

Let's embrace electric mobility

On May 3, 2026, at the National Science Week, held under the theme "Science, Technology and Innovation Works – Powering Uganda to a \$500 Billion Economy," government launched the E-Bus Xpress service to modernise public transport.

Developed by state-owned Kiira Motors Corporation, the fully electric buses with a 300-kilometre range form part of a strategy to deploy 1,500 electric buses across 14 urban centres to reduce emissions and dependence on fuel.

Private companies are also investing in green mobility.

The introduction of electric commuter services represents a turning point in Uganda's transport history. Public transportation in Uganda has evolved over decades from the Uganda Transport Company's city buses in the 1940s, to taxi services in the 1950s, and later the emergence of boda bodas in the 1960s. Following the collapse of state transport companies in the 1990s, private operators became the backbone of inter-town mobility.

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Stephen C Kaheru
Electric cars

This transport model is similar to those across East Africa. Tanzania relies heavily on dala dala minibuses and boda bodas, although Dar es Salaam introduced Bus Rapid Transit in 2016 to formalise urban transport. Kenya depends on matatus and semi-formal buses, while Rwanda has distinguished itself through reforms that standardised public transit and integrated motorcycle taxis into regulated transport systems.

Uganda's ecological impetus for electric mobility is undeniable. Kampala alone re-

lies heavily on approximately 400,000 passenger service vans that transport workers, traders, students, and commuters daily. However, these minibuses contribute significantly to urban pollution. A 2025 study by The Real Urban Emissions revealed that taxis account for 60 percent of Kampala's nitrogen dioxide pollution, with diesel minibuses contributing the largest share.

Despite environmental concerns, public transport remains central to livelihoods in Uganda. Our plug transition must therefore consider the economic realities of the citizenry, particularly the players in the informal economy.

In western Kenya, banana and avocado farmers in Kisii improved access to markets by adopting electric tricycles through the Kisii Smart Community initiative. By contrast, farmers in Arumeru and Njombe in Tanzania continue to face transport difficulties that undermine their agricultural profitability.

Rwanda strategically adopted green transport solutions to support agriculture and trade. Electric tractors are helping farmers increase productivity through mechanisation, while electric trucks transport thousands of tonnes of produce to Kigali since 2021. Similarly, Ghana's Wahu Mobility is deploying electric bicycles designed for African terrain through a leasing model aimed at empowering youth and women in small-scale businesses and the gig economy.

These developments spark pivotal questions. How can vehicle electrification be strategically implemented to facilitate agriculture, trade, entrepreneurship within a predominantly informal economy?

This is the question that must engage policymakers and industry experts.

As Uganda pushes toward climate action targets under Sustainable Development Goal 13, decarbonisation is non-negotiable. The future of mobility is increasingly electric and Uganda cannot be left behind. With Uganda's youthful population, sprawling suburbs, emerging enterprises and regional trade opportunities, transport electrification sits at the centre of national and regional economic momentum.

Uganda must therefore embrace electric mobility not only as an environmental imperative but also as a silent engine of structural change. It is this balance that will sustainably deliver Uganda's greener tomorrow and Africa's decarbonised future.

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