NEED/OPPORTUNITY / When the cabinet approved Gautrain in 2005, the project faced severe criticism from politicians, media and members of the public. The project was criticised for its multibillion rand budget, and there was a widespread view that the funding should have been allocated to existing public transport and invested in other development projects to alleviate poverty and provide essential social services. Strongly negative media content in the latter half of 2002 expressed opposition to the project and reflected negative public perceptions.

Nearly 700 public meetings were held during Gautrain’s environmental impact assessment in 2002, all of which were volatile and reflected highly negative opinion. The severe criticism by ward councillors attending these meetings, as well as subsequent community liaison forums, further fuelled public anger and media criticism. Affected communities demanded higher compensation for expropriated properties, claiming that Gautrain would become a “white elephant.”

Existing public transport in South Africa is widely perceived as unreliable and unsafe, and many of Gautrain’s critics were convinced that Gautrain would be bedeviled by similar problems. Despite a 7 percent increase in traffic congestion on Gauteng’s major routes, a culture of private car usage prevails in South Africa and is unlikely to change without a major shift in public perception. Critics of the Gautrain were unable to see its long-term benefits, including its impact on job creation, economic mobility, combating urban sprawl, changing spatial development trends, environmental sustainability, business tourism, broad-based black economic empowerment, city rejuvenation and the development of Gauteng as a global city region.

Gautrain is a world-class, modern rapid rail network that will be extended in the future to meet the expanding needs of South Africa’s economic heartland. Once complete, 10 stations will be linked by 80 kilometres of rail. Traveling at 160 kilometres per hour, Gautrain will allow urban commuters to travel safely between cities at high speed. It will take about 42 minutes to travel the distance between Johannesburg Park Station and Hatfield in Tshwane, or 12 minutes to travel between OR Tambo International Airport and Sandton Station. The first part of the route will be completed in time for the 2010 Soccer World Cup, which will be hosted in South Africa.

Public resistance resulted in five court cases against the building of Gautrain by various residential pressure groups along the proposed route, which further fuelled negative media coverage. Sustained pressure from numerous quarters was exerted on Parliament to stop the development of Gautrain. In short, Gautrain was faced with a crisis before construction had even started.
INTENDED AUDIENCE(S) / Since the main objective was to influence media coverage and opinion, the primary audience was mass media that targets interested and affected parties and potential passengers, identified as:

- Economically active M1, N1, N3 and R21 motorists commuting to/from Johannesburg/Pretoria or between Pretoria/Johannesburg and the OR Tambo International Airport.
- Owners and users of motor vehicles who can afford or have access to a car and are unwilling to use public transport.
- Younger people with a household income of above R15,000 belonging to LSM 6 – 10.
- International tourists and airline passengers traveling to/from OR Tambo International Airport.
- Interested parties and those affected by the construction of Gautrain.
- Government and private sector decision makers.

Mass media was grouped into the following categories:

- International
- National
- Provincial
- Community
- Trade and technical
- Consumer
- Online
- Business

To monitor key strategic issues, stakeholder needs, public opinion, audience demographics and the most appropriate media for conveying messages, ongoing formative and evaluative research was conducted. Research included:

- A 2006 perception audit.
- Monthly quantitative media analysis, since 2002, to statistically track strategic issues and public perception trends.
- A 2007 communication audit, including Internet communication tools.
Since construction started in September 2007, audience and media perceptions have gradually become more positive.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES /

- Achieve a minimum of 50 percent positive and very positive coverage overall from May through July 2007.
- Achieve a minimum of 50 percent positive and very positive coverage on major issues from May through July 2007 (major issues are: skills, the 2010 World Cup, spatial development, construction, public transport and the economy).

SOLUTION OVERVIEW / Key messages were identified as follows:

- Gautrain is a safe, world-class, reliable mode of public transport.
- Gautrain has socioeconomic benefits for the people of Gauteng.
- Gautrain stimulates economic growth, development and job creation.
- Gautrain reduces severe traffic congestion in the Tshwane/Johannesburg corridor.
- Gautrain significantly contributes towards urban restructuring, shortening of travel times and improving city sustainability.

Positive news about Gautrain competes with emotionally charged issues, such as the difficulties of people facing expropriation. The latter creates a hostile media environment that makes it difficult to create positive coverage reflecting the benefits of Gautrain.

Media relations focused on a strong drive to educate target audiences about Gautrain and to continuously communicate socioeconomic success stories. Based on monthly monitoring of issues receiving media attention, media tactics and messages were adjusted to address these issues in a positive manner.

Since Gautrain is the first world-class rapid rail project in Africa and the second biggest private-public partnership of its kind in the world, the need for education about the project is ongoing. Media messages are aimed at changing perceptions about public transport and educating potential consumers about the benefits of Gautrain, building relationships with communities affected by construction and securing future ridership.

Gautrain is an initiative of the Gauteng provincial government. In terms of the environmental impact assessment and Gautrain’s environmental management plan, stakeholder involvement is a legislative requirement. Communities are therefore educated on an ongoing basis about Gautrain’s numerous measures to minimise environmental damage during construction and emphasise the environmentally-friendly nature of this form of transport.
Relationship building with 19 print journalists (including dailies, specialisation media such as the Financial Mail and Engineering News as well as community newspapers) started with an educational, 10-day trip to London and Paris in October 2005. Broadcast journalists were not included, as the staff turnover in this sector is too high. The main objective was to give the journalists a comfortable and world-class public transport experience, as well as to show them the maintenance yards and attributes of rapid rail, safety and security presentations, and control room workings of Paris’ public transport systems. Journalists also visited Derby, outside London, where Gautrain’s Electrostar will be manufactured, and had a tour of the factory to see how it is assembled.

During the tour, journalists used public transport in order to experience public transport integration. They also experienced the spatial development impact at Canary Warf and Docklands in London, which experienced regeneration and mixed mode development as a result of public transport.

Upon the request of Carte Blanche, an influential television programme in South Africa, to compile a programme about Gautrain, the media relations team invited Derek Watts and his producer to go to New York, Paris and London to film international public transport systems for an exclusive programme insert in October. The communication and marketing director was contacted again in September 2007 for another insert on Carte Blanche in celebration of the first year of construction progress.

Two construction site visits have been held since construction started, and nearly 60 journalists, including international news media, have attended. Exceptional positive media coverage followed these site tours. This resulted in R12 million in coverage for that particular month.

Media conferences are kept to a minimum. Media relations relies strongly on intimate, small group media briefing sessions on specific issues, such as the tunnel boring machine, GTIA legislation (including expropriation, route determination and proclamation) and spatial development. These briefing sessions include the project leader, the marketing and communication director, and a lawyer and the MEC, when relevant. This builds strategic personal relationships on a one-on-one basis.

Construction updates are sent electronically to all media on a monthly basis. This supports an online database of high-resolution construction progress photographs and artists’ impressions, which can be downloaded from the web site. These include land and aerial photography with detailed captions. Access to the web site is secured with a username and password for each particular journalist.

IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES / The media budget for 2007 was comprised of R250,000 for media research and media monitoring and R100,000 for media interventions.

A detailed stakeholder map was drawn up to link strategic issues with affected stakeholders and the appropriate news media to reach them, while keeping project objectives in mind. Media management was therefore based on a carefully researched and planned model.
When negative media coverage is experienced, potential responses are evaluated in relation to the stakeholder map. Should it become necessary, meetings are held with the editor and the journalist, with the support of the Gautrain project leader.

### MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION /

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<th>MONTH</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF MEDIA REPORTS</th>
<th>OVERALL TOTAL POSITIVE AND VERY POSITIVE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
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<td>277</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2007</td>
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<td>July 2007</td>
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<th>POSITIVE AND VERY POSITIVE MAY 2007</th>
<th>POSITIVE AND VERY POSITIVE JUNE 2007</th>
<th>POSITIVE AND VERY POSITIVE JULY 2007</th>
<th>AVERAGE THREE-MONTH POSITIVE AND VERY POSITIVE</th>
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