance across long-haul and cross-border routes.



► 52 and possibly quadruple by 2040 - and this growth will continue to place pressure on South Africa's logistics networks, with demand for reliable delivery from mine to port. The ability to move bulk commodities efficiently is vital to unlocking long-term value in this sector.

**Building supply chain resilience against climate volatility and infrastructure pressure**

The recent floods in Limpopo and Mpumalanga are some of the many examples of extreme weather patterns only set to increase over the coming years. Adding in the ageing infrastructure and port congestion, logistical delays will become more commonplace if supply chain resilience isn't addressed now.

Across the bulk logistics sector, the need for in-house control and rapid response capabilities is becoming increasingly evident to ensure supply chains keep moving despite external challenges. Operators with full internal maintenance operations, certified multi-disciplinary technical teams, and 24-hour roadside assistance are better positioned to create resilient supply chains that safeguard delivery schedules.

Reinhardt Transport Group's in-house technical services model reflects this broader industry shift toward greater operational control and resilience. Likewise, improvements in port efficiency, rail reliability and energy security remain critical to building long-term industry resilience.

**Enhanced technological integration in logistics**

The adoption of forward-focused technology in the bulk logistics sector is now a necessity,

◀ Advanced fleet management systems form part of Reinhardt Transport Group's operations. This real-time vehicle monitoring improves route optimisation and fuel efficiency, ensuring the company remains environmentally accountable.

with truck management systems, geofencing, employee tracking and live fuel monitoring, enabling data-driven decision-making. Artificial intelligence and IoT-enabled systems are optimising routes and predicting maintenance, preventing unnecessary breakdowns and schedule delays. Digital platforms used in the African Continental Free Trade Area are also reducing friction in cross-border trade by allowing faster customs processing and e-payments.

Across the sector, technology is transforming how bulk transport is managed, allowing operators to move from reactive problem-solving to predictive planning. Reinhardt Transport Group's investment in integrated fleet management and monitoring systems reflects this broader shift toward data-led operational control, with measurable impacts on efficiency and competitiveness.

**Environmental accountability now a practical operational requirement**

The world has shifted from environmental performance as an 'added value' to a central theme across all operations. Globally, there is increasing demand from customers, investors and regulators for industries to display transparency in their carbon emissions and resource efficiency.

Reinhardt Transport Group cites practical interventions such as fuel-efficient tyre systems, optimised fleet utilisation and water recycling bays across depots as contributing to measurable reductions in carbon emissions - with 10,962 tonnes cut by the organisation in 2024 alone. Companies are now required to do more than just pledge and this is particularly evident in the bulk logistics sector. Environmental accountability is a regulatory condition, customer demand and a bottom-line requirement.

As South Africa continues to position itself as the gateway to continental trade, the bulk logistics sector is emerging as a key player in establishing sustainable growth. ◻



# The Story Behind The Story™



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# MAN adopts a holistic approach

**There's a new vibe running through the corridors of MAN Truck & Bus SA which became blatantly obvious at a media event held recently to announce the launch of the next generation D26 Efficiency engine along with the introduction of the new TGX range with the stunning MAN TGX 26.520 truck tractor flagship on display. The overall event was bannered under the label of MAN360 and FleetWatch editor Patrick O'Leary was there.**

**T**he good folk at MAN are probably not going to like what I'm about to say - but I'm going to say it anyway. It's about time MAN came out of the shadows and stepped into the limelight. As is well known, MAN has been a player in the South African truck market for many years - 64 years in fact - and prior to Covid, had a dynamic presence in the market. Mention trucks and MAN was up there occupying a position of top-of-mind presence.

Admittedly, everyone went quiet over Covid - except, of course, the illicit tobacco guys who penetrated our market with 'gwai' brands never heard of before. I smoked some weird stuff over that time. But since then, the 'traditional' truck OEMs have, in general, recaptured their visibility. MAN though has not been as visible. Sure, they have been punching away as evidenced by

## Impressive line-up

▲ MAN Truck and Bus SA has a new level of confidence with its new MAN TGX 26.520 truck tractors powered by the next generation D26 Efficiency engine.

**The new D26 Efficiency technology will be rolled out across the entire TGS and TGX product portfolio.**

 **WATCH THE VIDEO**



**FW Editor interviews MAN top man – Jan Aichinger**

maintaining a 15.5% market share in 2024 and 2025 among European OEMs. But there's been none of the previous rah-rah from this stable for some time - and rah-rah is good. We've missed it.

But now the rah-rah is coming back and that's why I like the man who has been steering the ship since being appointed as Managing Director of MAN Automotive (South Africa) Pty Ltd in May 2023. Jan Aichinger is his name and he's a man well versed in the truck and bus industry. He is also, by the way, Vice President: Medium and Heavy Commercial OEMs at naamsa, thus representing all OEMs on strategic issues at the lobbying table giving him a holistic view of the market, its players and its challenges.

Aichinger has a hearty laugh that can be heard across a room, talks enthusiastically and passionately about many subjects and has many stories to tell, which he tells animatedly and with gusto. I first met him soon after his appointment and a scheduled one hour-lunch ended about four hours later. Good stories were told and I went away thinking that MAN was back on course. But in all honesty, it wasn't. It went quiet again and I wondered why.

The answer to this came at the recent MAN360 event. The reason is because behind the scenes, MAN Truck & Bus South Africa was being restructured - it was being restored

to capture its former glory but in a more dynamic, sustainable manner. And thus, the label MAN360.

While the new Chinese entrants to the market were chipping away, MAN was busy developing a whole new product range to suit the local market while at the same time revitalising its internal culture and structures to emerge with a new way of operating in the market taking it beyond manufacturing into a fully integrated ecosystem of support for its customers. And now that is all in place and it's time to make a noise. To bring back the past glory as the company moves into the future.

More details on the D26 Efficiency engine and the MAN TGX 26.520 truck tractor are given on page 59 so we'll skip that here. So, what's the 360 all about. I decided to Google 'what does a 360 degree view give one?' And here's what I got. "A 360-degree view provides a comprehensive all-round perspective that eliminates blind spots and offers a complete picture of a subject. This enables better decision-making, improved safety in navigation, higher customer engagement and immersive, flexible content creation."

Boom! That's it. That's what MAN has metamorphosed into and to position this in terms of trucking, the "subject" referred to above is the customer with the all-round view ▶ 58



WATCH THE VIDEO



Talking to Frans la Grange  
MAN Financial Services



WATCH THE VIDEO



FW Editor interviews  
Philip Kalil-Zackey, Head of Truck  
Sales – MAN

MAN D26 Flagship

▼ And here it is in all its glory. MAN Truck & Bus's new offering for the market to haul efficiently with total support all along the way.



## OEMs | FLAGSHIP MODEL



### Leading the charge

▲ Managing Director of MAN Automotive (South Africa) Pty Ltd, Jan Aichinger, spells out the plans moving forward.

► 57 being pivoted around Total Cost of Ownership. It's all about being a complete end-to-end transport solution provider.

MAN Truck & Bus is refocussing its operations around TCO with the intention of supporting customers "at every touchpoint, from initial vehicle specification to end-of-life optimisation. This is all built around enhancing uptime, improving safety, simplifying fleet management and delivering predictable, long-term value for transport businesses across all segments. As was stated, "it goes beyond manufacturing, positioning MAN as a full-solutions partner, offering structured support at every phase of a vehicle's operational life."

In other words, MAN Truck & Bus SA will be driving down the road with each of its customers from start to finish - as a partner not just a supplier. One could perhaps liken it to the saying 'from cradle to grave' but no-one is going to end up in a grave. There are no undertakers here - just enablers.

Just one example of the different approach to adding value is that MAN Truck & Bus is also now becoming a 'chop-shop'. Yep. To enable affordable but quality parts, one segment of its parts portfolio - which is a first for MAN internationally - is that the company is stripping down selected used trucks and selling parts from those trucks to customers. Wow! More of this later.

I have mentioned Jan Aichinger but all this takes a team, some of



### Hands-on knowledge

▲ Sanelisiwe Molotsi - from Mechanical Engineer with 11 years R&D experience to Marketing Brand & Communications Manager at MAN Truck & Bus SA.

whom are featured on these pages. There are also a host of dealers out there who have bought into this new approach. Grab a cup of coffee and take a listen to the videos. They were recorded at the event which was held just two days after the United States and Israel launched co-ordinated military strikes against Iran.

Fuel price hikes and other horrible negatives are piling up across the world and these are not going to miss the South African transporter. However, as you will gauge from the comments in the videos, MAN is determined, under its new MAN360 philosophy, to stand firmly behind its customers whatever may come their way.

For Aichinger, February 28th when the missiles first struck was a Déjà vu for he was in Russia heading the MAN operations when Russia invaded Ukraine. He had to get his family out quickly and shut down the MAN operations. Now he's living it again...and as he did in Russia, he is determined to get everyone through this period safely, including all MAN customers.

It's a changing world. Quite scary actually. If only we could give peace a chance and get to the point where we're all moving forward as partners in progress. Wishful thinking as that, of course, will mean adopting a 360-degree view of the world rather than a narrow, tunnelled view. Maybe MAN Truck & Bus can teach Donald Trump a thing or two about this philosophy. □

### Product passion

▼ Livingston Mulaudzi, Head of Product at MAN Truck & Bus SA. A humble man whose product knowledge goes deep into every aspect of the new D26 Efficiency engine and TGX 26.520 models.



**The Middle East war impacts are dire but MAN is determined to stand by its customers through these tough times**

### Ease of access

▼ Every aspect of driver operation on the new models has been thought of such as ease of access for daily checks.





*The introduction of the TGX 26.520 marks the first step in MAN Truck & Bus SA's phased rollout of the new D26 Efficiency technology.*

#### **Updated driveline and safety systems**

The MAN TipMatic 12-speed automated manual transmission is now standard across the heavy-duty range. Equipped with SmartShifting technology, it delivers faster and smoother gear changes while maintaining tractive force under load. Drivers can select from operating modes such as Efficiency, Efficiency+, Offroad and Heavy-Duty to adapt shifting behaviour to different operating conditions.

Complementing the transmission is MAN's new hypoid axle generation featuring lighter housings, optimised bearings and longer final-drive ratios to improve fuel economy.

The updated electronic architecture also enables broader availability of driver-assistance technologies including Emergency Brake Assist (EBA and EBA Plus) with vulnerable road-user detection, Adaptive Cruise Control and Front Detection for monitoring pedestrians and cyclists at low speeds. MAN's OptiView digital mirror-cam system is also available to enhance visibility during turning and manoeuvring.

#### **TGX 26.520 flagship**

Leading the rollout is the TGX 26.520 6x4 BL SA, which pairs the 520 hp D26 engine with the TipMatic 12.26 Direct Drive gearbox and the new hypoid axle configuration.

The model is offered with MAN's GM cab, which combines aerodynamic improvements with driver-focused ergonomics. Features include High-Beam Assist, rain-sensing automatic wipers and EBA Plus with pedestrian and cyclist detection.

MAN says the TGX 26.520 delivers strong tractive performance at low engine speeds while maintaining competitive fuel economy for long-distance freight operations.

The truck marks the first step in MAN Truck & Bus South Africa's phased rollout of the D26 Efficiency platform, which will be progressively introduced across the full TGS and TGX product range during 2026. □

# MAN LAUNCHES D26 EFFICIENCY ENGINE AND TGX 26.520 FLAGSHIP

**MAN TRUCK & BUS** South Africa has introduced its new D26 Efficiency engine platform across the TGS and TGX heavy-duty ranges, with the launch of the TGX 26.520 6x4 truck tractor leading the rollout. The move marks a significant upgrade to MAN's regional product offering, combining a new engine generation with updated driveline components and expanded driver-assistance technologies aimed at improving fuel efficiency, safety and total cost of ownership.

#### **New D26 engine platform**

At the centre of the update is the latest 12.4-litre MAN D26 inline-six diesel engine. The platform replaces the previous D20 and D26 engine families and is standardised across the range in three power ratings - 400hp, 440hp and 520hp - with torque outputs of up to 2 600Nm available from as low as 930rpm.

The engine features common-rail injection pressures of up to 1 800 bar, a single-stage turbocharger with an electrically actuated wastegate and MAN's EVBec high-performance engine brake.

According to MAN, the combustion system has been redesigned to improve thermal efficiency, with compression ratios reaching 21.8:1 and ignition pressures up to 220 bar.

Engineering updates such as steel pistons, anti-polishing rings and optimised bearings are intended to reduce friction losses and extend service life.

For Euro 5 applications the engine uses an updated SCR-only aftertreatment system with Euro-6-derived catalyst technology and airless AdBlue dosing to simplify emissions control and improve reliability.

#### **Efficiency gains**

MAN reports measurable fuel savings compared with the previous generation. In Euro 5 configuration the new driveline is claimed to reduce fuel consumption by up to 3%, while Euro 2 variants can achieve improvements of up to 6% under comparable operating conditions.

These gains come from a fully integrated driveline package combining the new engine with the MAN TipMatic automated manual transmission and a newly developed hypoid rear-axle family designed for long-haul efficiency.

The D26 platform is certified for EN 590 diesel and EN 15940 paraffinic fuels such as HVO. With the appropriate configuration and maintenance regime, FAME B100 (biodiesel) operation is also supported.



## Isuzu NPR 400

◀ The versatility and durability of Isuzu medium and heavy trucks help form the foundation upon which the OEM's South African success is built. This is the Isuzu NPR 400 with Rhinopanel Van Double Side Doors.

## Market Leadership

# Isuzu Trucks marks 13 years

**M**arket leadership in the South African truck sector is never accidental and rarely sustained for long. But there are exceptions. Isuzu Trucks has retained the leading position across the combined Medium Commercial Vehicle and Heavy Commercial Vehicle segments for 13 consecutive years.

In practical trucking terms, that degree of consistency points to vehicles that deliver predictable uptime, specifications that remain stable over long model cycles and an aftersales system capable of supporting trucks well beyond the point of sale. It is continuity, rather than novelty, that has underwritten Isuzu Trucks' position at the top of its two market segments.

### Thirteen years of measured dominance

For the calendar period from 7 January 2012 to 6 January 2025, Isuzu led the combined MCV and HCV cab-over-chassis market with a 26.8% share. This placed the brand

2.1 percentage points ahead of the second-ranked competitor and 7.0 percentage points ahead of the third-ranked competitor.

In a market characterised by tight margins and cautious capital investment, those gaps are significant. They suggest repeat purchasing decisions rather than opportunistic buying, with fleets continuing to specify the brand across multiple replacement cycles.

"This milestone is the result of deliberate product strategy, continuous engineering refinement and an unwavering focus on customer operating requirements," says Craig Uren, Senior Vice President: Revenue Generation (SACU), Isuzu Motors South Africa.

"Over 13 years, we have consistently invested in reliable drivetrains, application-appropriate specifications and aftersales capability that supports customers throughout the full lifecycle of their vehicles. Engineering-led performance, designed for real-world operations."

### 'Solid' before 'shiny'

Isuzu's sustained performance has been built less on disruptive model shifts and more on disciplined evolution. Core platforms have remained familiar to operators, technicians and drivers, while incremental improvements in powertrain efficiency, emissions management and durability have been introduced without destabilising proven architectures.

For fleet operators, this approach translates into predictable cost-per-kilometre outcomes, strong residual values and reduced training friction across a mixed-age vehicle parc.

Reliability and durability remain central, with vehicle designs intended to minimise downtime in demanding operating conditions rather than optimise headline specifications.

Fuel efficiency gains and locally relevant engineering solutions have been layered into this foundation, supported by a national parts and service network designed to keep vehicles operational throughout extended duty cycles.

### Aftersales as a leadership differentiator

Beyond the product itself, Isuzu's market position has been reinforced by a consistent aftersales strategy. Nationwide dealer coverage, technical training and diagnostic capability have played a critical role in supporting fleets once vehicles are in service.

Equally important has been the brand's focus on application-appropriate specifications, allowing operators in logistics, construction and specialised applications to deploy vehicles aligned to real-world load profiles and operating environments.

Over time, this has shaped a partnership-led model in which Isuzu positions itself as a contributor to operational continuity rather than a transactional vehicle supplier.

**Looking ahead**

As Isuzu enters its fourteenth year of market leadership, the stated focus remains on refining technology, strengthening aftersales capability and delivering transport solutions that balance performance, efficiency and sustainability within a changing regulatory and economic landscape.

The company has also been explicit in recognising that sustained leadership is a shared outcome, underpinned by long-term customer relationships and a dealer network that supports the brand across South Africa.



**Isuzu FSR 500**

▲ One of Isuzu's top selling models - the FTR 850 with a refrigerated body fitted.

"Thirteen years at number one has been made possible because of the customers who rely on Isuzu every day, and the dealers who bring the brand to life across the country. Because of you, Isuzu continues to lead," Uren concludes.

**Editor's Comment:** Thirteen years at number one is no mean feat. In a sector where fleet managers value stability over experimentation, Isuzu's success highlights the commercial value of continuity. Consistent engineering, disciplined product planning and dependable aftersales support may lack the shimmer of new high-tech truck rollout, but they certainly reduce operational risk while simultaneously boosting customer peace of mind. For South African fleets operating under pressure, those proven benefits from Isuzu are legitimately persuasive market differentiators. Congratulations Isuzu! Keep it up!

**Isuzu FSR 500**

One of Isuzu's great strengths over the years has been its focus on application-appropriate specifications like this Isuzu FSR 500 Passenger Aid unit spotted at Chief Dawid Stuurman International Airport in Gqeberha.



## MERCEDES-BENZ TRUCKS 130 YEARS ON



# Mercedes-Benz Trucks 130 years on

**F**rom the invention of the world's first motorised truck in 1896 to today's battery-electric long-haul flagship, Mercedes-Benz Trucks used its 130-year milestone to frame a broader narrative about progress. Presented at Retro Classics Stuttgart in Germany, the anniversary display connected a heritage of pioneering truck engineering with modern-day truck technologies focused on road safety, vehicle efficiency and driver wellbeing - a timeline of trucking innovation increasingly centred on the people who operate, manage and share the road with heavy vehicles.

Across the 700m<sup>2</sup> Mercedes-Benz Trucks stand, static displays

were complemented by live presentations, technical walk-throughs and scheduled engine start-ups that brought both early and modern vehicles to life.

A tyre-changing station and remote-controlled model trucks added interactive elements, ensuring that some 70 000 visitors to the four-day show were offered not only historical context, but also practical insights and hands-on engagement.

### 1896 – the starting point

At the center of the historical section stood a reconstruction of the world's first motorised truck, originally unveiled in 1896 by Gottlieb Daimler. Its two-cylinder "Phoenix" engine produced four horsepower from 1.06 litres. Drive was transmitted to the rear axle

### Pioneering engineering

▲ 130 years of pioneering truck engineering: The reconstructed 1896 Lastwagen with a graphic of the latest eActros in the background.

via belt and steering was chain operated.

The driver sat on an elevated bench, in the style of a carriage. Despite its simplicity, the truck incorporated a planetary hub reduction axle - a principle still used in heavy-duty vehicles today.

By 1898, the design had evolved, moving the engine beneath the driver and then forward of the front axle to increase payload and performance. Early exports to England and France and presentation at the 1900 Paris World Exhibition confirmed the vehicle's international relevance.

### 1996 – electronics enter the mainstream

A century later, the launch of the Mercedes-Benz Actros marked

# MERCEDES-BENZ TRUCKS

## 130 YEARS ON



### World's first truck

▲ The world's first truck built by Gottlieb Daimler in 1896 with a rear-mounted four horsepower engine, chain steering and solid iron tyres.

another turning point. The first-generation Actros introduced CAN bus systems, electronically controlled brakes and integrated driver assistance functions.

The MegaSpace cab set new benchmarks for driver comfort, efficiency and safety. In 2006, Active Brake Assist extended the vehicle's safety capabilities, reinforcing the role of electronics in accident prevention.

By 2026, the Actros range - including diesel and electric derivatives - represented three decades of continuous refinement, illustrating the evolution from a purely mechanical machine to a connected, software-driven vehicle platform.

### 2026 – electrification and advanced assistance

The Mercedes-Benz eActros 600 Safety Truck showcased the latest developments in electrification and active safety. Equipped with a 270-degree sensor fusion system, Active Brake Assist 6 and Active Sideguard Assist 2, the battery-electric flagship demonstrated how predictive electronics now underpin accident prevention strategies.

Several of the systems on display already exceed forthcoming European regulatory standards. When displayed alongside the 1896 reconstruction, the technological progression was immediately evident.

### Broader brand heritage

In addition to the world's first truck, the Mercedes-Benz Trucks Classic stand showcased a series of historical milestones. Highlights included the 1899 Daimler cardan shaft truck, currently being restored to running condition at

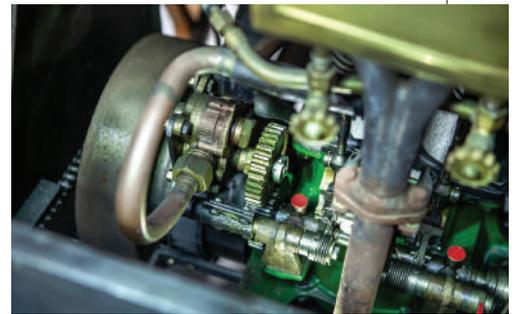
the Technik Museum Speyer as part of the "Legends on Wheels" exhibition.

A 1937 Mercedes-Benz L 1500 with wood gas generator illustrated an alternative propulsion technology that remained in use in Germany until the 1950s. Post-war transport was represented by the L 4500 and LP 608 from 1965, alongside the L 1113 from 1966, all symbols of the era's economic upswing.

The stand also celebrated 80 years of the Unimog with both a 1946 early model and a 1978 U 416, while three decades of the Actros were marked by a first-generation 1843 LS from 2000.

Bus heritage was represented by a 1954 Setra S 8 from the Neu-Ulm old-timer collection, highlighting the brand's pioneering integral construction.

For motorsport enthusiasts, the historic Mercedes-Benz Atego Race Truck from 2000 provided a glimpse into competitive truck racing, while the latest technology was represented by the eActros 600 Safety Truck. ▶<sup>64</sup>



▲ The Daimler Motor Lastwagen 1899 model with the engine now beneath the driver and then forward of the front axle to increase payload and performance.

### The Lastwagen engine

▲ The Lastwagen engine: the rear-mounted two-cylinder "Phoenix" engine - four horsepower with a displacement of 1.06 litres driving the rear axle via a belt system.

### L1500 Holzvergaser

▼ The 1937 Mercedes-Benz L 1500 Holzvergaser with wood-gas generator, an almost forgotten alternative propulsion technology that was common in Germany until the 1950s.



# MERCEDES-BENZ TRUCKS

## 130 YEARS ON



### 1955 L 4500

▲ A Mercedes-Benz L 4500 from 1955, a typical representative of the post-war economic upswing.

### Pioneering spirit and innovative future

According to Jean Marc Diss, Head of Global Sales & Marketing Mercedes-Benz Trucks: "130 years of trucks stands for 130 years of pioneering spirit and innovation. We can be proud of how far we have come and at the same time, this anniversary motivates us to continue our journey.

"Tradition and future are inseparably linked at Mercedes-Benz Trucks, just like our clear focus on the needs of our customers and on first class service. This includes thinking forward and continuously developing transport solutions that benefit our customers." □

### "Cab over axle"

► The 'cab over axle' arrives: a 1965 Mercedes-Benz LP 608.

### Tradition and future inseparably linked

### eActros 600

▼ The Mercedes-Benz eActros 600 Safety Truck with a 270-degree sensor-fusion system, intelligent assistance functions such as Active Brake Assist 6 and Active Sideguard Assist 2. The Mercedes-Benz eActros 600 represents three decades of technological progress - from new drivetrain technologies and connected systems to comprehensive safety features.



▲ An early UNIMOG from 1946.



**Editor's Comment:** Mercedes-Benz Trucks' "130 Years Trucks" display in Stuttgart showed that progress in commercial vehicle engineering is always incremental, each new stage being built on the past. The 130-year milestone was presented not as a conclusion but as an on-going process, shaped by efficiency requirements, safety standards and the transition toward sustainable transport. And that's exactly where we should be heading! Congratulations from all at *FleetWatch* on keeping the wheels turning over the past 130 years. Now for the next 130...Yeah!





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## DAF TRUCKS

# An engineered expansion strategy is essential

**W**ith road freight volumes expected to rise in 2026, DAF Trucks (a Babcock subsidiary) argues that disciplined fleet planning will be critical to capturing growth without overexposing operators to CAPEX risk. In a market shaped by diesel price volatility, regulatory pressures and payload demands prone to supply chain disruption, effective fleet expansion must be driven by an 'engineered' capital strategy.

According to Mark Gavin, Sales Director of DAF Trucks at Babcock: "Sustainable transport growth is rarely accidental - it is engineered. Many operators enter the market with quality pre-owned units to manage capital exposure.

"That's often a smart and strategic

starting point. The key is to ensure those vehicles are properly inspected, supported and backed by a strong aftermarket network."

### Starting smart in a tightening market

Pre-owned assets remain a pragmatic entry strategy, particularly for emerging operators or those cautiously expanding into new contracts. Lower upfront capital outlay preserves working capital - a crucial buffer in margin-sensitive freight environments.

But, as Gavin notes, fleet strategy evolves alongside operational maturity. "We see a clear transition point. Once operators begin running heavier combinations or expanding into longer routes, the focus moves beyond purchase price to total cost of ownership."

That transition typically coincides with increased gross combination masses (and on-road risk), more demanding duty cycles and higher utilisation rates - conditions where specification, not purchase price, becomes decisive.

### A fine balancing act

Scaling a fleet for heavier payloads

### Total cost of ownership

▲ Once operators begin running heavier combinations or expanding into longer routes, the focus moves beyond purchase price to total cost of ownership says Mark Gavin, Sales Director of DAF Trucks at Babcock.

or extended line-haul work demands more than incremental horsepower. It requires a carefully calibrated balance between power output, driveline efficiency and durability.

"It's about balance," says Gavin. "You need the right combination of power, fuel efficiency and reliability. If you get that balance correct, you protect margins while increasing capacity."

Modern long-haul platforms such as those from DAF Trucks increasingly integrate optimised aerodynamics and advanced driveline technologies. The result is higher output without disproportionate fuel penalties - a critical advantage when diesel remains the dominant operating cost in bulk and long-distance transport.

### Lifecycle value as the anchor metric

While a vehicle's purchase cost

will always influence procurement direction to one degree or another, Gavin stresses that fleet profitability will always hinge on total cost of ownership: "Capital cost is important but it's only one part of the equation. Fuel consumption, service intervals, parts availability, warranty support and residual value all influence long-term profitability."

Operators who plan around lifecycle value rather than acquisition price typically experience stronger asset sustainability, improved uptime and more resilient resale values. In a projected 2026 growth environment, that discipline can mean the difference between fleet growth that strengthens a balance sheet and fleet expansion that strains bottom line integrity, he adds.

**The human element**

Fleet productivity is not purely mechanical - it is also human, says Gavin: "Driver comfort plays a direct role in safety, productivity and retention. Ergonomic cabs, intuitive layouts and reduced fatigue contribute to operational consistency. In a competitive driver market, that matters."

As driver shortages persist globally and locally, vehicle ergonomics, cabin space and fatigue-reduction features become operational enablers, not luxuries. Strategic fleet growth therefore extends beyond powertrains and payloads to encompass the people who translate mechanical capability into revenue.



**You need the right combinations of power, fuel efficiency and reliability. If the balance is right, margins will be protected by increasing capacity.**

**Mark Gavin**  
Sales Director  
DAF Trucks at Babcock

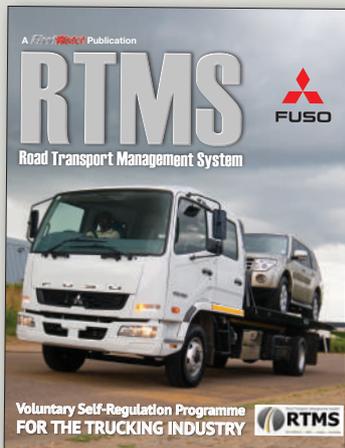
**Partnership, not procurement**

At Babcock, Gavin frames fleet planning as a long-term collaboration rather than a transactional supply exercise: "Our role is not simply to supply trucks. It's to work alongside operators - whether they are starting with pre-owned assets or scaling into higher-capacity units - and ensure their fleet decisions support sustainable growth."

If 2026 is gearing up to reward operators with best-practice standards in place, fleet growth via disciplined fleet engineering will provide a distinct competitive edge, Gavin states, reminding fleet operators that while growth in the road freight sector may be cyclical, capital missteps can haunt operators for years.

"Fleet growth should never be accidental," he concludes. "It should be engineered." □

**Editor's Comment:** History consistently demonstrates that poorly structured fleet expansion amplifies risk in volatile markets. The operators who thrive in 2026 are likely to be those who treat fleet planning as a financial strategy first and a procurement exercise second. Engineered growth, not opportunistic acquisition, remains the hallmark of resilient transport businesses.



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# Fuso sharpens the Canter for the last-mile

**A**s last-mile delivery volumes continue to surge - driven by e-commerce, urbanisation and just-in-time supply chains - light-duty trucks have become the unsung backbone of both South Africa's freight economy and global distribution networks.

In this high-frequency, stop-start environment, fuel efficiency, uptime and in-cab connectivity are no longer nice-to-haves - they are operational essentials. As such, Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus Corporation has launched a newly updated version of its flagship light-duty truck, the Mitsubishi Fuso Canter, in Japan - sharpening its focus on fuel economy, digital integration and regulatory compliance.

## Exceeding the efficiency benchmark

The new Canter delivers measurable gains in fuel performance over its predecessor, with all models now meeting Japan's FY2025 Fuel Efficiency Standards (JH25). More notably, the truck exceeds the JH25 benchmark by approximately 5%, with selected

derivatives achieving improvements of up to 10%.

These gains are driven by enhanced engine efficiency, including refinements to the power unit itself and optimised variable geometry turbo control. Aerodynamics also plays a role. A redesigned front bumper and standard door visors help reduce air resistance, contributing to improved real-world consumption - a critical factor for fleets operating in congested urban corridors where idling and low-speed driving dominate duty cycles.

For South African operators facing persistent fuel price volatility, such incremental efficiency

improvements, when they hit our shores, will translate directly into lower cost per kilometre - and stronger competitiveness in the last-mile arena.

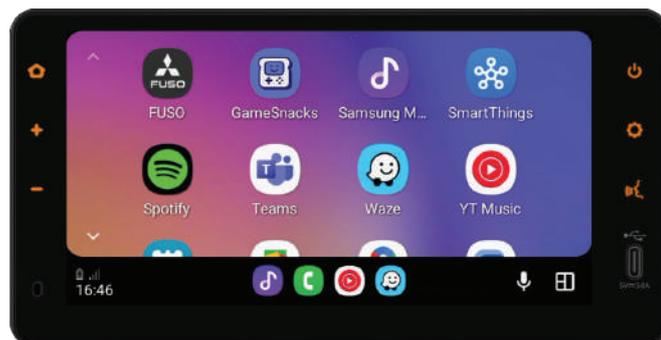
## Connectivity and compliance in a digital era

Beyond fuel savings, the new Canter responds to a growing demand for digital functionality in light-duty fleets. A newly designed optional center display supports Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto™, enhancing driver connectivity and navigation integration - key tools in time-sensitive delivery operations. Importantly, the truck also complies with the latest cybersecurity regulations, reflecting a broader industry shift toward safeguarding connected vehicle systems as telematics and fleet management platforms become more deeply embedded in daily operations.

## Design refresh, broader mission

Visually, the updated Canter features a revised front bumper that gives the truck a fresher, more contemporary face. While cosmetic changes are subtle, they align with Fuso's wider product evolution strategy - positioning the Canter to support an even broader range of customer applications.

For a segment defined by agility, efficiency and reliability, incremental innovation often carries disproportionate impact. In the light-duty space, small gains compound quickly across thousands of urban kilometres. □



▲ The latest communications functionality in an optional center display that supports Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto™.



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**Success** – traffic officers and partners celebrate two days training.

## Mogale City

# Five out of six trucks fail

**E**xcuse me getting a little nostalgic here but Krugersdorp - Mogale City - has always occupied a warm spot in my heart for it was here, back in 1975, that I started my journalism career as a cadet reporter on the then *West Rand Times*. It was also there that I met the late John Marsh who, as Deputy Editor, took me under his wing and taught me so much about crafting stories - and especially about photography. There were no cell phones or digital cameras then. I used a Pentax Spotmatic with film that we would develop in John's kitchen at night. Many readers will remember John, who went on to become the much-respected Editor of *Truck & Bus*, published by the late great Justin Haler.

I was thus thrilled when Mogale City (Krugersdorp) was chosen as the venue for our latest *Brake & Tyre Watch* event. The town itself has changed - not as pristine as it was back in the day - but the group of traffic officials who attended the

training were brilliant. So too were the 'bosses' - Deputy Director Sinah Lekganyane and Chief Provincial Inspector Makgalwa - who ensured a full turnout from the Traffic Officers. And then there was Kgomotso Mthethwa and Dumisani Mdluli from the Mogale Vehicle Testing Station who went out of their way to ensure the facilities were fully available for the practical training day.

Without doubt, the old-time Krugersdorp hospitality and warmth still exists today and our *Brake & Tyre Watch* partners (see page 36 for these Superhero companies dedicated to road safety) felt it too. Over the two days of training - one day theory and the second practical - the enthusiasm and willingness to learn shown by the delegates was noted and commented on by all our expert trainers. It was a pleasure.

What wasn't a pleasure, however, was seeing the state of some of the trucks brought in for inspection. Out of six randomly selected from the roads, five failed. Some

had specific faults which, by law, warrant immediate discontinuation - such as a non-working ABS system - while others displayed a multitude of defects that make such trucks and their operators a disgrace to this industry.

Frankly, they should just leave. The blatant unroadworthiness of their rigs shows they don't give two hoots about road safety or compliance. They are out there simply to make bucks. We, however, are out there to prevent them making those bucks at the cost of other people's lives. And *FleetWatch Brake & Tyre Watch* - along with our dedicated partners - will continue doing exactly that by equipping officers with the knowledge to identify critical vehicle faults that could lead to catastrophic road failures - and deaths. Thank you to all our partners. This initiative would not be possible without your continued support, expertise and commitment to road safety. Salute. Over the next few pages, we take you with us on a visit to the theory day, the practical day and various other activities of this project. □

**Patrick O'Leary**  
Managing Editor  
*FleetWatch*



**Bridgestone:** Dries Venter of Bridgestone under the spotlight as he discusses all aspects of tyres. There's always lively discussion on tyres.



**Theory Training**

Rapt attention from the delegates as the day's training gets underway. This was one side of the room. Lots more on other side.

# Knowledge is power

There's something so refreshing seeing Traffic Officers responding positively to the knowledge imparted by our expert trainers from our various partner companies. Many delegates start the theory day thinking "what can they teach us that we don't already know?" But then, it doesn't take long for that view to change as they realise we're there not to demean but to empower. It's a win-win day for all.



**ZF Aftermarket (Wabco):**

A correct answer gets a prize for this Traffic Official handed to him by Johan van der Merwe, our braking expert.

From l-r (below)

**Driving home** the message of vehicle compliance are, Kathy Bell of Standard Bank and Sean Annandale of BPW Axles.

**Leadership in action** Chief Provincial Inspector Makgalwa was there from start to finish over the two days showing great leadership by walking the talk.

**Accident Specialist:** Craig Proctor-Parker discusses case studies of actual crash investigations to show how you determine what caused them.

**Orafol's** ever supportive Clive Versfeld with a delighted winner of one of the prizes.



# Leading the way to road safety

Santam Heavy Haulage is the leading insurer of heavy commercial vehicles. We understand that truck drivers are the backbone of the trucking industry, and by the nature of the work they do, they work under unique physically demanding conditions, putting them at increased risk of a range of chronic health conditions, including diabetes and hypertension, and fatigue.

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Brake & Tyre Watch



## Daimler Truck joins in full gear

Our OEM partner for the Mogale City (Krugersdorp) Brake & Tyre Watch event was Daimler Truck Southern Africa and what a great effort they put in. On the first day, the legendary Duncan Prince, Manager Unimog and Specialised Heavy Trucks, (seen right with one of the delegates), gave a talk on safety features on modern trucks. On the practical day, ace driver trainer Naveen Sook, Team Leader Fleetboard and Driver Training arrived with his Actros training rig along with Fusi Mosia, certified driver trainer at Sandown Motor Holding; Dirk Meyer, Head of Value Chain Services and Jacky Fourie, Public Relations (all pictured left to right here). The rig was used for our trainers to show Traffic Officials the componentry on a roadworthy rig before hauling in trucks from the road. Thank you for your valued contribution, Daimler Truck.



## VALUED BRAKE & TYRE WATCH PARTNERS



DAIMLER TRUCK





### In the pit ▲

Each team gets the opportunity to go into the pit where Sean Annandale of BPW Axles explains the functioning of components like slack adjusters, brake boosters, load sensing valves and all the other parts that ensure the roadworthiness of a rig. Of course, in many cases, faults are picked up and a full explanation is given of what the particular fault may lead to out on the road. The Traffic Officers are urged not to “judge a book by its cover” but to get under and check.

### A parade starts the day

After the previous day's 'classroom' theory training, the practical day starts with a parade where the day's activities are explained. The delegates are then divided into teams which stay together for the day visiting the different stations of inspections where our *FleetWatch Brake & Tyre Watch* expert trainers take over. This is the start of a very active and informative day for all.

# Turning learning into action

Learning in a classroom is one thing but practical application of the theory ideally rounds off any learning process. And that is what we do at *Brake & Tyre Watch*. The practical day begins with the traffic officials divided into teams with each team allocated a team leader from our crew who will guide them from station to station where our expert trainers take them through inspections of the trucks brought in.

### Inspection of Mercedes-Benz 'good rig' – the right way



▲ **With our OEM** partner for each event - in this case Daimler Truck Southern Africa - supplying a roadworthy rig, Traffic Officers are shown what to look for to identify signs of unroadworthiness on a rig. This inspection provides a solid base of comparison for when trucks are later pulled in for real hands-on inspections.





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**No equipment needed**

▲ Out on the road, Traffic Officials don't have equipment to test vehicles. No problem. You only need your five senses and the knowledge of what to look for. If the vehicle is suspect, it is directed to an official test centre. Here Johan van der Merwe of ZF Aftermarket shows delegates exactly what to look for in braking systems.



**All round inspection**

▲ Clive Versfeld of Orafol leads a team around a rig for all-round inspections including lights, conspicuity and other necessities for roadworthiness.

**Partners in action**



**Testing the knowledge**

At the end of every Brake & Tyre Watch event, a quiz is held where one person from each team is appointed to represent team members in a knock-out knowledge quiz. The winner gets an accident investigation kit donated by Craig Proctor-Parker, MD of Accident Specialist and a loyal partner of Brake & Tyre Watch. It's a happy ending to each two-day event.



**Top cops were there**

▲ The top leaders, there to support their people, were thrilled at what had been achieved. Seen here with FleetWatch Editor Patrick O'Leary, are, from left: Chief Provincial Inspector Makgalwa, Deputy Director Lekganyane and Director Des Govender of Gauteng Traffic Police.

**Thanks**

► Delegated by his colleagues to speak on their behalf, this 'empowered' Traffic Officer extended thanks at the end of the event to FleetWatch and all our partners for passing on knowledge to enable them to do their jobs more effectively on the roads in the interest of road safety for all. Making a difference is what it's all about.

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## Discontinued...

It is totally disheartening to see the state of some of the trucks brought in for testing on the Brake & Tyre Watch exercises. Five of the six trucks tested during the Mogale City project failed and, as can be seen left and right, were discontinued with officers removing the license discs. Here are just a few faults depicted. It's a sad state of affairs out there.



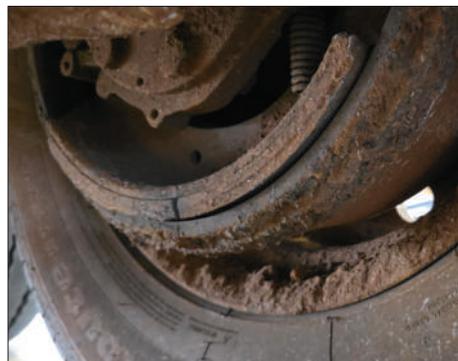
## Tyre woes ... always an issue

**Top left:**

A large bulge on the sidewall of the tyre due to operational damage. Section 212 (F) - this tyre is not allowed to operate and must be replaced.

**Top right:**

A large bulge on the sidewall of the tyre due to operational damage. Section 212 (F) - this tyre is not allowed to operate and must be replaced.



▲ **A single tyre** fitted to a trailer that should have dual tyres fitted. The tyre load capacity is exceeded and will fail during operation - as it is doing here. And it is totally under inflated. When the trailer turned, the rim gauged a groove into the concrete. Get it out of here.



▲ **Slack adjuster** Ag nee Pappie! This slack adjuster is taking a break - not a brake - by resting on the axle. Totally incorrect brake settings. Result - no brakes. Fail!

## Brake fails...

**Above right:**

ABS cable disconnected. Many operators don't realise that when an ABS is fitted, it must be working. If not, the consequence is serious for the law states it's a discontinuation.

**Above left:**

When last maintenance was conducted on this trailer's brakes is anyone's guess. Brake shoe protruding from the brake drum and large gap between drum and shoe. No maintenance equals no brakes. Fail

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**SAPICS 2026 Outlook**

# Recovering from “permacrisis”

**Supply chain ecosystem**

▲ The new African supply chain ecosystem: “Leading organisations are redesigning their supply chains to absorb disruption, adapt dynamically and create long-term value.” – SAPICS.

**A**s 2026 takes shape, the pressures facing African supply chain managers are already familiar to truck fleet operators - volatility, cost sensitivity and the constant need to do more with less. Against this backdrop, supply chain industry body SAPICS has offered a timely view on how African supply chains are shifting from a state of “permacrisis” to structural resilience, with direct implications for trucking, logistics and road-based distribution.

The reality is: while boardroom talk of algorithms, resilience and operational reimagining activates new enterprise management strategies, Africa’s supply chains still

move on tyres. Road freight remains the execution layer where strategy meets reality, carrying the economic load across long distances, border posts, ports and input-constrained infrastructure. With this truth front-of-mind, here’s the SAPICS African supply chain outlook for 2026.

**What 2026 holds for African supply chains**

It’s clear that supply chain uncertainty is not going away this year. But while there has been no respite from geopolitical tensions and shifting trade dynamics, the supply chain conversation is changing tone.

After years defined by disruption, firefighting and crisis response, the focus is shifting from survival

to structure and from reaction to strategy. For African and South African supply chains in particular, this transition brings both challenges and opportunities.

International research, including the United States-based Association for Supply Chain Management’s (ASCM’s) 2026 supply chain trends report, points to a supply chain future shaped by intelligent, resilient and data-driven operations. These themes take on a distinct meaning on the African continent, where supply chains must operate in environments marked by infrastructure constraints, energy instability, geopolitical complexity and deep socio-economic responsibility.

**Moving from a state of “permacrisis”**

Over the past five years, supply chain leaders have been operating in what many describe as a state of “permacrisis”. Pandemic aftershocks, geopolitical conflict, climate events, port congestion, skills shortages and cost volatility forced organisations into constant defensive mode.

For 2026, that is changing. Rather than reacting to each new shock, leading organisations are redesigning their supply chains to absorb disruption, adapt dynamically and create long-term value. This is where South African and African supply chain managers, which have long had to build resilience into daily operations, may have a headstart.



**AI moves from experiment to essential**

Artificial intelligence has been cited as a top supply chain trend for some time. This year, it is at the centre of supply chain optimisation, moving from pilot projects to core infrastructure.

For African supply chains, AI-driven forecasting, demand sensing and scenario modelling are gamechangers that can help mitigate long-standing challenges such as unreliable data, volatile demand and constrained capacity. By synthesising real-time information from across the supply chain - including weather, ports, energy availability and market signals - AI enables faster, better-informed decisions.

Crucially, this is not about replacing people. It is about augmenting human judgement in environments where complexity is high and margins for error are

low. But the increasing focus on technology like AI does mean that we will see a supply chain workforce evolution in 2026.

**Workforce evolution**

**A**utomation and AI are taking over repetitive, transactional tasks, freeing professionals to focus on strategy, analysis and decision-making. Supply chain managers must invest in new skills,

including data literacy, systems thinking, scenario planning and cross-functional leadership.

In Africa, this transformation has a powerful social dimension. Building future-ready supply chains means developing local talent, creating sustainable jobs and ensuring that technological advancement supports inclusive growth.



**Geopolitics, regionalisation and “Anywhere-but-China”**

With changing global trade patterns, the familiar “China + 1” supply chain strategy is evolving into a broader ‘Anywhere-but-China’ approach, as organisations diversify sourcing and production to reduce risk. This is driving increased regionalisation and supply chain rewiring.

This trend presents a strategic opportunity for Africa. As global companies seek alternative manufacturing and sourcing locations, African countries that invest in infrastructure, skills and policy certainty can position themselves as viable regional hubs. South Africa, with its established logistics capability and access to regional markets, has a critical role to play.

At the same time, supply chain managers must navigate increasing trade complexity, localisation requirements and geopolitical risk. Success will depend on network design, supplier diversification and strong regional partnerships.



**Climate, circularity and cost precision**

Climate risk and circularity are moving rapidly up the supply chain agenda. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) expectations are increasingly influencing investment decisions, customer relationships and regulatory frameworks.

For African supply chains, climate resilience is not abstract. Extreme weather events, water scarcity and energy instability already affect operations. In 2026, organisations that integrate sustainability into network design, sourcing and logistics will be better positioned to manage both risk and reputation. At the same time, cost optimisation is evolving. Rather than blunt cost-cutting, leaders are adopting precision strategies that balance efficiency, resilience and sustainability.

**A defining year for African supply chains**

With 2026 already shaping up to be a defining year for supply chains globally and particularly for Africa and South Africa, we emphasize the importance of education and knowledge sharing for everyone involved in supply chain management at any level.

“In today’s complex and rapidly evolving supply chain landscape, all supply chain roles must be filled by people with the requisite knowledge, skills and qualifications,” the organisation concludes. □

# New vehicle sales up but trucks face a tough road

Data recently released by naamsa The Automotive Business Council shows that South Africa's new vehicle market delivered a long-awaited milestone in 2025, finally surpassing pre-pandemic 2019 levels and reaching volumes not seen in more than a decade. The heavy truck and bus segments, however, were the exception to sales surges experienced in other segments.

According to naamsa, the sector's recovery was closely aligned with broader macroeconomic improvements, supported by cumulative interest rate cuts of 150 basis points since September 2024, record-low vehicle inflation, an influx of more affordable imports and the liquidity boost from two-pot retirement system withdrawals.

naamsa data confirms that aggregate industry sales grew by a robust 15,7% year-on-year to 596 818 units in 2025, reflecting renewed consumer confidence, improved credit conditions and the release of pent-up demand that had accumulated between 2021 and 2024.

## naamsa December figures underline uneven recovery

According to naamsa, December 2025 provided a strong conclusion to the year, with total new vehicle sales reaching 48 983 units, up from 41 101 units in December 2024. The naamsa figures show passenger car sales rising 20,3% year-on-year, while light commercial vehicles increased by 23,7%, reinforcing the strength of consumer-facing segments.

However, naamsa's December breakdown highlights continued pressure in the commercial vehicle space. Medium commercial vehicle sales declined by 7,0% year-on-year, while heavy trucks and buses recorded a sharper 13,2% contraction, indicating on-going caution among fleet operators.

Dealer sales accounted for 90,8% of December volumes, according to naamsa, with the remainder split between rental, government and corporate fleets.

## naamsa trend data shows mixed fortunes for heavy trucks

Full year naamsa data underscores the divergent performance across segments. Passenger car sales surged by 20,1% to 422 292 units, while light commercial vehicles grew by 7,8% to 143 637 units. Medium commercial vehicles edged higher by 5,6% to 8 151 units.

In contrast, naamsa reports that heavy truck and bus sales declined by 3,0% year-on-year to 22 738 units. While volumes remain well above pandemic-era lows, the segment has cooled since peaking in 2023, reflecting the sector's sensitivity to infrastructure constraints, freight demand and capital investment confidence.

For the trucking industry, the naamsa data reinforces that recovery remains uneven. While consumer-driven demand has powered the broader market, heavy commercial vehicle purchases continue to hinge on tangible progress in logistics reform and corridor performance.

Moreover, the rise of affordable Chinese heavy trucks represents a real market dynamic that could reshape the segment's outlook. As



Chinese manufacturers intensify export efforts into Africa - driven by the need to offset slower domestic demand - South African fleets are facing imports that undercut traditional price points. This is injecting competition into the heavy truck space, offering operators cost relief on initial purchase costs but also posing strategic challenges for local and established global OEMs seeking to protect market share.

**naamsa export figures breach 400,000-unit milestone**

On the export front, naamsa reports that vehicle exports reached 408 224 units in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 4,4% and the first time exports have exceeded the 400 000-unit mark.

Passenger car exports softened by 8,0%, according to naamsa, while light commercial vehicle exports rose sharply by 33,3%. Truck and bus exports increased by 68,4% off a low base, underscoring South Africa's continued relevance in selected commercial vehicle export niches.

naamsa has cautioned that while regulatory adjustments in Europe provide limited relief, the transition to new energy vehicles remains an existential priority for export competitiveness. The association continues to monitor geopolitical

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 / 2024% Change
Cars	304,338	363,681	347,367	351,551	422,292	+20,1%
Light Commercial	133,078	135,711	151,490	133,250	422,292	+7,8
Medium Commercial	7,520	8,297	8,252	7,722	8,151	+5,6%
Heavy Trucks, Buses	19,386	21,645	24,438	23,453	22,738	-3,0%
Total Vehicles	464,322	529,334	531,547	515,976	596,818	+15,7%

Source: naamsa, Lightstone Auto

risks, including trade tensions with the US and uncertainty around AGOA.

**naamsa outlook for 2026 remains positive, but conditional**

Looking ahead, naamsa expects the combined impact of lower interest rates and easing inflation, forecast to average 3,3%, to support consumer spending in 2026. With GDP growth projected at between 1,4% and 1,6%, naamsa forecasts new vehicle sales growth of between 9% and 11% in 2026.

For heavy trucks and buses, naamsa notes that upside potential will depend less on consumer conditions and more on execution

▲ Tale of the tills – a naamsa data table showing annual aggregate industry sales by sector from 2021 to 2025.

in logistics reform, infrastructure recovery and the effective rollout of private sector participation in rail and ports.□

**Editor's Comment:** naamsa's 2025 data paints a strong overall picture for South Africa's automotive market, yet it also highlights persistent structural challenges in the heavy truck segment. While passenger and light commercial vehicles have benefited from affordability and demand revival, heavy trucks remain constrained by logistics bottlenecks and cautious fleet investment.

Against this backdrop, the prospect of Chinese truck imports gaining traction adds another layer of complexity. Lower-priced models could offer short-term cost relief for operators, but they also risk intensifying competitive pressure on local and established global OEMs.

Ultimately, market shifts of this nature reinforce the need for infrastructure reform and logistics efficiency - because without reliable transport corridors, no amount of competitive pricing will unlock sustainable growth in heavy commercial fleets. If logistics execution accelerates, the heavy truck market could harness competitive imports as an additional growth vector; if not, it may continue to lag.

**“Trucking plays a critical role in African economies. The transport sector is expected to be one of the big winners of the African Continental Free Trade Area where higher production volume will not only create more local jobs, it will also open opportunities for more localisation.”**

naamsa Vice-President (Heavy Commercial): Jan Aichinger – MAN Automotive South Africa.



# Volvo Trucks SA crowns 2025 dealer champions

**W**ith 23 award categories spanning its full value chain and a 20-strong national dealer network, Volvo

Trucks South Africa's annual dealer awards have evolved into far more than a ceremonial pat on the back. In a market where uptime, parts availability and financial structuring can make or break a fleet's profitability, recognition of this scope gives frontline dealer personnel the confidence to sharpen customer support, drive sales volumes and compete harder in their respective regions.

This year's programme acknowledged excellence during 2025 across parts, finance, service, uptime solutions, safety and technical services - a comprehensive sweep that reflects how modern truck retailing now extends well beyond the initial vehicle sale.

## Dealer of the Year – setting the benchmark

In the headline categories, Volvo Trucks & Buses Kimberley secured the Small Dealer of the Year award, Billson Truck Centre Gqeberha was named Medium Dealer of the Year and Volvo Trucks & Buses Cape Town claimed top honours as Large Dealer of the Year.

For Waldemar Christensen, former Managing Director of Volvo Trucks South Africa, the awards were ultimately about customer

impact rather than internal recognition.

"We are very proud of what we have achieved over the past year and more importantly, of the service excellence delivered in support of our customers," he says. "Our customers always come first. We provide complete solutions, whether through transport solutions, maintenance or the financial products we offer. We ensure that our transport solutions meet their specific operational needs and are tailored to the respective segments within the local industry."

The breadth of the awards underscores Volvo's positioning as a solutions provider - integrating trucks, service contracts, parts support and finance into a single operational ecosystem designed to reduce total cost of ownership and improve fleet resilience.

## 26 years in South Africa - and counting

February marked 26 years of Volvo Trucks operations in South Africa - a milestone that reinforces the OEM's long-term commitment to the local road freight sector. Headquartered in Ekurhuleni, the company's 20 dealerships nationwide remain central to its uptime strategy and customer engagement model.

"Through the hard work, expertise and passion of the South African team, Volvo Trucks continues to drive progress, sustainability, fleet efficiency, safety and quality,"



▲ Volvo Trucks & Buses Kimberley secured the Small Dealer of the Year award.



▲ Billson Truck Centre Gqeberha was named Medium Dealer of the Year.



▲ Volvo Trucks & Buses Cape Town claimed top honours as Large Dealer of the Year.

Christensen adds.

"We are equally committed to making a positive impact in society by investing in the development of women truck drivers and female technicians, among other initiatives."

That investment in people - from technicians and service advisors to sales executives and driver trainers - is increasingly critical as fleets demand higher technical competence and data-driven support from their OEM partners.

**Dealer network as competitive advantage**

In an environment where procurement decisions are shaped as much by aftersales confidence as by product specification, dealer awards of this scale do more than celebrate performance – they create a culture of accountability and ambition at ground level which translates into customer trust.

Christensen concludes by reinforcing the pivotal role the dealer network plays in maintaining brand momentum: "Our dealers are our primary point of contact for customers. To strengthen these partnerships and continue delivering first-class service, we will keep investing in our facilities, the continuous training of our employees and innovative yet practical solutions that support customers throughout their transport journey with us." □

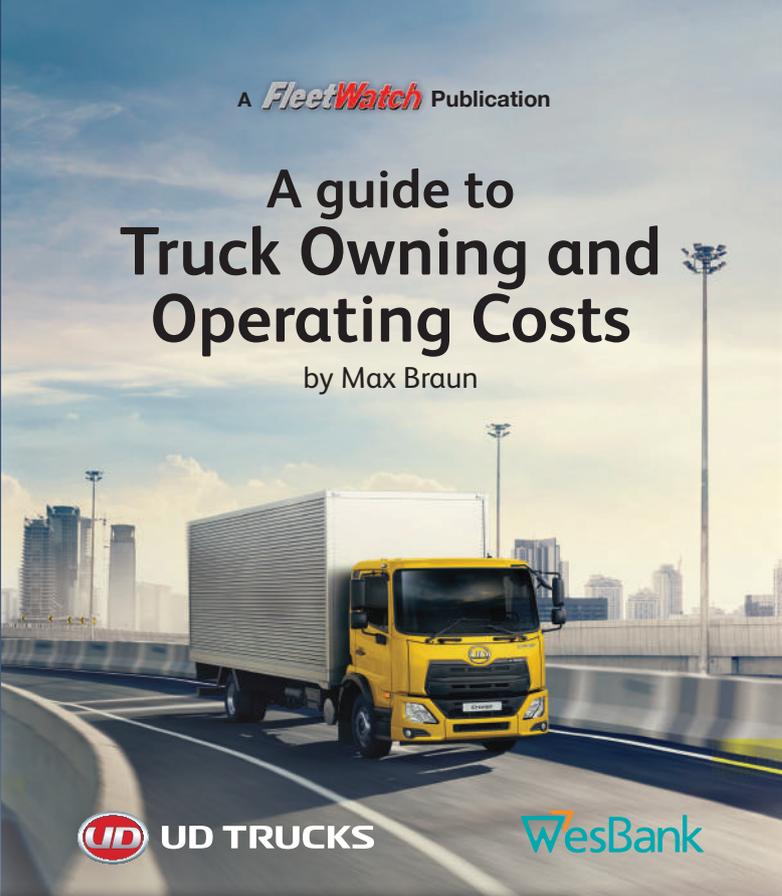
**Editor's Comment**

Comprehensive dealer recognition across 23 operational touchpoints sends a strong message to the market: performance is measured holistically, not just in unit sales. For fleets, that should translate into sharper service standards and greater accountability at dealership level. In a tightening freight economy, confidence at the frontline often determines brand loyalty - and Volvo appears intent on reinforcing that.

A *FleetWatch* Publication

# A guide to Truck Owning and Operating Costs

by Max Braun



**UD TRUCKS** **WesBank**

**Introduction**

**The future of the road freight logistics sector remains optimistic**

**UD AND WESBANK** has been tough to track, but not tough to follow. The company's success is based on its ability to provide a comprehensive range of services, from financing to fleet management, all under one roof. This approach has allowed the company to build a strong relationship with its customers, and to provide a level of service that is second to none. The company's focus on customer service is a key differentiator, and one that has helped it to build a reputation for excellence in the industry.

**Fuel costs remain the largest single expense for virtually all operators.**

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The vehicle's design in this book makes them open to the air, which means the engine is not protected from the elements. This means that the engine is more likely to suffer from wear and tear, and that the engine will need to be replaced more often. This is a significant cost, and one that can be avoided by investing in a more robust engine. The average vehicle in this book is not protected from the elements, which means that the engine is more likely to suffer from wear and tear, and that the engine will need to be replaced more often. This is a significant cost, and one that can be avoided by investing in a more robust engine.

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**Sustainable outcomes**

► Engen has added 30 lower-emission trucks to its national fleet to deliver more sustainable transport outcomes without compromising performance.



**FLEET INVESTMENT**

# Engen strengthens fleet with 30 smart Euro 5 trucks

**A**s far as emissions standards go, Euro 5 is not new to South African truck fleets. Many operators have been running Euro 5-compliant units for some time as part of the gradual shift toward cleaner diesel technology. What is new, and accelerating fast, is the integration of smart technologies including AI-driven safety systems, video telematics and predictive fleet intelligence. In that context, Engen's latest investment proves that emissions compliance is only the starting point. Intelligent oversight is now the differentiator.

Against a backdrop of tightening ESG expectations, rising operating costs and heightened risk exposure in hazardous goods transport, Engen has added 30 lower-emission trucks to its national fleet.

The investment forms part of the company's Own Fleet Lifecycle Management Programme, reinforcing operational resilience while

strengthening safety, efficiency and environmental performance across its logistics network.

**Emissions performance meets operational discipline**

The new Euro 5 fuel-specification vehicles are designed for both short- and long-haul fuel distribution. Equipped with advanced engine management systems, improved fuel-efficiency technology and emissions-reduction solutions, the trucks support cleaner exhaust output and enhanced reliability.

According to Les Moodley, General Manager: Operations at Engen: "Our fleet plays a critical role in ensuring reliable fuel supply across South Africa. This investment future-proofs our transport operations through smarter technology, enhanced safety systems and lower emissions, while maintaining the high standards our customers and partners expect from Engen.

"By continuously renewing

and optimising our fleet, we are strengthening supply chain resilience and reinforcing our commitment to responsible, efficient operations."

A core component of the specification is Euro 5 emissions technology supported by Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) systems and AdBlue, significantly reducing nitrogen oxide emissions while allowing engines to operate at optimal performance levels.

Jason Heath, General Manager: Lubricants at Engen, underlines the role of advanced fluids in supporting this transition: "Modern engine technology demands equally advanced solutions. AdBlue and high-performance lubricants contribute to reduced emissions, improved fuel efficiency and extended engine life. This investment reflects how Engen integrates technology, products and operational expertise to deliver more sustainable transport outcomes without compromising performance."

**AI and video tech redefine safety oversight**

Where Engen's fleet stands out is in the integration of advanced risk-mitigation and driver-assist technologies. Electronic braking systems, stability control, traction management and predictive cruise control enhance vehicle stability and reduce driver fatigue in demanding operating conditions.

More significantly, the fleet incorporates Advanced Driver Assistance Systems using AI-powered cameras and sensors to monitor vehicle surroundings in real time.

Automatic emergency braking, lane-keeping assist and collision warnings form part of a layered safety architecture designed to prevent incidents before they occur.

To strengthen oversight, Engen has deployed a sophisticated In-Vehicle Monitoring System across the fleet. Real-time visibility extends to vehicle location, route tracking, harsh braking events, rapid acceleration, engine performance, idling time, driving hours and fatigue indicators.

Multiple internal and external cameras provide 360-degree visibility, with AI-driven systems analysing driver alertness and vehicle behaviour and issuing alerts where potential risks are identified.

In the fuel distribution environment - where compliance, safety and reputational risk are non-negotiable - this level of visibility is fast becoming the benchmark.

**Lifecycle-led investment strategy**

Jaco Henning, Engen Procurement Category Head: Transport & Products, confirms that the acquisition aligns with a structured lifecycle strategy: "Our Own Fleet Lifecycle Management Programme spans acquisition, operation, maintenance and replacement to ensure maximum value throughout a vehicle's lifespan.

"These trucks were selected based on stringent technical, safety and efficiency criteria. Their advanced systems enable a shift towards predictive maintenance, improving uptime while reducing long-term

operating costs and emissions."

This shift toward predictive maintenance - enabled by telematics data and AI analytics - is increasingly central to cost control and uptime optimisation in modern fleets.

**National pride, ESG alignment**

Adding a distinctive national element, the new trailers carry Springbok branding, reflecting Engen's sponsorship of SA Rugby and its connection to South African communities.

More importantly, the fleet expansion supports Engen's broader ESG commitments by reducing transport emissions, improving safety standards and ensuring compliance with evolving regulatory requirements.

Euro 5 may not be new. But the convergence of emissions technology, AI-enabled monitoring and lifecycle-led procurement marks a decisive step forward.

"In a sector where risk exposure is high and margins are tight, Engen's investment demonstrates that modern fleet management is no longer about trucks alone - it is about intelligent infrastructure engineered for resilience, safety and long-term performance," Moodley concludes.

And while on the subject of Engen's fleet, through a phased delivery, 27 GRW fuel trailers have joined Engen's fleet. This combination of Bartec Q50 and Q39 fuel trailers is designed to handle both primary and secondary distribution, operating on long-haul and regional routes nationwide. Equipped with SPDS technology, fuel is electronically sealed, adding an extra layer of safety, security, and accountability throughout the journey.

GRW has a long-standing partnership with Engen built on shared values and a win-win mindset. It's all about working together to keep South Africa moving. □



**Engen has deployed a sophisticated in-vehicle monitoring system... including AI-driven safety systems, video telematics and predictive fleet intelligence.**



## Everlectric

# 2026 is the year for urban truck fleet electrification

**2**026 is shaping up as a decisive year for truck fleet electrification in South Africa, moving the paradigm from long-term aspiration to near-term commercial reality. According to Paul Plummer, Chief Commercial Officer at Everlectric, the economics of electrifying urban and last-mile fleets are now viable for a much broader segment of the market. "For many fleets, the question is no longer if electrification will work, but which routes are already ready to make the switch," he says.

As new electric vehicle classes enter the local market, fuel price volatility continues to undermine operating certainty and fleet data is offering unprecedented clarity on real-world usage patterns.

Everlectric works with fleet operators to assess, deploy and

manage electric vehicles through data-led route analysis, flexible vehicle access models and integrated charging and energy solutions. Its offering spans vehicles, charging infrastructure, maintenance, telematics and energy management, enabling operators to evaluate electrification without the complexity of managing multiple suppliers.

### New vehicle classes change the equation

Plummer argues that 2026 represents a convergence of factors that materially change the fleet electrification case. "2026 is the year when the economics of fleet electrification become more compelling than ever for a broader range of operators," he says.

"The convergence of new vehicle classes, clearer operating economics

### Electric Van

◀ The Clicks Group and UPD, in partnership with Everlectric and Investec Private Banking Solutions, last year launched South Africa's first zero-emission pharma-grade electric panel-van fleet equipped with solar-powered refrigeration.

and instability in fuel prices including South Africa's Electric Vehicles White Paper, create a practical environment for last-mile and urban logistics fleets to begin electrifying the parts of their fleets that already make sense.

"For years, adoption centred around one-ton panel vans. However, the expected arrival of larger panel vans in 2026 gives fleet managers an electric option that meets their payload needs," says Plummer.

"New four-ton-style trucks land directly in the urban distribution segment where operating efficiency, maintenance intensity and uptime are critical considerations."

At the lighter end of the market, compact EVs are also reaching new cost thresholds. "In parallel, the compact EV category is opening up new opportunities with total cost of ownership now competitive at monthly operating levels that were previously difficult to reach (now at around R10 000 per month)," Plummer explains.

### Route data exposes where EVs already win

The strongest case for electrification emerges via fleet data interrogation. "Once owners analyse the data of the routes their vehicles operate, how far they travel, and what they haul, the decision about which segments of the fleet to electrify becomes more straightforward," says Plummer.

He notes that telematics often overturns long-held assumptions. "What often surprises fleet managers is how different things start to look once the data is analysed in detail. ▶ 88

▶ 88 When you strip away assumptions and focus on actual telematics, weekly kilometre patterns, dwell time at depots and how loads shift across the day, it becomes obvious which parts of the fleet are ready to move and which are not."

Urban routes with predictable cycles tend to stand out. "Most fleets have a large proportion of routes that repeat almost exactly. Those are the natural first adopters," he says, pointing to "high stop-start intensity during peak hours, drop-off zones, and end-of-day charging back at the base" as areas where EVs deliver immediate operational advantage.

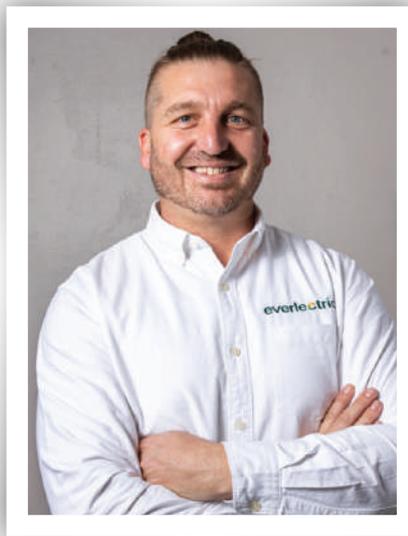
**Pilots over theory**

Plummer cautions against over-modelling and advocates for live testing. "From there, the question is how you want to take the first step," he says. "Some fleet managers prefer to own the vehicles outright. Others wish to have everything, for example, vehicles, charging, maintenance, insurance, electricity management, and telematics, handled in one place so they can judge the economics without juggling multiple suppliers."

"Either approach works, as long as the transition is adequately tested in a live environment. A short pilot on real routes usually tells you more than months of theoretical modelling," he adds.

**Competitive pressure begins to build**

Early adopters are likely to see benefits beyond fuel savings. "Fleets that begin electrifying the right segments early benefit from more predictable operating costs and improved resilience to energy and maintenance volatility," Plummer says.



**'Successful fleet electrification reflects a broader focus on total operating costs, uptime and control over energy and maintenance variables.'**

**Paul Plummer  
CCO, Everlectric**

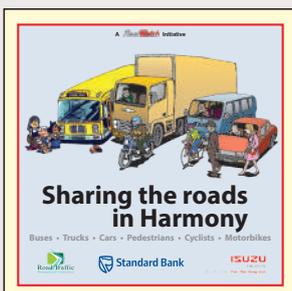
"Additionally, they will also be the first to see where electrification creates new efficiencies inside their networks."

He argues that electrification is increasingly about operational control rather than environmental positioning. "This shift is not driven solely by fuel prices, which naturally move up and down over time. Instead, it reflects a broader focus on total operating cost, uptime, and control over energy and maintenance variables."

As more suitable models enter the market, hesitation becomes harder to justify. "At this point, electrification becomes a pressure test of fleet data and of the ability to draw relevant insights from it."

"With the models arriving this year, the decision is no longer about taking a risk but about recognising that a workable, commercial option now exists for the right routes and use cases," Plummer concludes. □

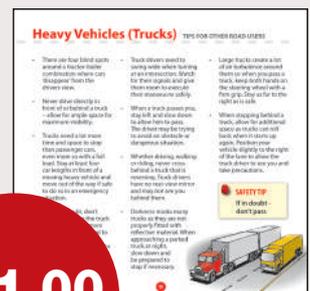
**Editor's comment:** Plummer's analysis underscores a structural shift – driven by route data, vehicle availability and total cost transparency – that places urban and last-mile operations firmly in the electrification firing line. For road freight operators, the strategic risk may now lie less in 'risky early adoption' and more in failing to interrogate fleet data rigorously enough to unlock optimal fleet intelligence. As EV options broaden in 2026, electrification becomes less a question of ideology and more a test of fleet intelligence and execution discipline.



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▲ In January 2026, CHARGE demonstrated simultaneous charging of two electric trucks supplied by SANY Trucks alongside four passenger EVs at its Wolmaransstad station.



# Two N3 electric charging stations soon to be operational

**S**outh Africa's busiest trucking route, the N3, is edging closer to being genuinely electric-ready. Zero Carbon Charge (CHARGE) has confirmed that construction of its next two off-grid electric truck charging stations - CHARGE N3 Roadside and CHARGE N3 Tugela - remains on schedule for completion before June 2026. Together, the sites will establish reliable EV charging coverage between Johannesburg and Durban, a corridor that carries

a substantial share of the country's long-haul freight and intercity passenger traffic.

The milestone follows a R100-million investment by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), with the N3 rollout set as a prerequisite for funding. For the electric mobility ecosystem, the implication is significant - long-distance EV travel on the N3 moves from theoretical to operational, underpinned by infrastructure designed to function independently of the national grid.

▲ CHARGE is differentiating its sites through what it describes as a farmstall concept. Each location features covered facilities, food and retail offerings, high-quality ablutions, free Wi-Fi and a strong emphasis on hospitality. The stations are entirely off grid, powered by solar generation and on-site battery storage, with no reliance on Eskom supply. CHARGE's two N3 charging stations will follow the design and layout of its Wolmaransstad station.

### From pilot projects to national freight relevance

CHARGE's model is notable not only for its location strategy but for its technical configuration. The stations are entirely off grid, powered by solar generation and on-site battery storage, with no reliance on Eskom supply. According to CHARGE, this allows ultra-fast charging without compromising uptime or reliability - a critical requirement for commercial operators running to tight delivery schedules.

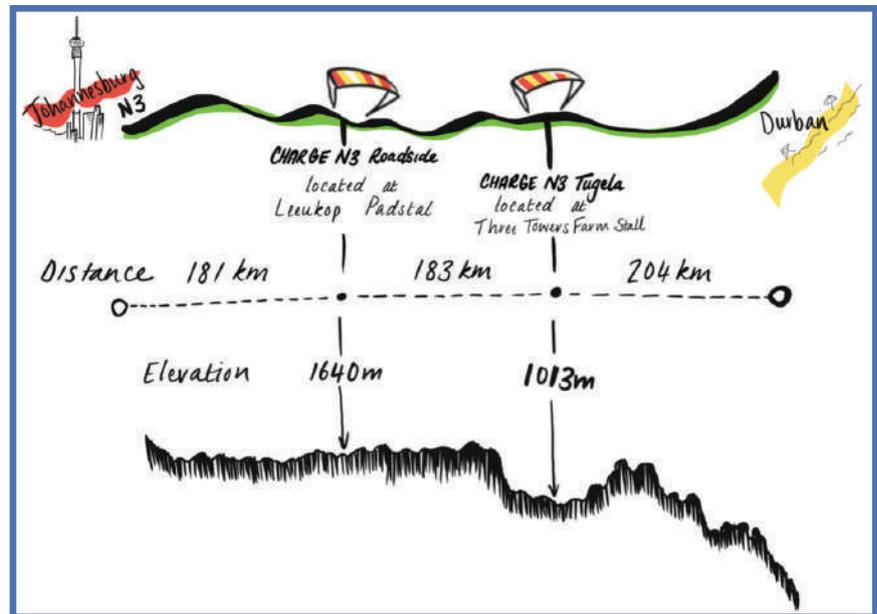
Co-founder Joubert Roux framed the development in broader market terms. "This milestone sends an unmistakable signal: EV infrastructure in South Africa is moving - and moving fast. With the N3 now unlocking for electric travel, the next priority is the NI, extending reliable, off-grid, ultra-fast charging along the country's most critical long-distance routes."

For fleets, OEMs and dealers, the strategic shift is hard to ignore. The long-standing objection that battery-electric vehicles are unsuitable for intercity operation weakens considerably once dependable highway charging is in place. The conversation increasingly shifts from technical feasibility to cost models, duty cycles and total cost of ownership.

### Truck-ready charging moves from theory to practice

Importantly for the freight sector, CHARGE is positioning its sites as truck-capable from the outset. In January 2026, the company demonstrated simultaneous charging of two electric trucks supplied by SANY Trucks alongside four passenger EVs at its Wolmaransstad station. The exercise was designed to show that off-grid systems can support mixed traffic - heavy-duty and light vehicles - without prioritising one at the expense of the other.

This capability will be closely watched by fleet operators assessing early electric deployments on regional and long-haul routes. Charging concurrency, dwell time and power availability remain



▲ **With two** solar-powered charging stations servicing the N3, road freight operators utilising the corridor will look increasingly at the business case supporting the deployment of electric long-haul trucks.

decisive factors for commercial adoption.

### More than a stop – a roadside destination

CHARGE is also differentiating its sites through what it describes as a next-generation farmstall concept. Each location features covered facilities, food and retail offerings, high-quality ablutions, free Wi-Fi and a strong emphasis on hospitality. The visual signature – a bright yellow roof – is intended to make the sites immediately recognisable from the highway.

Roux places the experience at the centre of the brand. "Each charging station is not only focused on charging – it's all about our guests enjoying the experience and feeling welcome. We no longer refer to consumers; we refer to guests. All South Africans – whether you drive an EV or are still thinking about migrating – are welcome at any CHARGE station, and to be part of the family."

### Site locations confirmed

The two N3 developments are located at established interchanges

to maximise accessibility for both freight and passenger traffic:

- CHARGE N3 Roadside – N3 at the Reitz Roadside Interchange (Exit 107, west side)
- CHARGE N3 Tugela – N3 at the Colenso–Winterton Interchange (Exit 207, west side) □

**Editor's Comment:** For commercial truck operators, the significance of the CHARGE N3 rollout obviously lies less in lifestyle positioning and more in what it represents for road freight electrification. Off-grid, truck-capable highway charging removes one of the structural barriers to deploying electric vehicles on South Africa's primary logistics arteries. While e-truck pricing, their residual values and energy costs will continue to influence adoption rates, infrastructure of this scale signals that electric long-haul trucking is no longer a distant prospect. The N3 may well become the proving ground for whether battery-electric logistics can move from pilot phase into everyday commercial reality.

# Collaboration is a strategic imperative



**By Morena Sithole,  
Managing Director, Masana  
Energy Solutions**

▼ With a 20-year existence, Masana Petroleum Solutions is a majority Black-owned and managed Level 2 B-BBEE contributor, marketer and supplier of a range of petroleum products and energy solutions to various B2B sectors within the economy.

In an environment shaped by supply chain volatility, rising operational costs and increasing pressure on productivity, energy companies are being forced to rethink how they operate and with whom they partner. The conversation around collaboration has never been more relevant.

Energy reliability sits at the center of this challenge. Operations depend on uninterrupted access to fuel, lubricants and energy-related services to maintain uptime and manage costs. When these systems fail or underperform, the impact is immediate and far-reaching. Ensuring resilience in this context requires more than individual excellence; it requires coordinated effort across the energy value chain.

Too often, energy supply models remain fragmented. Fuel sourcing, lubricant performance, technical support and energy efficiency are managed independently, creating silos that increase risk and reduce operational visibility. This approach may work in stable conditions, but it struggles in periods of disruption or rapid change.

A collaborative operating model offers a more sustainable alternative. By aligning fuel suppliers, technology providers, logistics partners and energy management specialists, allows access to integrated solutions that improve reliability and performance. Collaboration enables shared accountability, better data-driven decision-making, and faster responses to operational challenges.

At Masana Energy Solutions, we view collaboration as a strategic enabler. Our role is to connect global expertise through our partners such as bp and Castrol with local execution, working alongside established energy and technology partners such as Energy Combustion Services to deliver high-performance products, and improved energy efficiency for our customers. This ecosystem-based approach allows us to move beyond transactional supply and support long-term operational resilience.

The benefits of collaboration extend beyond continuity of supply. Technical partnerships help reduce maintenance costs and minimise unplanned downtime. Energy measurement and efficiency initiatives provide greater transparency, enabling businesses to optimise consumption and control expenditure more effectively.

Collaboration must also be grounded in local understanding. In emerging markets, success depends on long-term partnerships built on trust, accountability and a deep appreciation of operating realities. Strong local partners play a critical role in translating global capability into practical, on-the-ground solutions.

Collaboration is not a slogan, it is a business imperative. For energy companies seeking resilience, efficiency and sustainable growth, working together across the energy value chain will be essential. By being “Stronger Together”, the industry can build operations that are better equipped to withstand uncertainty and deliver lasting value, which Masana prides itself in. □



# Your Truck • Your Gym



**LEGS WORKOUT**  
Your Truck • Your Gym

### 1 WALKING LUNGES

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Description
15 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	30 sec Work, 30 sec Rest	45 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin at one end of the back and step forward with one foot and bend the knee to 90°</li> <li>Focus to step over on the front heel and align the back heel to fit. The back knee should also be bent and just forward of the foot</li> <li>Then straighten both legs and repeat movement with other leg stepping forward across the length of the truck</li> </ul> <p><b>Important cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't allow the front knee to pass over the heel or collapse inward and ensure to maintain a full gait</li> </ul>

SCAN FOR VIDEO

### 2 SIT-TO-STANDS

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Description
15 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	30 sec Work, 30 sec Rest	45 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin standing with feet back towards a step chair and feet hip width apart</li> <li>Move into a squat position by bending of the hips to that your buttocks makes contact with the step chair</li> <li>Push through the heels as you straighten both legs and move into an upright position</li> </ul> <p><b>Important cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The movement should be performed with control</li> <li>Avoid using your arms to help lift from the step chair but rather focus on using your leg strength</li> <li>Squeeze your buttock muscles as you lift</li> </ul>

SCAN FOR VIDEO

**CARDIO**  
Your Truck • Your Gym

### 3 FORWARD JOGGING

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Description
15 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	30 sec Work, 30 sec Rest	45 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin at one end of the truck and continue walking until the truck length from one end to the other</li> <li>Maintain the same pace for the entire duration</li> <li>Keep your body upright with head facing forward</li> <li>Use your arms as you move forward</li> <li>Focus on deep, rhythmic breathing</li> </ul>

SCAN FOR VIDEO

### 4 MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Description
15 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	30 sec Work, 30 sec Rest	45 sec Work, 15 sec Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin in a prone position so that your body is in a straight line with hands placed under the shoulders and hip straight</li> <li>Lift one foot off the floor as you pull the knee up straight to the chest level</li> <li>Return the foot to the floor while pulling the other knee up and in to create a chopping motion</li> <li>Alternately repeat this movement</li> </ul> <p><b>Important cues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This can be performed on an incline with hands placed on a step or top of the truck (beginner) or on a flat surface (intermediate)</li> <li>Keep your stomach and buttock muscles tight</li> <li>Try to keep your body in a straight line</li> </ul>

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# Karoo000 Ltd listed on Singapore's Fastest-Growing companies list

**W**hat began as a small South African vehicle tracking and recovery company in South Africa - Cartrack - has expanded to include over 20 countries across Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and North America - and has now been recognised on a global stage.

Karoo000 Ltd., the parent company of Cartrack, has been named on Singapore's Fastest-Growing Companies 2026, a ranking compiled by Statista in partnership with leading Singaporean newspaper The Straits Times. The annual ranking identifies 100 Singapore-headquartered companies that have delivered the strongest revenue growth over the past three years across sectors including technology, fintech, logistics and industrial services.

What sets Karoo000 apart is not only its growth rate, but the scale at which that growth has been achieved. Of the 100 companies recognised, only 16 reported revenue above SGD 100 million

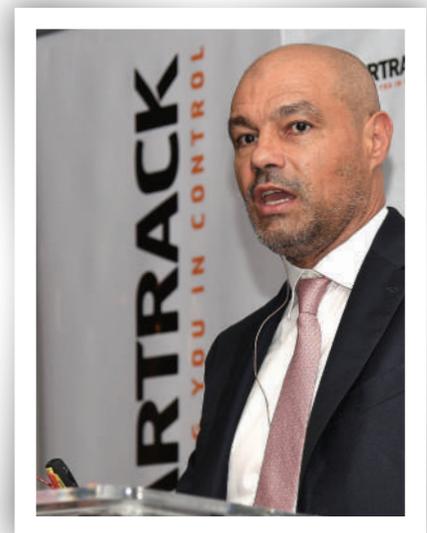
(±R1.27-billion) in 2024. Karoo000 posted revenue of SGD 334.6 million (±R4.24-billion), placing it among the largest businesses on the list and highlighting its ability to expand while maintaining operational control and profitability. In an index largely populated by smaller, earlier-stage firms, that distinction carries weight.

## Cartrack's trucking roots go worldwide

Karoo000's performance is anchored by Cartrack, its largest operating subsidiary and the business most familiar to South African fleet operators. Originally developed to address the realities of local South African fleet conditions, the Cartrack platform today delivers operational intelligence across fleet maintenance, fuel management, asset utilisation, workforce management, logistics, safety, compliance, risk and environmental impact, including AI video solutions.

Today, Cartrack supports

▲ Home grown South African company - Karoo000 has been named on Singapore's Fastest-Growing Companies 2026, a ranking compiled by Statista in partnership with leading Singaporean newspaper The Straits Times.



▲ Zak Calisto, founder of Cartrack and today Group Chief Executive Officer of Karoo000. Karoo000's strong financial and operational performance is underpinned by Cartrack, the company's largest operating subsidiary.

**Growth at scale requires discipline, resilience and a clear value proposition**

millions of connected vehicles and assets globally. Its expansion into international markets has been driven by replication – applying a proven, outcomes-focused model to fleets facing similar pressures around cost control, safety and regulatory compliance.

That focus on practical, intelligence-driven solutions has allowed Cartrack to scale across both developed and emerging markets without losing relevance at fleet level, a challenge that has derailed many technology platforms attempting global expansion.

**Long-term positive outcomes**

While Karoo000's inclusion in a Singapore ranking reinforces its position as a global technology group, the business remains grounded in the operational

discipline forged in South Africa's transport sector. Serving fleets in a high-pressure environment with narrow margins has shaped a model that favours reliability, consistency and long-term customer relationships over rapid but fragile expansion.

“Growth at scale requires discipline, resilience and a clear value proposition,” says Zak Calisto, founder of the company and Group Chief Executive Officer of Karoo000. “Recognition as one of Singapore's fastest-growing companies reflects our ability to deliver sustained growth from a significant revenue base, driven by our culture of execution excellence and long-term customer trust in our technology.”

What a great accolade for a South African born company. □

**Editor's Comment:** South Africa's truck and fleet telematics sector has been setting global benchmarks for close to three decades. Long before telematics became a buzzword, local operators were generating and acting on empirical data to manage risk (think truck hijackings), fuel consumption, driver behaviour and maintenance cycles in one of the world's most demanding freight environments. That combination of technological innovation and practical relevance has consistently placed South African solutions ahead of the curve. Cartrack is a local success story which has translated that hard-won expertise into global scale. Its international traction reinforces a broader industry truth - fleet technologies shaped by real operational pressure, and proven through data rather than theory, tend to travel well. For South Africa's telematics sector, Karoo000 and Cartrack's offshore recognition is not an exception - it's a continuation.



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▲ US tariff uncertainty and geopolitical conflicts remain key recovery threats for West Europe's heavy goods trailer industry.

## Optimism for recovery of West European trailer market

**U**S tariff impositions - recently voted illegal by the USA Supreme Court - served to dent business confidence across Western Europe, constraining trailer investment. However, the latest forecast from CLEAR International points to a measured recovery in Europe's heavy trailer sector - but the risk profile remains.

According to Clear International's February 2026 report, the West European heavy goods trailer market is entering a recovery phase, driven by pent-up demand, easing inflation and improving economic indicators - though the risk of renewed tariff escalation or geopolitical instability remains.

### Confidence dented - but not broken

As the report notes, US import tariffs triggered significant uncertainty in 2025, weighing on haulier investment appetite. While the second half of 2025 delivered 8.6% growth compared to the same period in 2024, it was insufficient to

offset first-half weakness. Overall demand for 2025 declined by 0.5%.

### Growth forecast for 2026

Looking ahead, the report states that trailer demand across Western Europe is forecast to grow by 6% in 2026, with stronger expansion anticipated in 2027 and 2028. After three years of weak new trailer demand between 2023 and 2025, significant pent-up replacement demand has accumulated.

The report highlights several tailwinds:

- Strengthening West European GDP growth in 2027-28.
- Rising investment levels.
- A favourable trailer replacement cycle through to decade-end.
- Continued reductions in inflation and interest rates.

Lower financing costs will make commercial vehicle acquisitions more affordable – a dynamic that resonates strongly in South Africa's high-interest-rate environment.

### Country-level momentum building

All but one Western European country are forecast to record increased trailer registrations in 2026. Spain is the exception, having expanded strongly in 2025 and likely pausing this year, says Clear International.

Demand for road transport in Western Europe - measured in tonne-kilometres - declined by 4.0% in 2023 before recovering modestly by 0.6% in both 2024 and 2025. Stronger growth is expected going forward.

The January 2026 Composite Leading Indicators from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reinforce this outlook. Germany, France, the UK, Italy and Spain all sit above the 100-trend line - between 101 and 102 - signaling improving economic momentum over the next six months.

However, the report cautions that renewed war or further tariffs remain the principal risks to the forecast.

Gary Beecroft, Director of CLEAR International, strikes an optimistic tone: "Now is the winter of our discontent coming to an end. Spring is in evidence and in due course we may even experience glorious summer. Economic growth in the region will remain moderate but positive for the next three years. Interest rates and inflation should continue to fall. Pent-up demand caused by three years of weak trailer sales will boost the recovery. It is possible that many published economic forecasts for Western Europe are too pessimistic."

The full report outlines when, where and how quickly the trailer market is expected to recover and develop through to 2030, although a cyclical downturn is anticipated around that year.

If Western Europe accelerates as forecast, it could support healthier global supply chains, improved OEM order books and more predictable equipment pricing. Conversely, renewed US tariffs could reintroduce volatility (as could supply chain disruptions). □



# VW Delivery 11.180 dominates Brazilian medium-duty sector

**V**W trucks are not well known in South Africa. The VW Constellation came in some years ago but it didn't take off as was expected. However, for those interested in the global markets, Volkswagen Truck & Bus is a prominent player in the Brazilian market with its VW Delivery 11.180 proving a best seller.

During 2025, the VW Delivery 11.180 emerged as Volkswagen Truck & Bus's best-selling truck worldwide, reinforcing its position as a market leader not only in Brazil but across export markets that include Africa and the Middle East.

For operators navigating rising input costs, mixed duty cycles and growing pressure on fleet uptime, the Delivery's success offers a useful signal. Models that succeed strongly in emerging-market conditions often mirror the same operational realities faced by Southern African fleets – from last-mile distribution to municipal and rental applications.

## Export strength underpins global leadership

While the Delivery 11.180 is a long-standing favourite among Brazilian carriers (it is manufactured in Brazil), its momentum now extends well beyond its home market. The model ranks among Volkswagen Truck & Bus's most exported products, reaching close to 30 countries across Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.

In Brazil alone, more than 6 500 units were licensed in 2025, reflecting year-on-year growth of around 10%. That demand translated into market dominance, with the Delivery 11.180 accounting for more than half of

Brazil's medium-duty truck sales during the year.

## Rental fleets validate lifecycle economics

One of the VW Delivery's largest buyers is VAMOS, Brazil's leading heavy-duty vehicle rental specialist and largest dealer of pre-owned trucks. The company has added the 11.180 to diversify its fleet and broaden customer solutions – a move that echoes trends increasingly visible in Southern Africa's growing rental and contract-hire sector.

Gustavo Couto, CEO of VAMOS says: "The Delivery 11.180 is a very well-received asset on the marketplace, which reinforces our confidence in both the vehicle's operation and life cycle. In addition to contributing to the standardisation of the fleet through its consistent performance, the Delivery maintains a high level of demand and liquidity and supports our strategy of operational efficiency and intelligent asset management while focusing on availability, cost predictability and productivity for the customer."

## Medium-duty demand reshapes the market

Volkswagen Truck & Bus links the model's performance to a broader shift in truck demand, marked by rising volumes in the medium- and heavy-duty segments. Within that trend, the Delivery 11.180 expanded its share of the Brazilian medium-duty market by 20% in 2025, lifting its segment penetration to more than 50% – an increase of nine percentage points.

According to Ricardo Alouche, Vice President of Sales, Marketing

▲ The VW Delivery 11.180 - a versatile medium-duty workhorse: 3.7 L 4-cylinder turbodiesel engine, 177hp, 6-speed manual gearbox, 11 tonne GVW. It's available in 4x2 for urban/regional distribution and 4x4 for tougher off-road or mixed-terrain applications. Flexible wheelbase options support a wide range of body builds, while key design priorities remain high manoeuvrability, durability and operational efficiency across markets.

and After Sales at Volkswagen Truck & Bus, adaptability has been central to that growth adding that the model's appeal reflects changing customer expectations: "Customers are demanding vehicles that are increasingly economical, versatile and prepared for intense routines. The Delivery 11.180 has gained strength and reaffirmed its strategic importance by combining durability, the latest technology and versatility for different urban and regional applications." □

**Editor's Comment:** For Southern African fleets, the VW Delivery 11.180's global success proves that trucks that dominate in cost-sensitive, high-utilisation markets tend to earn that position through lifecycle economics rather than specification alone or purchase price. As regional operators weigh purchase versus rental strategies and prioritise total cost of ownership alongside uptime, Volkswagen Truck & Bus's best-selling model worldwide offers a useful benchmark for what medium-duty buyers are increasingly demanding from their fleets.



# Serco completes major expansion to Boksburg facility

In South Africa's competitive commercial trucking industry, predictability is like gold, helping to keep contracts on track and the fleet on an upward trajectory. Recognising this, Serco has completed a major expansion of its Boksburg facility to boost lead times and customer service, adding 1 500m<sup>2</sup> dedicated to after-sales repairs, including a new speed bay for minor fixes within a single day.

"These investments strengthen our ability to respond quickly to customer needs," says Serco CEO Clinton Holcroft. "We've focused on improving workflow, increasing capacity and creating a safer, cleaner working environment for our teams - all of which ultimately benefit our customers."

The company has also enlarged its steel body assembly shop by 600m<sup>2</sup>, creating capacity for 20 additional

vehicle bodies each month, while 3 800m<sup>2</sup> of new yard paving improves access and drainage during rainy conditions.

By expanding capacity and streamlining operations, Serco ensures faster turnaround for repairs and production, helping fleet operators minimise downtime.

Originally focused on refrigerated bodies, Serco now produces dry freight solutions including single-skin van bodies, tautliners, interlinks and tautliner trailers.

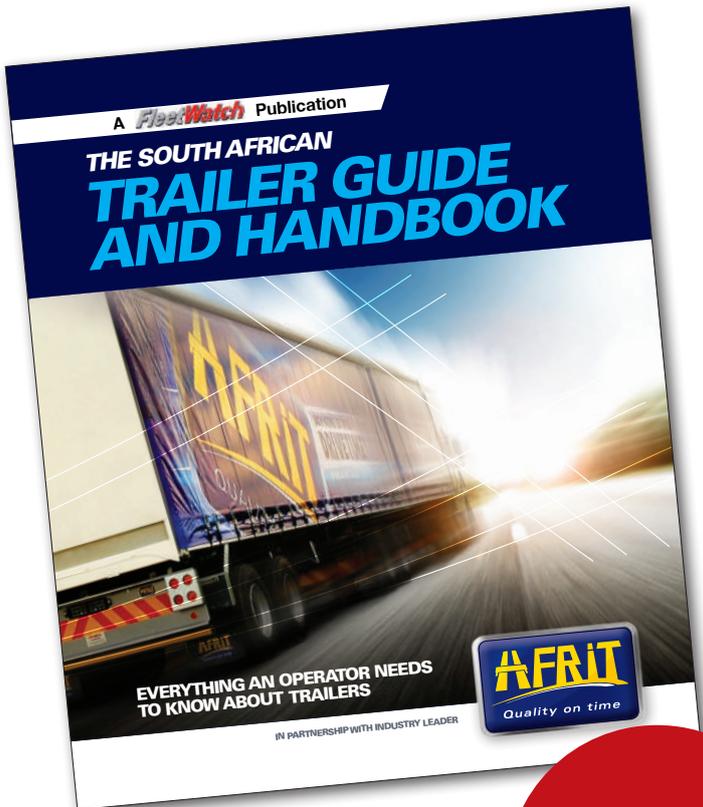
Holcroft says the company enters 2026 with optimism, supported by lower interest rates, a stronger rand and elevated gold prices.

"The facility enhancements ensure we can meet increased customer demand while maintaining competitive lead times and high manufacturing quality," Holcroft concludes. □

▲ Serco's Boksburg facility with a new 1 500m<sup>2</sup> after-sales repair workshop that includes a new speed bay for same-day repairs to minor issues.

**These investments strengthen our ability to respond quickly to customer needs**

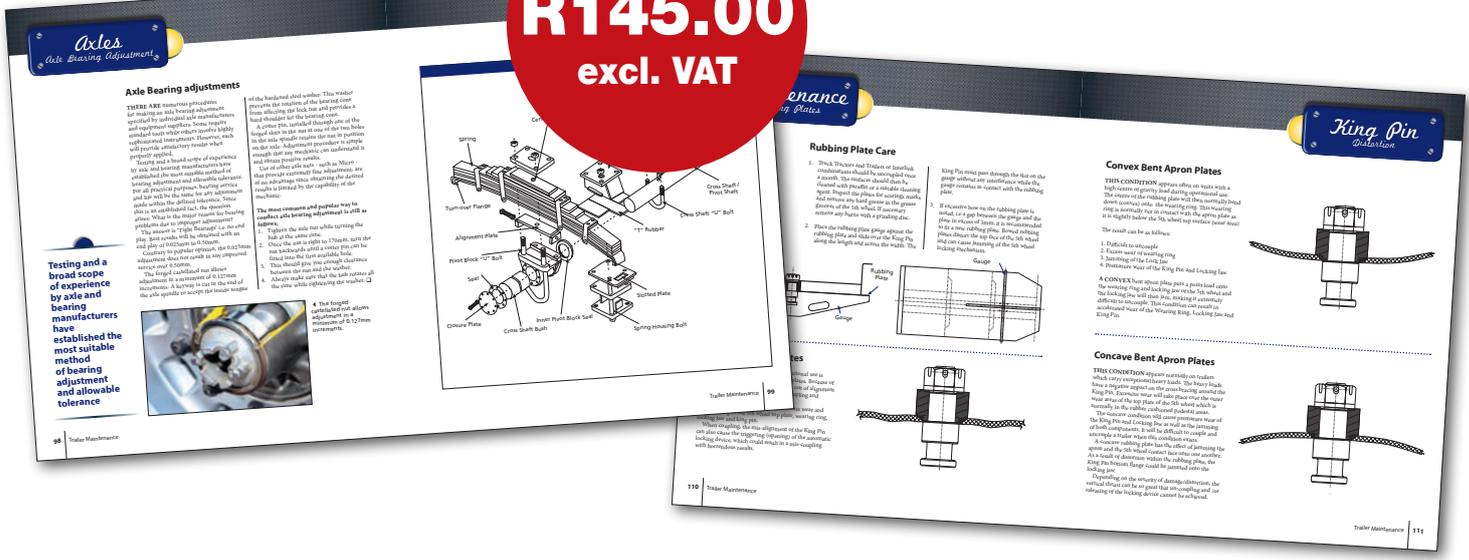
**Editor's Comment:** Serco's Boksburg expansion highlights how targeted investment can strengthen both fleet performance and industry confidence. Faster repairs, increased vehicle output and enhanced customer support not only benefit operators but also signal positive growth for South Africa's truck trailer and body manufacturing sector.



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# Bakwena advances R276-m N1 rehabilitation



**S**outh Africa's freight economy runs by and large on roads but unfortunately, road maintenance these days is often merely cosmetic. Well-maintained trucking routes are an economic productivity imperative, translating directly into safer operating conditions, reduced trip times, lower vehicle operating costs and more predictable logistics performance. As such, Bakwena Platinum Corridor Concessionaire is advancing a R276-million rehabilitation programme along the N1, one of the country's most important north/south freight arteries.

The rehabilitation between the Proefplaas Interchange and the Pumulani Main Line Toll Plaza (in Gauteng, north-east of Pretoria) targets a 16km section of road that carries sustained commuter and heavy vehicle volumes every day. For fleet operators, this corridor is not optional. Its condition directly affects efficiency, safety margins and delivery reliability.

## Scope, standards and construction discipline

The project, awarded to Roadmac

Surfacing, started in August 2025 and is scheduled for completion by November 2026 under a 15-month contract. It forms part of Bakwena's broader NIN4 rehabilitation programme, aimed at restoring structural integrity and extending pavement life in line with international engineering standards.

"This rehabilitation programme is designed to restore the structural strength of the N1, improve driving conditions and extending the lifespan of the road in line with international engineering standards," Bakwena says.

Work includes rehabilitation of the slow lanes in both northbound and southbound carriageways, upgrades at the Stormvoël and Zambezi Interchanges, sections of the Proefplaas Interchange and an asphalt overlay across the full road surface.

Road signage is being replaced and concrete-lined drainage systems repaired to improve water management and long-term durability.

Construction is taking place during both day and night shifts. Lane closures are required in both directions, but Bakwena says strict traffic management measures are in place to minimise disruption and maintain safe travel for all road users.

▲ Bakwena's N1 rehabilitation covers slow lanes north and south, Stormvoël, Zambezi and Proefplaas interchanges, full asphalt overlay, upgraded signage and repaired drainage for long-term durability.

Road users are encouraged to stay informed via the @bakwenan4 X channel, where real-time updates on traffic accommodation and lane closures are shared.

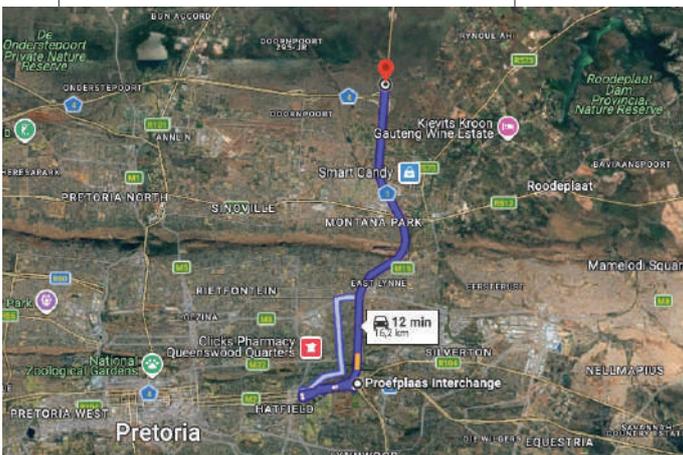
## Freight efficiency and regional impact

Beyond immediate safety improvements, the rehabilitation delivers longer-term economic value. Improved road surfaces reduce vehicle wear, lower fuel consumption and stabilise travel times – all critical variables in freight cost modelling and fleet planning.

Bakwena also highlights local employment and supplier participation as part of the project's broader socio-economic contribution.

"Beyond improved safety, the project supports freight efficiency, regional trade and local economic participation," Bakwena concludes.

**Editor's comment:** Plainly speaking, "a truck is only as good as the road it's driving on" is a hard truth – and road agency negligence isn't the only culprit behind the poor state of our roadways. Often, road maintenance is framed by users as a disruption rather than an enabler, leading to errant driver behaviour. Projects like Bakwena's N1 rehabilitation remind the industry that maintenance is the quiet work that keeps freight moving – safely, efficiently and at scale. For fleet operators, fewer potholes mean fewer breakdowns, tighter schedules and sharper cost control. In a transport economy under constant pressure, well-maintained roads remain one of the most effective productivity interventions available. □



◀ Cross-border crucial: the N1 corridor from Gauteng northwards to the Zimbabwe border, highlighting the 'under rehabilitation' section between Proefplaas Interchange and Pumulani Main Line Toll Plaza.

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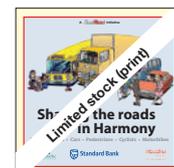
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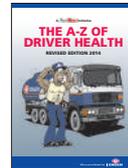
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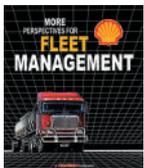
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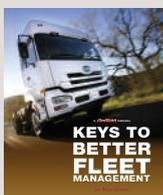
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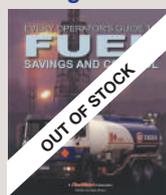
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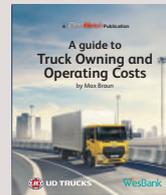
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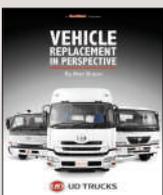


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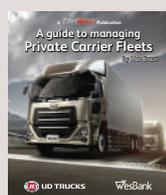
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