

Road Infrastructure in Joburg

By Karibu! Staff

The state of roads, streets, traffic lights, and public infrastructure in Johannesburg and many parts of the country has become a source of growing frustration, and daily danger to residents and pedestrians. Repair delays often stretch over years, even in critical areas. This long-standing neglect was most clearly exposed following the gas explosion on Lillian Ngoyi Street in July 2023, which tragically killed one person and injured nearly 50 others.

More than two years later, on 12 September 2025, the street finally reopened. However, the inclusion of newly built pavements has sparked mixed reactions. Some residents and taxi drivers argue that these pavements are not designed to withstand the weight of Johannesburg's heavy daily traffic, especially with minibus taxis and delivery trucks often using sidewalks to manoeuvre through congestion. Concerns have been raised about the quality of the materials used, the narrow width of the pedestrian paths, and the absence of protective barriers between the pavements and the roads.

"You can already see cracks forming on the pavements before the road is even open to full traffic," said one frustrated resident. "What's the point of opening a street that will fall apart again in a few months?"

In many communities, damaged pavements also lead to flooding during rain, as proper drainage systems are either non-functional or blocked by rubble and construction waste. This worsens walking conditions, especially for schoolchildren, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The crisis extends beyond roads and pavements to traffic lights. Ordinary residents feel the brunt of this collapse daily. Anele Bham, a school transport driver from the inner city, said "Every morning, we get stuck at intersections where traffic lights are not working. This causes delays at schools, and the children arrive late through no fault of their own. It's stressful for parents, the learners, and for us drivers."

Johannesburg's road infrastructure tells the story of a decaying city. While government officials stress that reconstruction projects are underway and that lessons were learned from past disasters, many residents remain unconvinced. Potholes, illegal dumping on sidewalks, and constant utility excavations continue to erode public trust.

Infrastructure is more than just roads and traffic lights, it's the foundation of daily life, economic activity, and social mobility. When that foundation is unstable, the city's future remains uncertain.

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