

Heavy haul conference to play critical role in building sustainable economy

In order to ensure that South Africa's rail network achieves its true potential, the rail industry needs to take greater steps to start introducing smart and resilient railway operations and infrastructure, so as to improve efficiency and safety.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

This is according to Brian Monakali, the chairperson of the South African Heavy Haul Association (SAHHA), and former Chairperson of the International Heavy Haul Association (IHHA), who explains that smart systems are those that are able to self-monitor and self-diagnose railway conditions, and then predict failures or problems before they occur.

"We want smart systems in heavy haul rail operations similar to what we see in the automotive industry."

Monakali says that achieving resilience is also incredibly critical for the industry. "We want to make sure that our infrastructure and operations can withstand even abnormal conditions – such as heavy rains and thunderstorms. Our trains must be able to run uninterrupted."

Addressing these issues and how the Fourth Industrial Revolution can bring about smart resilient railways in Southern Africa, SAHHA will host their Technical Conference set to take place from 15 to 17 April 2020 at Emperor's Palace, Kempton Park, Johannesburg.

A pre-conference technical workshop will be held on 14 April 2020, unpacking the global best practice under the topic: *Railway Operations and Maintenance Excellence*.

The opening keynote at the event will be delivered by Portia Derby, the Group CEO of Transnet. Mxolosi Mgojo, the president of the Minerals Council South Africa, will deliver a keynote address on *Opportunities and challenges of the mining sector – the expected role of the railway industry*.

Brazil and Australia, as members of the International Heavy Haul Association, will deliver an update on their countries' rail expansion plans and technological advancements.

Both the International Heavy Haul Association and the South African Heavy Haul Association's vision of **Excellence in Heavy Haul Operations**, provides a platform where breakthrough technologies and innovations that improve operations efficiency, maintenance and safety are shared and successfully implemented," says Monakali.

There is an opportunity for global heavy haul technical best practice to be applied in African railway operations, to achieve our quest for regional integration, and seamless rail service in Africa.

For this reason, the presentation at the upcoming SAHHA Conference, by the Chief Executive Officer of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Business Foundation, on *An Update on Rail Infrastructure Programmes in the SADC Region*, will give delegates a platform to explore an integrated logistic solution.

This year's theme for the event will be **Smart, Resilient Railway Operations & Infrastructure**, and a number of local and international experts and decision-makers in the field of heavy-haul technology will present and discuss advances in the field of heavy-haul railway operations.

During parallel technical sessions, railway experts will also present technical papers of research, developments and technological advancements. These streams will include track infrastructure, vehicle track systems, bridges and tunnels, operations, rolling stock, motive power, traction and energy efficiency.

There will also be a session that discusses the **human factors in relation to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)**.

"We are confident that the papers and presentations will provide industry executives and professionals with key insights needed to ensure that their railway operations are able to flourish under the Fourth Industrial Revolution era," says Professor Hannes Gräbe, Technical Planning Committee Chairperson.

Exhibitions will provide an opportunity for organisations to showcase their breakthrough solutions and market their services. The cocktail functions and gala dinner will provide an opportunity for networking with experts and associates from the heavy-haul railway industry.

Those expected to attend are railway operators, suppliers to the railway industries, research and tertiary institutions, customers of railway operators, regulators of the industry and government institutions.

"Attendees will have the opportunity to exchange information, ideas and innovations with people working in the many interdisciplinary fields aligned with heavy-haul technology," he says.

Monakali explains that through a number of conferences held over the last 40 years internationally, and in South Africa over the last 6 years, a number of breakthrough technologies in Heavy Haul Railways have been introduced.

"Some of the notable achievements include technologies that enabled Transnet to hold a record of the longest production train in the world, at 4km length per train hauling iron ore and manganese, and driverless trains in Australia. This conference is a continuation of the journey towards excellence in railway operations."

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>