

Roads sector expands,

BY EDWARD KAYIWA

Uganda has overcome past trials and tribulations to become a stable nation with a growing economy that is capitalising on the country's natural advantages and ambitious workforce.

Trade and investment has since sky-rocketed, flying on the wings of a soothing road network connecting the country to its different regions and neighbours.

In 1986, when the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power, the country's public road network stood at a paltry 987km but has since expanded to approximately 140,000km.

"The Government has always focused on building the country's road network, and this has never changed. We shall continue to build roads to facilitate the movement of people and their goods as we grow the economy together," works minister, Gen. Edward Katumba Wamala said.

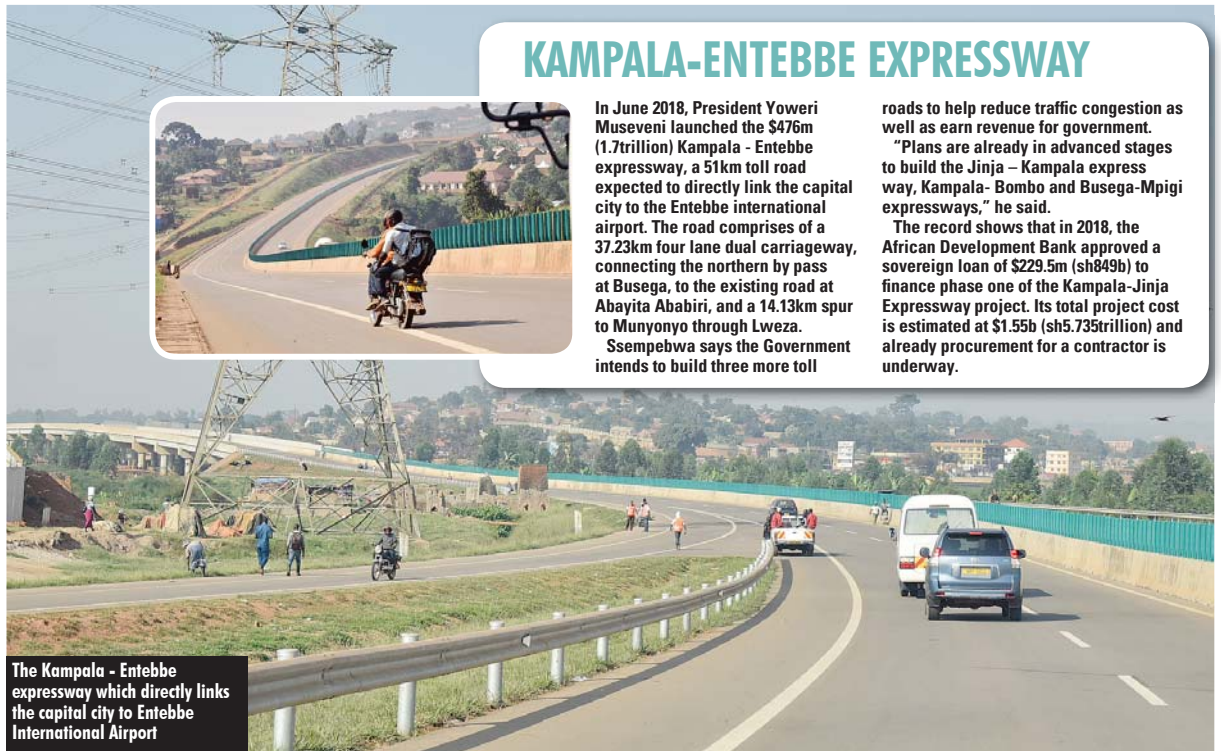
According to Katumba, Works and Transport is one of the sectors that drum up growth and development in the global economy, and is extremely crucial for landlocked economies such as Uganda's.

He said infrastructure in such an economy serves as a conveyor belt, opening up production zones to markets, while availing the needed thrust for post-production processes, thus reducing costs for producers and manufacturers in the long run.

Katumba said Uganda's road network has considerably expanded over the last six years, connecting almost 80% of the country to its border posts, while facilitating trade with her regional neighbours.

He said the condition of the roads, especially those under Local Governments, has also improved greatly during the same time, due to consistent monitoring, maintenance and auditing of road works.

Previously, experts have argued that poor roads are perhaps one of the major



The Kampala - Entebbe expressway which directly links the capital city to Entebbe International Airport

KAMPALA-ENTEBBE EXPRESSWAY

In June 2018, President Yoweri Museveni launched the \$476m (1.7trillion) Kampala - Entebbe expressway, a 51km toll road expected to directly link the capital city to the Entebbe international airport. The road comprises of a 37.23km four lane dual carriageway, connecting the northern by pass at Busega, to the existing road at Abayita Ababiri, and a 14.13km spur to Munyonyo through Lweza.

Ssempebwa says the Government intends to build three more toll

roads to help reduce traffic congestion as well as earn revenue for government.

"Plans are already in advanced stages to build the Jinja - Kampala express way, Kampala- Bombo and Busega-Mpigi expressways," he said.

The record shows that in 2018, the African Development Bank approved a sovereign loan of \$229.5m (sh849b) to finance phase one of the Kampala-Jinja Expressway project. Its total project cost is estimated at \$1.55b (sh5.735trillion) and already procurement for a contractor is underway.

Tarmac roads

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bottlenecks to unlocking the country's economic potential.

Nonetheless, Katumba said the Government is resolute on building and maintaining an appropriate road infrastructure to boost both domestic and intra-regional trade.

TARMAC ROADS

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Statistics also indicate that the number of cars getting into the country is expected to grow at approximately 5% per year due to a growing middle income class.

Without regular maintenance, roads can rapidly fall into disrepair, deterring realisation of their longer term impact on development, such as increased agricultural production and reduced journey times across the country.

Uganda boasts of approximately 140,000km of roads, linking it from border to border with her regional neighbours, while

at the same time allowing intra- connectivity to regions, towns and villages.

RURAL AREAS ACCESSED

Katumba said the Government has improved accessibility to all rural and urban areas of the country on a sustainable basis.

He said the Government is also striving to improve the flow of traffic and the speed of passenger movement in Kampala and the inner urban areas; and to substantially increase road maintenance funding in the medium-term.

Katumba said construction of the critical oil and tourism roads and improvement of selected district and urban roads will take centre stage.

Finance minister, Matia Kasaija says the Export-Import Bank of China has agreed to lend Uganda approximately \$456.37m, meant for

financing, upgrading and constructing national oil roads.

The money, according to Kasaija, will be used to partly finance roads, traversing Hoima, Masindi, Pakwach, Buliisa and Kakumiro districts. They will comprise of a 50-meter right of way and seven-meter carriage way, upgraded to class two bitumen.

Katumba said 50 new bridges will also be added to the road infrastructure network, while 80% of the national road network will be maintained in fair to good condition all year round.

"We want to operate an efficient national road network that supports the economic development of the country," he said.

REHABILITATION EFFORTS

Kasaija said, the Government will also embark on completing phase 2 of the rehabilitation works on the 29km Sironko -Muyembe road, and the upgrade to bituminous standard of the 20km Mpigi



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opens production zones

Town roads.

Upgrade of the Kaya-Yei road to class A murrum will also commence along with the 44.5km Bumbobi-Lwakhakha road, whose completion is expected in 2021.

According to the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), the 44km Pallisa-Kamonkoli road, 67km Tirinyi-Pallisa-Kumi road, 10km Kitale-Gerenge road and the 69km Kigumba-Bulima road will be completed in 2021.

Rehabilitation of the 102km Nakalama-Tirinyi-Mbale road is also expected to be completed in the 2020/21 financial year," Allan Ssempebwa, UNRA publicist, said, adding that about 400km of roads are expected to be constructed, while 200km will undergo rehabilitation by mid-2020.

Between 2020 and 2021, the network planning and designs of the 149km Hamurwa-Kerere-Kanungu-Buhoma-Butogota-Hamanyanja-Ifasha-Ikumba road will be undertaken, along with the Kampala-Busunju Expressway.

The 95km Kumi-Ngora-Serere-Kagwara road, 95km Mayuge-Mbaale-Nakivumbi-Bugiri-Namayingo-Lugaala road, 97km Kyenjojo (Kahunge) - Nyarukoma-, Kigara - Rwamwanja- Kiruhura road, 50km Muhanga-Kisiizi-Rwashamire road and 38km Karenga - Kapedo road will also undergo network planning and designs.

"The feasibility and preliminary design of the 150km Ntusi-Lyantonde - Rakai, 143km Soroti-Amuria-Oreta-Akwanamoru, 68km Abim-Kotido and the 104km Muko-Katuna and Muko-Kamugunguzi roads will be done starting from the last half of 2020," Ssempebwa said. He said UNRA will continue to carry out sensitisation on

1986:
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987km

**National
road
network**

By 2020:
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road infrastructure
network

UNDER
CONSTRUCTION

80%

of national
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condition all year round



The good state of roads has led to increased agricultural production and reduced the time spent on upcountry travel



The newly refurbished Fairway Junction in Kampala

road safety during construction, targeting school children and the general community.

KAMPALA-JINJA HIGHWAY

5%

Projected
annual
percentage
increase of
cars to be
imported
into the
country due
to a growing
middle class

The Kampala - Jinja Express way is the first road project the Government is undertaking jointly with the private sector. Ssempebwa said the road is expected to create up to 1,500 jobs during construction and 200 jobs in operation, adding that it is expected to cut the journey time to Jinja by 70 minutes. He said the project will be carried out in two phases with the first one being 33km

of the Kampala-Jinja Mainline commencing at Kampala and terminating at Namagunga and the Kampala Southern Bypass.

"The second phase will be 43.7km of the Kampala Jinja Mainline commencing at Namagunga and terminating at Jinja," he said. Already, the existing Kampala Jinja highway is undergoing reconstruction, after years of being dilapidated, owing to heavy traffic from Kenya and eastern Uganda.

Eng Isaac Wani, the director of network planning and engineering at UNRA, says the section between Kampala and Mukono will be integrated with the Greater Kampala Transport Master Plan (GKTM) to undercut the city's traffic jam. GKTM is a

comprehensive programme that seeks to overhaul the city's roads with the overall aim of improving transport in and around Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono districts over the next 10 years. KCCA says the project includes the Kampala Bus Rapid Transit (KBRT) that will ensure that buses move along dedicated lanes within the metropolitan area. Wani said the KBRT integration to the existing road will only stretch to Mukono, after which the normal carriage way will continue to Jinja and terminate at the new Nile bridge.

Discussions are underway, to optimise road usage and reduce jam. He said the road will also include non-motorised infrastructure such as walkways, taxi fleet renewal, control centre,

TRAFFIC CONTROL

Last year, the Japanese government extended more than \$24m (sh88.56b) to facilitate the construction and equipment of an ultra-modern traffic control centre at the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA). According to the Japanese ambassador to Uganda, Kazuaki Kamada, the money will also be partly used to upgrade and signalise 30 junctions within the Kampala metropolitan city area, in an attempt to curb the city's runaway congestion.

The centre will enable KCCA to monitor and control traffic in real time. He said Uganda and Japan signed a sh3.23b grant agreement in February to fund the detailed design of the project.

World Bank estimates indicate that the country loses about \$800m (sh2.952trillion) per annum in Gross Domestic Productivity (GDP) due to traffic congestion, a challenge that needs to be urgently tackled.

Ssempebwa said the new traffic control centre would be the first of its kind in East Africa, giving Kampala the lead in traffic control across the region.



"We want to operate an efficient national road network that supports the economic development of the country," Finance minister, Matia Kasaija

traffic management and other infrastructure.

FEEDING THE EXPRESSWAY

Wani said the road is also being designed to enhance the capacity of the planned Kampala - Jinja

express way, by having access ways that feed in and out of the new tolled road. After running on the road from Kampala to the Nakawa - Kyambogo interchange, the express way will divert to a green field. He said other interchanges are planned along the expressway stretch to connect it to other existing infrastructure.

\$456m

Allocation for financing, upgrading and constructing national oil roads in Hoima, Masindi, Pakwach, Buliisa and Kakumiro districts