**National Assembly**

**Question Number:2748**

**Mr M S F de Freitas (DA) to ask the Minister of Transport:**

With regard to tollgates situated in areas outside of Gauteng, (a) what is being done by her department to alleviate the long build-up of queues, especially over weekends, (b) what studies have been undertaken pertaining to vehicle build-up and blockages and trends in this regard and (c) what lessons has her department learnt from these studies?

**Reply**

1. The specified queue lengths are monitored at all plazas. CCTV surveillance systems are in place at the toll plazas to monitor this. All Plazas’ performance and operating efficiency is assessed to ensure adequate capacity exists to meet demand.

Several additional measures, as the circumstance demands, have been implemented at toll plazas that operate at near full capacity. These include the following:

* The implementation of tandem tolling which is a mechanism of allowing two vehicles to be processed at the same time in a single lane. This allows an increase in throughput of vehicles in comparison with normal lanes.
* Additional personnel are deployed in the lane area to ensure that motorists who pay toll fees in cash have the correct change, in advance of getting to the toll booth.

Further, to alleviate toll plaza capacity problems and increase vehicle processing speeds, additional, automated electronic toll payment method is being implemented at the toll plazas. This will allow non-stop passage through the lane via payment with an electronic tag. This system has been in operation for over ten years on the Platinum Toll Road, and is in an advanced stage of testing at most of the toll plazas. This will greatly assist with alleviating plaza capacity problems and long queue build-up. As has already been clearly demonstrated at the Platinum Toll Route Plazas, the processing rate of toll lanes dedicated for tag users, is 3 times that of manual payment methods.

(b) Historic traffic volumes, catering for traffic volumes from major events (sporting, cultural, etc.), seasonal traffic shifts, school holidays, long weekends, public holidays, etc. are analysed to plan for the future.

The traffic volumes at the plazas are also regularly monitored and examined. Traffic criteria such as the 30th highest hour traffic volumes and higher than average projected traffic growth rate, which could be indicative of the need to trigger dedicated electronic tag lanes, or a toll plaza expansion is regularly reviewed.

Regular analysis of the traffic volumes is undertaken to optimise the distribution of payment methods available to the road user as well as determining appropriate lane configurations.

(c) Regular traffic and capacity planning together with trained vehicle toll collectors improve the through flow. Flexible lane configuration allows for the accommodation of directional traffic flows so as to minimize the queue length.

The rapid deployment of the automated electronic toll payment method – payment of toll via electronic tag will greatly improve vehicle processing speed at the toll plazas.

Freeway Management Systems and Incident Management, with the assistance of CCTV surveillance of the road network, have facilitated rapid responses to incidents that may impact throughput at the plazas and thereby minimise the impact on traffic flow. These systems can also inform of traffic flows to and from the plaza.