Smart city projects can deliver billion dollar savings and double-digit cuts in expenditure, according to research carried out by smart city consultant and service provider NXN. A typical city in the GCC can save over one billion dollars from properly executed smart city projects, said Ghazi Atallah, CEO of NXN, formerly nexGen Group.

“At the central level, we have quantified the benefits of transformation, and we have identified many areas. Taking the city as a whole, depending on city size, we are talking about billions in savings, at least 30-40% savings within the overall ICT spend of the city, when the transformation is done in the right way,” he said.

“On an initiative level, if you look at energy, we are seeing a 20-25% reduction of energy spend — if you look at the energy bill of the whole city, those are some serious figures. The level of efficiency achieved was quite surprising. We expected to have a very efficient environment, but we didn’t expect it to have that level of efficiency.”

The company has rebranded in part as it has expanded its remit to include managed services. NXN recently signed a strategic agreement with telco group Zain to deliver a range of smart services, and more services are being added to the portfolio, in addition to the existing close strategic engagements in Dubai, Riyadh and Kuwait City.

With the NXN smart city platform established in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the company is able to offer a range of smart city and smart district services in related verticals including energy, security, utilities, facilities and city data services. The platform enables NXN to work with customers, whether they are city-wide government or specific departments and authorities, entities such as utilities, or real estate developers, to integrate the relevant infrastructure and assets of the customer with the platform and manage the service on their behalf. By using open standards, the NXN platform can connect to any existing technology the user has already deployed.

“As an organisation we have extended our ability beyond consulting and engineering, to actually delivering smart city services, so we can help cities transform a lot easier,” Atallah said. “We have set up our own platform in the UAE, Saudi Arabic and Kuwait, and the platform has the ability to manage IoT, big data, digital identity security, all the aspects that you need of a central platform that allows you to deliver smart city services. We have done 80% of the work on behalf of our customers by creating this platform.

“We are able to offer that on an OPEX basis, on a monthly or quarterly subscription, and we are able to deliver it in a time-to-market that is much better than a traditional systems integration, CAPEX-based model. That is a big advantage to our customers,” he added.

Across the GCC and wider Middle East, NXN believes there is huge potential for the services-based approach, as more cities set targets for smart projects and digital transfor-
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