The ignored transportation failure and the forgotten traffic jam

By JEHUDA HADDAD

Anyone familiar with the close to one-hour traffic jam between Omer/Lehavim and Beersheba, or bumper-to-bumper traffic at the Emek Sara or Neot Hovav junctions, or the western entrance to Beersheba during rush hour, is well aware of the problem. In the Beersheba metropolitan area, getting to work in the morning and home in the afternoon entails spending at least one hour in traffic each way.

Hundreds of thousands of Israel's southern residents spend long hours in traffic, without any suitable public transportation alternatives available to get to work, to cultural events or to medical treatments.

I call this "the forgotten traffic jam" because the state, which invests billions of shekels building infrastructures to bring the periphery closer to the center, does nothing to solve the transportation crisis within the periphery. The state forgot the acute need to first and foremost attend to the transportation infrastructure in the periphery itself.

In the center of the country, the state is involved in various efforts to ease traffic congestion by expanding the transportation infrastructure from the satellite towns to the large metropolitan cities in the South - Beersheba and Ashdod. It must significantly improve education and health services and formulate plans to help these areas develop advanced industry and transportation. This in turn will increase the standard of living in the southern localities, empower the residents, foster economic growth and improve overall quality of life.

An advanced and suitable "intra-periphery" transportation infrastructure is a timely necessity. Such an infrastructure will attract the residents of the nearby localities to the southern metropolitan cities, and perhaps even residents from the center who will choose to move to the South. Thus we will be able to realize David Ben-Gurion's vision of making the desert bloom.

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