



SERVICE DELIVERY PARTY

GOVERNANCE POLICY PAPER

FINISH WHAT WE START

The Foreshore Freeway and the Case for a Cape Town
Project Completion Register

*A governance framework for stalled infrastructure and
unfinished promises*

PREFACE

Opening

For almost fifty years, motorists leaving Cape Town's elevated freeway have arrived at a piece of road that simply stops in mid-air. The Foreshore Freeway Bridge, Cape Town's most photographed unfinished thing, has outlived the government that built it, the government that abandoned it and at least three official attempts to decide what to do with it.

In July 2026, the City signalled it had finally made up its mind: the Mayor announced the bridge would be completed, with first design proposals promised for public comment in September. That promise has not yet been kept.

This is not, at its heart, an argument about a road. It is an argument about what happens to a city that starts things and does not finish them, and about the accountability mechanism Cape Town needs to make sure the Foreshore Freeway is the last project to sit unfinished for fifty years.

PART ONE

Fifty Years Is Enough

We accept that the original 1970s design may no longer be the right answer. The Service Delivery Party is not proposing that Cape Town spend billions completing a plan built for a city that no longer exists. Traffic patterns have changed. Public transport requirements have changed. The value of the land underneath and around the bridge has changed beyond recognition.

But Cape Town cannot keep carrying the physical and financial consequences of an unfinished project indefinitely, and it should not need another five-year planning exercise to decide what to do about something it has been looking at since 1977.

A project that has survived fifty years needs a decision date, a completion date and someone accountable for both. Not another cycle of consultation.

The City has said it is close to a decision. The SDP position is simple: hold it to that, publish the options and their full costs and put a completion date on the wall.

"Finish it. Fix it. Repurpose it. Or remove it. But stop leaving it unfinished."

PART TWO

What The City Actually Owes Residents

We should consult. If the City is choosing between completing the elevated structure, building an at-grade alternative, creating a multimodal connection, partially demolishing the existing viaducts or repurposing the precinct entirely, then residents, businesses, transport users and affected communities should have a real say.

But consultation should answer one question: which of the viable, costed options should Cape Town pursue. It should not become another invitation to discuss what the City might possibly do one day.

We also recognise that this is not the city's only pressing need. Community voices have already, and fairly, questioned whether a multi-billion rand freeway project should take priority over housing, employment and basic services. We do not think the choice is between finishing the bridge and funding service delivery. The point of this paper is that Cape Town should never again be in a position where a decision drifts for decades before anyone has to account for it, on a bridge or on a housing project. A functioning Completion Register would apply exactly the same discipline to both.

PART THREE

Four Honest Options, Not One

Rather than starting with "how do we finish the highway," the right question is "what transport and development problem are we trying to solve, and is completing the existing structure the cheapest way to solve it."

We would put four realistic paths on the table, each properly costed and scored against the same criteria, so the choice is made on evidence rather than nostalgia for a 1970s blueprint.

Complete it as a road. The most obvious option, and not necessarily the cheapest or smartest. This is the only option that requires no new thinking, which is exactly why it should not be assumed to win by default.

Turn it into a multimodal spine. Instead of filling the gap exclusively for private cars, the existing structure could carry some combination of bus rapid transit, taxis, cycling and pedestrian routes, with a linear park beneath and around it. Public submissions to the City's own planning process have already raised versions of this idea.

Build the missing connection at ground level. A high-quality at-grade boulevard connecting the existing road network, with proper crossings, dedicated public transport lanes, cycle infrastructure and development frontage instead of a

concrete barrier. This could solve the functional traffic problem without committing Cape Town to an expensive elevated structure, and could unlock development land the City has previously identified as constrained by the unfinished freeway.

Partially or fully remove it. This should not be politically taboo. The City's own 2017 consultation process considered proposals ranging from completing the viaducts to demolishing the freeway infrastructure altogether. The test should be which option gives Cape Town the greatest return per rand, not which option protects a fifty-year-old sunk cost.

Each option should be scored on the same criteria: capital cost, ongoing operating cost, travel-time and congestion impact, public transport and active-mobility benefit, land unlocked, private investment unlocked, construction employment, long-term municipal revenue and lifecycle cost over thirty years. Publish the scorecard. Let residents see the numbers, not a vision statement.

PART FOUR

Make The Precinct Pay For Itself

The Foreshore is some of the most valuable real estate in Cape Town, bordered by the CBD, the harbour, the Waterfront, the CTICC and the port. The City has previously recognised this precinct as a major potential lever for private investment and affordable housing.

Rather than asking Cape Town to find several billion rand from rates and borrowing, the SDP proposes a Foreshore Infrastructure and Development Partnership, in which the increase in land value created by finally solving the transport problem helps finance the solution itself: municipal land, development rights and private capital working together, instead of taxpayers carrying the full cost alone. The City's own public statements already point in this direction, having indicated that private investment is expected to fund most of the eventual project.

PART FIVE

This Was Never Really About A Bridge

The unfinished freeway is the most visible example of a much bigger problem: the volume of delayed, stalled or quietly abandoned infrastructure and municipal projects across Cape Town, each one without a public decision date, a named owner or a published cost to complete.

The Service Delivery Party proposes a permanent, public Cape Town Project Completion Register.

Every major delayed or unfinished municipal project would appear on it, with six fields that cannot be left blank.

Register Field	What It Records
Status	Where the project currently stands, in plain language
Cost to Complete	The rand figure required to finish, fix, repurpose or remove it
Responsible Authority	The named department or official accountable for the next step
Decision Date	When a final direction will be chosen
Completion Date	When the chosen work will be done
Public Benefit	What residents gain once it is finished, fixed, repurposed or removed

Every project on the register is then required to fall into one of four categories, decided on evidence rather than habit or sentiment.

Finish, if completing it provides more value than abandoning it. **Fix**, if the infrastructure is fundamentally useful but needs redesign. **Repurpose**, if the original purpose is obsolete but the asset can serve another public need. **Remove**, if maintaining it costs more than it delivers.

"A stalled project with nobody's name attached to it is a project nobody has to explain."

The Foreshore Freeway would be the register's first and most visible entry, but not its only one. Cape Town has no shortage of decisions that have been left to drift, and no shortage of residents who have stopped expecting an answer. A public register with a named responsible authority against every entry changes that.



CONCLUSION

Closing

Cape Town does not need another vision for the Foreshore. It needs a decision, a date and a name attached to both. The same is true for every other unfinished project sitting quietly in a City filing system.

Finish it. Fix it. Repurpose it. Or remove it. But by 2030, Cape Town should no longer be looking at a monument to its own indecision, and residents should not have to wonder who is responsible for the next fifty years of delay.