

New Karuma bridge to cost Shs300b

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KAMPALA. The Uganda National Roads Authority (Unra) has revealed it is planning to construct a new bridge at Karuma along River Nile in Kiryandongo District.

The new bridge will replace the old one constructed in 1963, which is wearing out.

The Unra head of design Mr Patrick Muleme, told journalists yesterday during the authority's annual end of financial year briefing that designs for a cable-stayed bridge have been completed and "government is currently looking around for prospective funders for the project."

The 209 metre bridge, according to current designs, will cost \$100m (about Shs355b).

The Karuma bridge was constructed a year after Uganda attained self-rule from Britain, to help cotton and tobacco farmers in the West Nile sub-region transport their produce to the Southern Range Nyanza (previously Nyanza Textile Mills) in Jinja via Kampala.

The bridge also links the northern/West Nile sub-region with the central via the Kampala-Karuma, Lira-Kam-



"This year, we are going to do anything possible to help local contractors,"

ALLEN KAGINA, UNRA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

dini-Karuma road. Once current plans for the new bridge materialise, it will be the second suspended bridge after the Shs391b (\$130M) cable over the Nile in Jinja whose construction is ongoing.

At the briefing, Unra's executive director, Allen Kagina highlighted some of the milestones and challenges over the last financial year 2016/2017, which closed early this month.

Among the key challenges, Ms Kagina listed the recurring "headache" over acquisition of land for the different road projects, individuals who want to influence the process

of awarding road construction contracts, and budget shortfall. According to Ms Kagina, the expected budgetary shortfall is about Shs700b.

She said this shortfall may hamper the ongoing road construction projects worth Shs243b.

"Overall, Unra absorbed 100 per cent of the government budget released for maintenance and development of roads in 2016/2017," Ms Kagina said. This year, Unra plans to complete seven new road projects; the Kampala-Entebbe Expressway, Mbarara Bypass and Kyetume-Mukono-Katosi and start work on another 400km of new roads.

Some of the new road projects whose financing has been already secured include, Busega-Mpigi by Africa Development Bank, the Kampala flyover project, Atiak-Moyo by European Union and Rwenkunye-Apac-Lira-Acholibur by the Islamic Development Bank. This is on top of other 18 projects whose construction is ongoing.

Ms Kagina said plans are in advance stages to start enforcing local content, especially on government funded roads by either awarding contracts to local companies, especially road maintenance.

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