



The Kampala-Entebbe Expressway. The cost of construction will be recovered from the user collections through road tolls

Public Private Partnership to bridge financing gap in roads sector

By Samuel Balagadde

With the national road transport network as the most dominant aspect of infrastructure in Uganda, the demand for upgrading roads from gravel to tarmac and the maintenance of existing roads has grown in importance over the years. A big percentage of the transit cargo traffic and passenger vehicles use the national road network hence straining it. This has to an extent given many of the roads a short lifespan.

The non-adherence to vehicle load regulations by truck operators and drivers has been a major cause to this challenge.

Due to insufficient funds to adequately facilitate the construction and maintenance of these national roads, the Government has reached out to the private sector through Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements.

Through such arrangements, the Government is being able to foster construction of big road projects with the understanding that these investors will recoup their investment through road user charges collected in form of road tolls.

Through PPP the Government is able to acquire and develop nationwide infrastructure as well

as offer opportunities to improve service delivery

With PPPs, come a number of advantages such as faster completion of construction works as investors are eager to recoup their investments.

Allen Kagina the executive director of Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), said although the Government continues to fund road projects using the locally raised taxpayers revenue and donor support, PPPs will push the roads sector to greater heights.

Under such arrangements, she says, the Government retains the role of acquiring the right of way through compensating the Project Affected Persons (PAPs) and the potential investor is mandated to finance the construction works and maintenance as they recoup their investments over the agreed period of time.

Gen. Katumba Wamala, the state minister for works says, roads constructed under the PPP arrangement with tolled implying that motorists will pay a user fee. However, he says the fee is optional and payable only by those who want to move fast through the road with limited traffic jam interruption.

He says highways such as the Kampala-Jinja, Kampala-Entebbe and Busega-Mpigi will be maintained and in good condition for those who are ready to pay the road toll.

Government investment in high

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mobility routes is geared towards enhancing trade and economic growth of the country and curtailing heavy traffic congestion on the existing highways, which will result into saving time and other associated benefits.

Kampala-Jinja Expressway

The 77km Kampala-Jinja Expressway with a 12km stretch of the Southern Bypass connecting to Kampala-Entebbe Expressway at Munyonyo is the first of this kind in the history of road infrastructure development in Uganda and the East African region.

The estimated construction cost for this road project totalling to 95km with a lifespan of 25 years will cost about \$1b based on the detailed design and cost estimates prepared by UNRA.

The successful bidder will inject in about \$600m recoverable after a period of 30years through collecting the road user fees, but will be tasked to maintain it in good condition by repairing it whenever it is due.

Apart from cutting on the time spent to travel from Kampala to Jinja, the project will also provide economic opportunities for Ugandans by creating direct and indirect jobs for Ugandans as it has been structured with strong local content with at least 30% of the value of the project being undertaken by local companies.

Currently, the Road Act in Uganda does not cater for toll fees. This is one of reasons for the delayed implementation of the user fees on the recently commissioned Kampala-Entebbe expressway and motorists use it for free.

"The key cost drivers include higher design standards (Expressway standards) with a design speed of up to 120kph for the Kampala-Jinja mainline and 100kph for the Kampala Southern Bypass, 4.1km flyovers, 46 overpasses, 27 under-passes and 12 toll stations" she said.

Kagina said there is a need for Parliament to expedite the approval of the road bill, to provide the legal provision for tolling as the road is currently being abused by some motorists using it.

Water transport

However, the Government is also looking at private sector involvement in continued roads to provide services in navigable water to promote connectivity of the islands to mainland.

Ferries being classified as continued road on the water and are meant to be free of charge just like the case for the tarmac and gravel roads, the government is in further partnership with the private sector in provision and operation of water vessels.

Under the same arrangement, the Government partnered with Kalangala Infrastructure Services (KIS) to provide two ferries *MV Pearl* and *MV Ssesse*, which ply the Bukakata landing site route in Masaka and Lukulu in Kalangala Island.

Both ferries are managed and operated by KIS for ease in crossing of vehicles and passengers to and from Kalangala connecting to Masaka areas.

The ferries replaced *MV Bukakata* that had outlived its lifespan and broke down frequently hence posing a risk to the lives of travellers. It is currently at Port Bell dry dock pending repairs.

Herbert Mutyaba, UNRA's head of ferries recently said several modifications are expected on this ferry before being transferred to other islands such as Buvuma since it is bigger than the Kiyindi ferry, but that they are still sourcing for funds.