



a world class African city



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## Media Statement

### THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THEFT AND VANDALISM ON JOBURG'S ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

**19 August 2014**  
**For immediate release**

The **Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA)** is concerned about the alarming increase in theft and vandalism of road infrastructure furniture within the City of Johannesburg and the compound effect of this on the economy.

As a leading African City and economic hub, Jo'burg has a complementary road infrastructure network and the JRA is responsible for some 10 500km of tarred roads, 1,250km of gravel roads, 880 bridge structures and some 2178 signalized traffic intersections.

However the JRA is facing an enormous battle to save the City's road assets from rampant theft and vandalism.

The **JRA Managing Director, Mr. Skhumbuzo Macozoma** stresses, "This spate of infrastructure theft and vandalism is a direct sabotage and devaluation of the City's infrastructure assets. Criminals are stripping our road infrastructure furniture bare. The M1, M2 and Soweto highways are hardest hit and everything is targeted; from guardrails, storm water drain slabs, manhole covers and grids, metal directional signage, poles and gantries, bridge expansion joints and bridge railings." He adds, "Other areas such as Wemmer Pan and Klipriver are also the target of copper (cables and electrical components) and traffic signal equipment (signal heads / UPS / poles / cables) theft and these syndicates are now spreading their illegal activities across the

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entire City. These crimes are damaging our economy, infrastructure and heritage. Even the iconic Nelson Mandela Bridge is being stripped of bridge railings and its glass panels vandalized”.

“These acts lead to the disruption of essential services such as traffic lights and jeopardize public safety. The end result is a negative drain on the City’s economy with traffic congestion and unproductive, frustrated commuters as well as a possible increase in traffic collisions. The very furniture that is intended to prevent accidents and protect our community and road users ends up being sold to illegal scrap metal dealers for almost nothing.”

The JRA has a budget of R5.6 billion over the next three years to focus on improved road safety and mobility which are key drivers of economic development. A significant portion of this budget is allocated towards an extensive capital investment programme to increase the overall quality of our road infrastructure and the entity’s operating budget aims to maintain existing infrastructure.

“Despite our efforts to provide quality roads that are accessible, safe and liveable for the Johannesburg community, the surge in theft and vandalism places strain on our operating budget intended for maintenance and on the JRA teams who constantly have to replace and repair damaged and stolen infrastructure,” Macozoma explains.

According to JRA estimations, the entity has lost **R57.46 Million** to vandalism and theft in the last year while criminals and unscrupulous traders have cost the Joburg economy losses amounting to millions in the recent past. Combatting this scourge will save the City and Ratepayers huge amounts of lost revenue and replacement costs of vandalised and stolen road infrastructure:

- approximately 5000 storm water drains (Kl’s) which have either been chopped up for their metal wire, stolen or damaged by heavy motor vehicles parking on pavements across the City need to be replaced at a cost of **R10 Million**.
- The cost of replacing stolen manhole covers is substantial, approximately 1050 manhole covers need to be replaced at a cost of **R4.1 Million**. These open manhole covers pose a danger to all vehicular road users as well as for pedestrians.

- Guardrails, brackets and handrails (excluding gantries and overhead signage) on the M1, M2 and Soweto highways amounting to **R4.5 million**;
- All 200 Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) sites at traffic signals to cope with power outages, have been vandalised or stolen resulting in traffic signal downtime when power supply is interrupted. The replacement cost of these is **R11 million**;
- 2 Solar Panels, costing **R450 000 each** have been completely removed and not replaced;
- Approximately 70 traffic signals are damaged per month through motor vehicle accidents costing **R 5.24 million per year (2013/14 cost)**. These then require construction teams to effect the repairs, which is generally a much longer and costlier process than repairing faulty components.
- Traffic light intersections are cut down for their copper wire, components and even the traffic light poles at a replacement cost of **R 3.62 million per year (2013/14 cost)**. It is estimated the economic impact of traffic light downtime due to stolen power or copper cables or other traffic signal equipment could run into billions of rands, as non-functioning traffic lights lead to congested roads and impact on transit time for commuters.
- Copper theft has increased to such an extent that we are losing on average **R10 million** a year to this scourge alone.

Current efforts aimed at curbing theft and vandalism include interventions by the JRA Infrastructure Protection Unit which collaborates with entities such as City Power, JMPD, SAPS and security organizations to ensure a more effective response. Replacement of metal products with alternative materials which will replace hand railings, brackets, manhole covers, grids and kerb inlet covers that have no financial value to the black market is now also being implemented. Alternative products have successfully been tested by means of pilot projects consisting of various types of materials i.e. plastic, fiberglass, polimer etc. A reduction in the attractiveness of copper cables to vandals, either by using fewer cores or using an alternative material to copper as well as strengthening unit access and security has been piloted. In addition the JRA will launch a community based anti-vandalism project to get communities involved in curbing this deliberate sabotage of the city's infrastructure assets. The fight against vandalism and theft can only be curbed through Active Citizenry and community involvement, policing and public awareness.

JRA is appealing to scrapyards owners not to purchase CoJ and JRA assets when approached with these items by the culprits; and community members are requested to engage in the City's

Active Citizenry initiative and report all acts of vandalism and theft of the road infrastructure and City's furniture to the City of Johannesburg's Call Centre 0860 562 874 or report these criminal activities to the SAPS or JMPD.

**ENDS**

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**About the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA)**

The JRA is a City-owned agency responsible for the maintenance, repair and development of Johannesburg's road network and storm water infrastructure, including bridges and culverts, traffic lights and signage. The organisation is committed to providing quality roads that are accessible, safe and liveable for our communities. ***The JRA encourages residents to report road and storm water issues to 0860 562 874/ [hotline@jra.org.za](mailto:hotline@jra.org.za) / twitter @MyJra so that we may be of service.***

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