ZIMI

Your EV charging expert

Driving Change: A Case Study on Zimi's Integrated EV Solution for Fleet Decarbonization

September 2025

1. Background and Problem Analysis

1.1. Global Context: Transport's Contribution to Emissions

The transport sector is a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As of 2022, it was responsible for nearly 8 gigatonnes of CO_2 emissions, accounting for approximately 15% of total global GHG emissions IPCC. Road transport, encompassing cars, trucks, and buses, is the dominant source within this sector, responsible for about 71.7% of transport-related emissions in the European Union European Parliament.

1.2. Regional Context: South Africa's Emission Profile

In South Africa, the transport sector is the third-largest emitter of GHGs, contributing over 10% to the nation's total emissions BCG. Road transport is the primary source, responsible for approximately 91.2% of transport-related emissions Changing Transport. This heavy reliance on fossil fuels underscores the urgent need for sustainable alternatives.

1.3. The Imperative for Electrification

Electric vehicles (EVs) present a viable solution to mitigate the environmental impact of road transport. They offer a pathway to decarbonize the sector, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and contribute to achieving national and global climate goals. However, the transition to EVs is fraught with challenges, including high upfront costs, range anxiety, and the need for robust charging infrastructure.

1.4. Micro-Level Problem: Fleet Decarbonization Challenges

Fleet operators face mounting pressure from multiple stakeholders, including shareholders, boards, consumers, and regulators, to reduce emissions and achieve net-zero commitments. For listed entities on the JSE, ESG reporting obligations intensify scrutiny on transport-related emissions. Within fleets, the mode of transport is often the single largest contributor to an organization's carbon footprint, making decarbonization a critical priority.

Transitioning to electric vehicles, however, represents a complete paradigm shift for fleet managers. Challenges include:

- **High upfront capital expenditure** for vehicles and charging infrastructure.
- **Operational complexity** in integrating EVs into existing fleet workflows.
- **Energy management needs** to optimise charging, minimise costs, and reduce downtime.
- **Limited internal expertise** in managing EVs and associated technology.

1.5. Zimi's Role: Enabling the Transition

Zimi addresses these challenges by providing an end-to-end EV solution for fleets, combining vehicles, charging infrastructure, energy, and fleet management software. By integrating technology and services, Zimi de-risks the transition, reduces cost per kilometre, and enables fleets to meet their carbon reduction goals without disrupting operations. This positions Zimi as a critical partner for organizations seeking to achieve their ESG targets in a practical, financially viable way.

2. Solution

Zimi's solution directly addresses the challenge faced by fleet operators who need to decarbonize under pressure from regulators, boards, investors, and consumers. By integrating electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, energy management, and fleet software into a single end-to-end platform, Zimi makes the transition to zero-emission fleets practical, cost-effective, and operationally seamless. This integrated approach is innovative because it transforms what would otherwise be a complex, high-risk transition into a turnkey service, and it adds significant value to South Africa's transport sector by accelerating fleet decarbonization and supporting ESG and net-zero goals.

2.1. Electric Vehicles

Zimi provides a range of best-in-class electric vehicles designed to meet the operational demands of various fleet types, from light urban deliveries to heavy-duty logistics. Cars such as the BYD DolphinSurf are compact and efficient, ideal for urban delivery and passenger transport. Vans including the Mercedes eSprinter and DFSK EC35 offer versatile payloads for last-mile and commercial deliveries. Trucks such as the JAC X200, JAC N75, and Sany 4x2 and 6x4 cover light, mid-weight, and heavy-duty regional and freight operations. This diverse fleet ensures that all modes of fleet transport, the largest contributors to emissions, can be replaced with zero-emission alternatives.

2.2. Charging Infrastructure

Zimi offers a full spectrum of AC and DC charging solutions. AC charging provides affordable overnight charging at depots or residences, while DC fast charging minimizes downtime for high-usage fleet operations. The integrated approach ensures reliable, scalable charging infrastructure tailored to operational needs, removing a critical barrier to EV adoption.

2.3. Energy and Fleet Management Software

Zimi's centralized EV asset management platform empowers fleet operators to monitor and optimize vehicle status, driver behavior, charging performance, energy consumption, and emissions reporting in real time. Advanced analytics and reporting allow operators to manage costs, reduce risk, and make data-driven decisions, providing an additional layer of operational efficiency.

2.4. Flexible Lease and Full Maintenance Offering

Zimi reduces the financial and operational risk associated with fleet electrification by offering flexible leasing and full maintenance lease solutions. This approach aligns costs with usage, includes servicing and support at a fixed monthly rate, and lowers the barrier for fleets to adopt zero-carbon technology.

2.5. Innovation and Additionality

Zimi's solution is innovative because it combines vehicles, charging, energy, and software in one integrated package rather than piecemeal adoption. It transforms fleet electrification from a complex, high-risk project into a turnkey service, significantly reducing adoption friction, and offers customization to specific fleet workflows, a differentiator in markets where operational complexity has historically slowed EV adoption.

The solution adds significant value to South Africa and the sub-sector by accelerating fleet decarbonization in a context where road transport is a major emissions contributor. It supports ESG and net-zero commitments for corporate clients, including JSE-listed companies, and enhances the local EV ecosystem by deploying vehicles, infrastructure, and management systems that together create scalable models for sustainable fleet operations.

By addressing both operational and financial barriers, Zimi enables fleets to transition to zero-emission transport faster, safer, and more efficiently than traditional approaches, making it a unique and impactful solution in the market.

3. Defined methodology

Zimi has built its business execution around structured, evidence-based methodologies that combine rigorous commercialization discipline with agility and customer-centricity. This approach ensures that each stage of development, from idea to market deployment, is validated by customer feedback, financial viability, and measurable impact.

3.1. Stage-Gate Commercialization Model

The seven-stage gate model is a structured framework for bringing new solutions to market. Each stage represents a phase in development, such as idea generation, feasibility analysis, product design, pilot deployment, and full-scale commercialization. Between each stage is a decision gate where progress is assessed against defined criteria such as technical feasibility, financial viability, and customer demand. This methodology allows Zimi to reduce risk systematically, allocate resources effectively, and ensure that only validated solutions advance to market. It is particularly valuable for fleet electrification, where decisions on vehicles, infrastructure, and financing must be tested before large-scale deployment.

3.2. Agile Methodologies

Agile practices enable Zimi to remain responsive in a rapidly evolving sector. Work is organized into short development cycles, or sprints, where specific goals are delivered and immediately tested with users. Daily standups and sprint reviews ensure alignment and accountability across the team. The iterative nature of Agile allows Zimi to release features incrementally, collect feedback in real time, and adapt quickly to changes in customer needs or external conditions. This is essential in the EV transition, where technology, regulations, and customer expectations are continuously evolving.

3.3. Product-Market Testing

Zimi prioritizes validation in real-world conditions before scaling. Pilot programs with fleets allow the company to test vehicles, charging infrastructure, and software under operational demands. Data is gathered on cost per kilometer, charging behavior, driver satisfaction, and emissions reduction. These results are shared with clients, creating transparency while giving Zimi valuable insights to refine its offering. Product-market testing ensures solutions are not only technologically feasible but also financially and operationally aligned with fleet realities.

3.4. Business Model Canvas

The business model canvas provides Zimi with a visual framework to design, test, and refine its business model. It covers nine building blocks: value propositions, customer segments, channels, customer relationships, revenue streams, key activities, key resources, key partnerships, and cost structures. By regularly reviewing and updating the canvas, Zimi ensures alignment between its strategic vision and operational execution. For example, customer feedback directly informs value propositions, while new partnerships affect both revenue streams and key resources. This iterative process keeps Zimi's model resilient and adaptable.

3.5. Customer-Driven Product Development

At the core of Zimi's approach is direct engagement with customers. Fleet managers are actively involved throughout the development process, from early interviews and workshops to pilot testing and ongoing feedback loops. Zimi prioritizes listening to the "voice of the customer," ensuring products are tailored to fleet workflows, reporting needs, and cost constraints. This customer-driven approach reduces the risk of misalignment between technology and operations, and fosters stronger customer relationships by building trust and co-creating solutions.

3.6. Tools and Innovations

Zimi supports these methodologies with a range of modern tools. Project management platforms facilitate collaboration across teams using Agile methods. Data analytics tools are used to measure pilot outcomes and refine assumptions. The EV fleet management platform itself acts as a continuous learning tool, providing usage and performance data that feed directly into new product iterations. By embedding innovation not just in the product but in the process, Zimi ensures continuous improvement and rapid responsiveness to market needs.

4. Business model

Zimi's business model is designed to remove the barriers to EV adoption for fleet operators by packaging vehicles, charging, energy and software into flexible commercial arrangements that align cost to usage and create recurring revenue for the business.

4.1. Customer segments

Zimi's core customers are fleet managers in logistics and service sectors across first-party (owner-operated) and third-party (contracted) fleets. These segments include light commercial vehicle (LCV) operators (panel vans, bakkies), urban delivery fleets, last-mile couriers, municipal and utility fleets, and regional freight operators that use heavier commercial vehicles.

South Africa's vehicle population and new vehicle sales, sourced from the national registries and industry body, show the market scale by vehicle class. According to eNaTIS live vehicle population data (end of February 2024), there were about 13.19 million registered vehicles in South Africa, of which roughly 7.83 million (≈65.6%) were motor cars and station wagons and about 2.70 million (≈22.6%) were light duty vehicles (GVM ≤ 3,500 kg). Heavy trucks (GVM > 3,500 kg) accounted for roughly 393,000 vehicles (≈3.3% of the fleet). (Natis)

New vehicle sales data from NAAMSA illustrate ongoing demand by vehicle class. For example, in March 2025 the passenger car market recorded 33,447 new cars and the light commercial vehicle segment reported 13,328 new units, with aggregate domestic new vehicle sales in that month near 49,500 units, demonstrating steady replacement and growth dynamics in the vehicle classes Zimi targets. These class-level sales trends indicate a meaningful addressable market for electrified LCVs and urban delivery vehicles. (NAAMSA)

Taken together, the large base of motor cars and light commercial vehicles, and continuing monthly new vehicle sales concentrated in passenger cars and LCVs, underscore the opportunity to electrify fleet classes where Zimi's offering delivers the most cost and carbon impact.

4.2. Product packaging

Zimi packages its offering to match fleet operators' financial and operational preferences:

Full Maintenance Lease (FML): a single monthly payment that covers vehicles, chargers, servicing, warranty and operational support. This reduces upfront capex and shifts cost into predictable opex.

Upfront purchase: for customers that prefer asset ownership, Zimi supplies vehicles and chargers for direct purchase.

SLA subscriptions: ongoing access to the fleet management platform is sold separately or bundled, depending on the deployment model, which includes service and maintenance on charge points.

Transaction payments: Zimi facilitates public charging access and point-of-sale payment flows for depot/public charging and captures a margin on transactions.

This modular packaging allows fleets to mix and match financing and ownership structures across vehicle classes and depots.

4.3. Revenue streams

Zimi's primary revenue drivers are:

1. Upfront revenue from charger and vehicle sales
2. Leasing revenue from FML contracts (recurring monthly fees covering vehicles and hardware).
3. SLA revenue from subscriptions to the fleet management platform and servicing (per-vehicle / per-charger).
4. Transaction and payments revenue from public charging roaming (transaction fee).

This blend creates both predictable recurring income (leases and SLAs) and variable revenue upside (charging transactions, upfront sales).

4.4. Channels and customer relationships

Zimi reaches and retains fleet customers through a multi-channel approach built on partnership-led distribution, direct engagement, and long-term account management.

4.4.1. Customer acquisition and sales process

Lead generation and outreach: targeted enterprise sales engage fleet decision-makers (fleet managers, operations heads, CFOs) with industry-tailored materials, TCO and CPK analyses, and ROI cases.

Pilots and proofs-of-concept: sales typically progress from exploratory workshops to small-scale pilots that validate operational fit (range, consumption, charging patterns, savings). Successful pilots convert to fleet rollouts and multi-depot deployments.

Commercial close and onboarding: site assessments, charger installs, driver training and onboarding to the SaaS platform. Standardised playbooks and deployment checklists reduce time to value.

4.4.2. Channels and partnership strategy

Direct enterprise sales: high-touch sales for medium and large fleets, supported by product team and customer success.
OEM and dealership partnerships: distribution agreements or referral arrangements with vehicle OEMs and dealer networks help source vehicles and accelerate deployments across vehicle classes.
Finance and leasing partners: collaborations with financiers and leasing houses enable co-branded FML offerings or balance-sheet light solutions for customers.
Charging network partners and hosts: integration with public charging networks and local site hosts increases operational flexibility for fleets and drives transactions revenue.
Fleet service and maintenance networks: authorised service partners expand Zimi's geographic coverage for maintenance SLAs, reducing fleet downtime.

Channel/referral partners: telematics providers, fleet brokers and industry associations act as referral partners to introduce Zimi to new customers and provide warm leads.

4.4.3. Customer relationships and retention

Dedicated account management: each fleet receives a named account manager responsible for lifecycle value (optimisation, renewals, upsell).
Operational SLAs and maintenance: service level agreements and preventative maintenance reduce reliability risk and build trust.
Continuous performance reporting: regular TCO reviews, CPK dashboards and emissions reporting keep customers engaged and demonstrate value.
Customer feedback loops: pilots and early deployments are formalised as feedback mechanisms that feed product and service improvements, tightening product-market fit and increasing referrals.

4.4.4. Referral and distribution incentives

Zimi structures referral and distribution incentive programmes to reward partners (dealers, brokers, fleet consultants) for successful introductions and completed pilots that lead to commercial deployments; this helps amplify reach into regional and sectoral clusters without linear headcount growth.

4.5. Scalability and differentiation

Zimi's bundled model, with recurring lease and SaaS revenue, scales across vehicle classes by reusing deployment playbooks, standardised charger-install processes, and a centralised software layer. Differentiation comes from the end-to-end integration across vehicles, energy, hardware and software, together with customer-centric onboarding and strong partner channels that reduce time to deployment and lower perceived risk for fleet decision-makers.

5. Results

Zimi has made significant progress toward building an investable, scalable business model while demonstrating measurable economic, social, and environmental impact. Guided by the P4G MEL framework, the company has translated its solution into tangible outcomes across investment mobilization, employment creation, operational performance, environmental impact, and governance.

5.1. Investment

Since inception, Zimi has raised over USD 3.5 million in combined commercial and non-commercial funding. This blended capital has enabled the company to build its technology platform, establish partnerships, and secure early commercial traction with customers, while de-risking operations and positioning the business for scale.

Most recently, Zimi secured a commitment of USD 2.55 million from the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), structured as:

- USD 790,000 equity
- USD 100,000 grant
- USD 1,660,000 debt financing

This investment marks a significant milestone in Zimi's growth journey, strengthening its capital base, supporting the scaling of commercial operations, and enhancing its attractiveness for follow-on investors.

5.2. Employment

Zimi currently employs 7 full-time staff members, with 6 youth employees under the age of 35, underscoring its role in advancing youth employment in South Africa. While the team is male-dominated, gender diversity in governance has been partially addressed, with 33% of board seats held by women. In addition to direct employment, Zimi has created 12 indirect jobs, primarily through suppliers, installation partners, and service providers.

5.3. Financial Performance

Zimi has begun generating recurring revenues through leasing contracts, software subscriptions, and public charging services. Early commercial traction demonstrates that the business model is monetizing successfully, with cost-saving results already validated for customers. As operations scale, Zimi is positioned to grow both recurring and transaction-based revenues.

5.4. Operational Usage & Customer Traction

Zimi's solution has already been deployed in real-world fleet operations, producing measurable operational results:

- 2,600 charging sessions completed
- 8,800 hours of charging delivered
- 60,000 kWh of electricity supplied to EVs
- ZAR 590,000 in fuel cost savings achieved for customers
- Approximately 200,000 kilometers driven on electric power
- 4 commercial fleet clients secured across logistics and service segments

These usage statistics validate the reliability of Zimi's solution in day-to-day fleet operations, while demonstrating meaningful savings and emission reductions for customers.

5.5. Customer Case Study: Bakers S.A. Limited

Bakers S.A. Limited, one of South Africa's largest independent integrated supply chain solution providers, has taken its first steps towards fleet electrification with Zimi Charge. Bakers, with a 40-year history of innovation in logistics, has consistently invested in cleaner technologies and is now piloting electric freight vehicles.

5.5.1. The Challenge

Bakers faced the same hurdles many large fleets encounter: high upfront charging infrastructure costs, limited grid capacity, uncertainty over ROI, and lack of performance data. While pilots with smaller EVs proved promising, scaling required a trusted partner to design a cost-efficient and data-driven electrification roadmap.

5.5.2. The Solution

Zimi partnered with Bakers to design a tailored Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) model, proving the financial viability of commercial EV adoption. A 120kW DC charger was deployed to support the new eActros and eSprinter fleet, coupled with Zimi Fleet, the energy and charger management platform. Integration with Bakers' telematics gave managers a single-view dashboard, combining vehicle data, charger uptime, and fuel savings.

5.5.3. The Results

Over the course of one year, Bakers S.A. Limited has demonstrated the economic and environmental impact of electrifying part of its fleet with Zimi's technology. The deployment proved that commercial EVs can deliver substantial savings while maintaining reliability across high-demand logistics operations.

- **Fuel savings:** Approximately **R480,000** saved in avoided diesel costs within the first year.
- **Net savings:** An **83% reduction in energy costs** compared to equivalent diesel operations.
- **Carbon savings:** A **32% reduction in CO_2 emissions**, supporting Bakers' broader net-zero strategy.
- **Distance travelled:** More than **40,000 km** logged in real-world deliveries.
- **Diesel displacement:** Over **24,000 litres of fuel replaced** by clean electric energy.

These outcomes validate the business case for electric trucks in South Africa's logistics sector. Beyond cost efficiency, Bakers has strengthened its sustainability credentials, positioned itself as a leader in green logistics, and created a replicable model for other fleet operators aiming to decarbonise.

5.5.4. Customer Testimonial

Luqmaan Hansa, Contracts Manager at Bakers, reflects: "At Bakers, innovation in logistics is integral to our operations, and this partnership with Zimi marks a pivotal step toward a sustainable future. By integrating electric vehicles into our fleet, powered by Zimi's advanced charging technology, we have significantly reduced our environmental impact while enhancing operational efficiency. This collaboration demonstrates the potential for sustainable solutions to transform the logistics industry, setting a new benchmark for efficiency and environmental responsibility."

5.5.5. The Future

With this proof-of-concept complete, Bakers plans to scale electrification across its national network, expand solar integration at depots, and roll out EV adoption to key blue-chip customers, showing that large-scale fleet transition is both feasible and financially sound in the South African context.

5.6. Environmental Impact

To date, Zimi's deployments have avoided an estimated 32 tonnes of CO_2e, equivalent to planting approximately 1,528 trees. While renewable generation deployed at certain sites,, Zimi's platform is designed to integrate with solar and other clean energy sources, further multiplying environmental benefits in future rollouts.

5.7. Governance and Inclusion

Zimi has developed a five-year ESG strategy with a clear action plan across governance, inclusion, environmental responsibility, and social impact. Governance and inclusion form a core part of this roadmap, ensuring that the company's growth aligns with both investor expectations and South Africa's transformation priorities.

- **Board structure:** Zimi maintains a three-person board, with 33% female representation in leadership. While Black South African representation at board level is not yet established, the company recognises this as a priority and is actively engaging to diversify governance structures.

- **Ownership and transformation:** Ownership at Zimi remains non-diverse; however, the company has achieved a B-BBEE Level 4 rating. To strengthen its transformation journey, Zimi is actively working toward placing Black candidates in senior management positions, while also expanding its skills development and enterprise supplier development (ESD) initiatives. These measures are designed to both increase Zimi's score and deepen its impact in building a more inclusive EV value chain

- **ESG integration:** Governance practices are directly linked to Zimi's broader ESG strategy, with dedicated reporting and accountability mechanisms in place to track progress on environmental, social, and transformation objectives.

- **Future commitments:** Zimi has committed to strengthening board diversity, embedding inclusive hiring practices, and aligning with national transformation objectives to ensure long-term sustainability and stakeholder trust.

By institutionalising governance and inclusion within its ESG roadmap, Zimi is laying the foundation for responsible growth, investor confidence, and long-term impact in the EV ecosystem.

Zimi is actively advancing ownership transformation and supplier diversity. While current ownership remains non-diverse, the company has implemented a multi-year roadmap to increase Black South African participation in senior management and explore options for equity partnerships that align with B-BBEE objectives. Supplier diversity initiatives are being scaled through targeted engagement with Black-owned service providers, installation partners, and technology vendors to strengthen the local EV value chain. Progress is tracked through quarterly governance reviews, with milestones set for expanding diverse leadership representation and measurable spend with empowered suppliers over the next 24 months, ensuring accountability and transparent reporting to stakeholders.

6. Challenges and solutions

As Zimi has moved from pilot deployments to commercial traction, a number of challenges have surfaced, both internal and external. These reflect the broader barriers to EV adoption in emerging markets and the specific constraints of scaling an integrated fleet solution.

6.1. Market Environment Challenges

6.1.1. High Upfront Costs and Access to Capital

Commercial EVs and charging infrastructure require significant capital expenditure, which can deter fleet managers. Limited access to affordable financing in South Africa compounds this challenge.

Solution: Zimi's Full Maintenance Lease model spreads costs over predictable monthly payments. By bundling vehicles, charging, and software into one package, Zimi reduces upfront expenditure and aligns costs with fleet usage.

Zimi mitigates the high upfront capital barrier through a suite of flexible financing structures and strategic funding partnerships. Core commercial offers include Full Maintenance Lease (FML) packages that bundle vehicles, chargers, servicing and software into a single predictable monthly payment, and charger-leasing options that remove site capex for charging hardware. To scale these offers, Zimi has established a finance partnership framework with vehicle financiers, leasing houses and energy service providers that enables balance-sheet-light deployments and co-branded leasing solutions. The company actively pursues blended finance and concessional capital to lower effective borrowing costs for customers, and has used grant and development funding (for example, the EEP Africa award and recent DBSA commitment) to de-risk early pilots and proof points for larger financiers. Repayment profiles are aligned to operational savings (fuel and maintenance reductions), improving cashflow parity for fleet operators. Pilots of these financing models are underway and are being standardised for replication across customer segments in 2026, improving investor and customer confidence in rollout economics.

6.1.2. Grid Capacity and Energy Reliability

South Africa's energy supply challenges, including loadshedding and grid connection delays, create uncertainty for fleet managers considering EV adoption.

Solution: Zimi conducts detailed site assessments to design charging solutions that fit within existing grid constraints. The platform is designed to integrate renewable energy sources in future deployments, and smart load management optimises charging schedules to reduce exposure to power supply instability.

South Africa's constrained grid capacity and intermittent supply pose significant operational risks for large-scale EV charging deployment. These risks manifest in the form of potential load-shedding disruptions, limited grid availability at logistics depots, and voltage fluctuations affecting charger uptime. To mitigate these risks, Zimi has adopted a hybrid infrastructure strategy that integrates solar PV, battery energy storage systems (BESS), and smart energy management to maintain operational resilience. Sites are designed with modular capacity upgrades and demand-response features that balance loads and reduce grid dependency during peak periods. Zimi is also piloting grid-interactive charging at selected depots to support load shifting and ensure predictable cost of energy supply. Partnerships with EPC providers and energy developers strengthen the company's ability to deliver hybrid, grid-tied systems with high reliability. Over time, Zimi plans to extend these capabilities through virtual wheeling and embedded generation partnerships, reducing exposure to grid volatility and enhancing fleet energy security.

6.1.3. Policy and Regulatory Uncertainty

The enabling environment for EVs in South Africa is still nascent. There are no tax incentives for commercial fleet adoption, slowing demand and investor confidence.

Solution: Zimi has been highly active in policy and industry engagements to strengthen the EV ecosystem and advocate for supportive regulations:

- **Policy Engagement Workshop #1: Green Transport Strategy** (3 September 2024, Virtual)
  Hosted in partnership with P4G, this workshop convened multiple industry and policy stakeholders to discuss local manufacturing incentives, import duty adjustments, charging infrastructure expansion, and public awareness campaigns. Recommendations included engaging government departments to advocate for EV incentives and publishing a summary of findings for industry stakeholders.

- **EV Whitepaper Workshop** (November 2024)
  Industry experts, including Greencape, collaborated to produce an EV White Paper workshop highlighting key challenges and recommendations for policymakers. The workshop strengthened relationships with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), which has pledged support for local manufacturing incentives and industry-municipality engagement.

- **EV Infrastructure and Investment Conference** (27 March 2025, Sustainability Institute)
  The conference convened multiple stakeholders, including local government representatives, VCs, and accelerators, to discuss policy issues and investment models related to EV infrastructure. This engagement amplified Zimi's visibility and established the company as a thought leader in the sector.

- **Ongoing Policy Advocacy**
  Zimi's efforts, including participation in the Climate Study Group, Naspers World EV Day, and the South African Innovation Summit, have strengthened networks with investors, policy

stakeholders, and industry leaders. While these engagements have not yet led to formal policy changes, they have built momentum and government commitment to support the partnership on EV adoption initiatives.

Zimi has faced a set of specific policy and regulatory barriers that materially affect commercial rollout timelines: the lack of tax incentives or depreciation allowances for commercial EV fleets, inconsistent municipal permitting processes for charger installations, the absence of a standard EV tariff framework for high-usage commercial charging, and slow utility interconnection timelines for high-capacity DC chargers. To convert engagement into policy traction, Zimi has pursued a targeted advocacy plan that pairs technical inputs with commercial pilot evidence. Milestones achieved to date include submitting formal policy inputs during the Green Transport Strategy workshop (September 3, 2024), co-authoring outcomes from the EV Whitepaper Workshop (November 2024), and presenting pilot findings at the EV Infrastructure and Investment Conference (March 27, 2025). Concrete outcomes from these activities include accelerated municipal pilot approvals for public charging sites and a commitment from a national department to review commercial EV tariff options. Zimi expects these engagements to yield clearer permitting guidance and draft tariff proposals within a 12–24 month horizon, de-risking site deployment timelines and improving investor predictability. Where appropriate, Zimi will continue to pair policy submissions with real-world pilot data to shorten regulatory decision cycles and accelerate market development.

6.1.4. Innovative Pilot Support

Zimi was recently awarded $320,000 (R6.04 million) from the Energy and Environment Partnership (EEP) Africa Trust Fund to deploy Africa's first commercial-scale vehicle-to-grid (V2G) pilot. This grant demonstrates recognition of Zimi's innovation and positions the company to influence future policy related to V2G solutions in South Africa.

6.2. Internal and Operational Challenges

6.2.1. Scaling Commercial Capacity

As a startup, Zimi's limited resources constrain sales, marketing, and customer acquisition activities. *Solution:* Investment in dedicated sales and business development personnel, alongside leveraging strategic partnerships for distribution and referrals, has allowed Zimi to capture market opportunities effectively. Agile methodologies help prioritize high-value opportunities.

To support planned market expansion, Zimi has developed a structured commercial capacity-building roadmap. Over the next 12–18 months, the company will expand its sales team from 1 to 4 full-time employees, strengthen marketing functions with dedicated digital and field marketing specialists, and implement a customer acquisition program targeting high-value fleet segments. Resource allocation has been defined across geographies, with regional account managers responsible for multi-depot fleets, supported by a centralized business development team. These initiatives, coupled with training programs and standardized playbooks, ensure readiness to scale efficiently while maintaining high-quality customer engagement and deployment performance

Zimi has identified operational constraints in technical support, maintenance, and customer onboarding teams that could limit rapid scale. To address this, the company is expanding technical support headcount, implementing standardised training and certification programs for field engineers, and developing scalable service playbooks for installation and maintenance workflows. In parallel, a centralized operations dashboard is being deployed to monitor site readiness, technician allocation, and SLA compliance, enabling proactive resource management. These measures ensure that as sales and deployments grow, operational capacity will keep pace without compromising service quality or customer satisfaction.

6.2.2. Technology and Product Development

Developing a seamless, integrated EV fleet management platform requires continuous iteration. *Solution:* Zimi applies a customer-driven development approach with feedback loops, agile sprints, and product-market testing to ensure interoperability with multiple OEMs, charger types, and customer workflows.

Zimi maintains a structured technology roadmap that guides continuous product development across vehicles, charging infrastructure, and fleet management software. Customer feedback from pilots and early deployments directly informs feature prioritization, integration improvements, and user interface refinements. Iterative releases through Agile sprints ensure that enhancements are rapidly tested and validated in real operational environments, keeping Zimi ahead of evolving fleet requirements. Planned roadmap initiatives include advanced analytics for total cost of ownership modelling, predictive maintenance for chargers and vehicles, and integration of renewable energy sources to further optimise operational efficiency and cost. By embedding customer-driven insights into every stage of development, Zimi ensures that its technology remains responsive, reliable, and aligned with market needs.

6.2.3. Diversity and Inclusion

Zimi faces challenges in achieving gender and racial diversity in ownership and leadership. *Solution:* The company is implementing strategies to improve B-BBEE spend, supplier diversity, and recruitment of diverse leadership talent as it scales.

6.3. Contribution to Policy and Market Development

Through workshops, conferences, and whitepaper initiatives, Zimi has played a catalytic role in shaping the enabling environment for EV adoption in South Africa. Engagement with the DTIC, local government, and industry bodies continues to strengthen the EV ecosystem, supporting future policy development and broader uptake of commercial EV solutions.

7. Lessons learnt

Zimi's journey to becoming investment-ready and scaling an innovative EV fleet solution has surfaced several key lessons that can inform other startups in the sector:

Customer-Centric Product Development is Critical: Developing solutions in close collaboration with customers ensures that products address real-world operational and financial challenges. Zimi's focus on fleet managers' needs, from total cost of ownership modelling to seamless software integration, enabled adoption and validated the commercial viability of EV solutions.

Integrated Solutions Reduce Adoption Barriers: Bundling vehicles, charging infrastructure, energy management, and fleet software into a single offering reduces complexity and financial risk for fleet managers. This approach accelerates decision-making and demonstrates value early in the adoption cycle, improving both customer satisfaction and investor confidence.

Agile and Iterative Methodologies Enhance Execution: Adopting agile methods, stage-gate commercialisation, and continuous product-market testing allowed Zimi to respond quickly to operational challenges, market feedback, and technology iterations. Structured frameworks like the business model canvas facilitated clarity in strategy, prioritization, and investor communications.

Strategic Partnerships Are Multipliers: Leveraging partnerships for distribution, referrals, and co-development can expand market reach and operational capacity without significant capital outlay. Zimi's collaborations with OEMs, charging providers, policy stakeholders, and acceleration partners accelerated access to pilots, insights, and investment opportunities.

Early Policy Engagement Builds Market Readiness: Even in the absence of immediate regulatory change, proactive policy and industry engagement positions a company as a thought leader, strengthens networks, and creates credibility with investors. Workshops, conferences, and whitepapers helped Zimi influence discussions on local manufacturing incentives, import duties, and charging infrastructure expansion.

Demonstrable Impact Drives Investor Confidence: Quantifying operational, environmental, and cost benefits through usage statistics, pilot deployments, and case studies (e.g., Bakers S.A. Limited) builds trust with investors and customers. Transparent reporting on outcomes such as emissions avoided, kilometers driven, and fuel cost savings validates the business model and strengthens funding prospects.

Scaling Requires Balancing Commercial and Operational Capacity: Startups must manage the tension between market demand and internal capabilities. Investment in sales, business development, and technical teams is crucial to scale efficiently, particularly for asset-heavy solutions like fleet electrification.

Innovation and Policy Advocacy Go Hand-in-Hand: Pioneering solutions, such as vehicle-to-grid technology, not only differentiate the company but also create opportunities to influence policy and regulatory frameworks, shaping the market for future growth.

8. Recommendations

Based on Zimi's journey to scale EV fleet solutions and engage investors, the following recommendations are proposed for similar businesses and stakeholders in the sector:

Prioritise Customer-Centric Solutions: Startups should continuously engage fleet operators to understand operational pain points, financial constraints, and ESG goals. Solutions should be tailored to real-world workflows, and feedback loops must be embedded in product development to ensure adoption and satisfaction.

Bundle Products and Services to Reduce Barriers: Combining vehicles, charging infrastructure, energy management, and fleet software into integrated packages can accelerate adoption by simplifying procurement and reducing upfront capital requirements. Leasing and flexible financing models should be leveraged to lower financial barriers.

Maintain Robust Data Collection and Impact Measurement: Documenting outcomes such as emissions reduction, cost savings, and operational efficiency builds credibility with both customers and investors. Standardised metrics and case studies should be developed to communicate impact clearly and support policy advocacy.

Engage Early with Policy and Industry Stakeholders: Proactive engagement with government departments, local authorities, and industry associations helps shape the enabling environment for EV adoption. Hosting workshops, contributing to whitepapers, and participating in conferences can raise visibility, influence policy, and create opportunities for incentives or support.

Leverage Strategic Partnerships: Collaboration with OEMs, financing institutions, energy providers, and technology partners amplifies reach and accelerates scale without requiring disproportionate internal resources. Partnerships can also provide credibility, accelerate knowledge transfer, and reduce execution risk.

Invest in Operational and Commercial Capacity: As demand grows, startups must ensure sufficient operational bandwidth, including sales, business development, technical support, and project management teams. Agile methodologies and stage-gate frameworks help manage scaling while maintaining quality and reliability.

Explore Innovative Technologies with Market-Ready Pilots: Pioneering solutions, such as vehicle-to-grid integration or renewable energy-linked charging, can create competitive differentiation and position the business as a thought leader. Pilots that demonstrate technical feasibility and financial viability are critical to de-risk future investments and policy engagement.

Prioritise Diversity, Inclusion, and Empowerment: Embedding gender, youth, and racial inclusion in employment, leadership, and supplier strategies strengthens organisational resilience, aligns with ESG goals, and improves access to funding opportunities that consider empowerment credentials.

Maintain Transparent Communication with Investors: Clear reporting on operational, environmental, and financial metrics, alongside structured narratives on market traction and policy engagement, builds confidence with current and prospective investors, facilitating follow-on funding.

9. Conclusion

Zimi's journey demonstrates that the transition to electric mobility in South Africa is both feasible and investable when approached with the right combination of innovation, partnerships, and market understanding. By addressing the barriers fleets face in electrification, including high upfront costs, charging complexity, and data-driven management, Zimi has positioned itself as a catalyst for sustainable logistics.

Through early commercial traction, measurable cost and carbon savings, and active engagement in shaping the enabling environment, Zimi has validated its business model and impact potential. The company's focus on customer-driven development, governance, and transformation ensures that growth is aligned with ESG imperatives and national priorities.

Looking ahead, Zimi is poised to scale its solutions, deepen its policy influence, and expand its partnerships to accelerate fleet decarbonisation across South Africa and beyond. By combining financial innovation, advanced technology, and a strong commitment to inclusion, Zimi is paving the way for a new era of green, efficient, and resilient transport systems.