

TO MEET THE 2020 DEADLINE, UNRA NEEDS TO SECURE THIS FUNDING ON TIME, PATRICK MULEME SAID

Oil roads: UNRA seeks sh3 trillion

By David Lumu
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If Government is to meet the 2020 deadline set for the construction of 10 oil roads, \$600m (about sh3 trillion), must be secured by November for the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) to commence with the construction works.

According to UNRA's head of design, Patrick Muleme, officials from the finance ministry are currently in talks with the Chinese Exim Bank, to ensure that the needed financing for the strategic roads leading to the Albertine Graben is secured.

"We need about \$600m for the oil roads. For us to meet the 2020 deadline, we need to secure this funding on time. The Ministry of Finance has to sign the commercial contracts with China Exim Bank by November. If we get the funds in time, then we shall achieve the 2020 deadline of delivering the oil roads," Muleme said.

Muleme was speaking during the end of financial year 2016/17 press conference at the UNRA headquarters in Nakawa.

The press conference was

BETWEEN THE LINES: Key road projects

Kagina said this financial year, seven key road projects will be completed, including Mbarara Bypass, Kampala-Entebbe Express Highway, Rushere-Nswerenkye, Mukono-Kyetume-Katosi and Gulu-Acholibur.

convened by UNRA's executive director, Allen Kagina, to give an outlook of the performance of the Authority in the last financial year.

2020 target

The Government has set the 2020 target for oil production in the country with working on infrastructure to fuel the process of oil production being a key ingredient of the 2020 oil agenda.

The 10 oil roads include: Masindi-Kisanga road junction (84km), Masindi through Murchison Falls game Park, Kabale-Kizirafumbi-Kaseeta-Lwera via Bugoma forest (54km), Pakwach-Paraa-Buliisa (66km), Bahimba-Nalweyo-Kakindu-Kakumiro-Mubende (51km), Lusailira-Nkongge-Lumegere (55km) and Lumegere-Sembabule and Kyotera-Rakai road (60km), among others.

Budget shortfall

Apart from the oil roads, Kagina said this financial year, the Government has given UNRA sh3.89 trillion, up from sh1.2 trillion to enable the authority acquire land, among other activities, in preparation for the Albertine region road construction.

Despite the heavy budgetary allocations, Kagina yesterday said "the required budget estimates versus the appropriation has resulted in a budget shortfall of approximately sh700b for development and sh280b for road maintenance".

"This shortfall exposes the Government's programmes to possible poor quality," she added, citing inadequate supervision as a direct gap occasioned by budgetary shortfalls.

Kagina said this financial year, seven key road projects



Kagina (left) speaking to the press at UNRA's headquarters in Nakawa Business Park, Kampala yesterday as the director roads maintenance, Eng Joseph Otim and the head of strategy, Eng Charles Kizito, look on. Photo by Shamim Saad

will be completed, including Mbarara bypass, Kampala-Entebbe express highway, Rushere-Nswerenkye, Mukono-Kyetume-Katosi and Gulu-Acholibur.

"In this financial year, we hope to achieve 400km equivalent, in terms of physical progress on civil works. Seven roads will be substantially completed, adding 264km to the paved road network," she said.

Middlemen warned

Kagina revealed that UNRA employees are under immense pressure from local and international lobby groups

to award lofty contracts to particular companies.

Without mentioning the kingpins running the cartel of lobbyists, who she said are interfering with the procurement process of road construction firms, Kagina said, "money is exchanging hands".

"Interference from lobbyists is a big challenge. Our staff get so many calls from people lobbying for contracts. This puts enormous pressure on staff. Money is exchanging hands, an evil that has got to be stopped. Let UNRA do its job," she said, warning contractors against unscrupulous methods of using middlemen.

"Interference in the procurement process by outside lobbyists continues to be a serious problem. This is disruptive and affects the timely completion and quality of the outcomes of our procurements," she added.

Kagina said Police has been notified about the middlemen factor in the road construction equation.

"Corruption is still a challenge, especially at the weighbridges. In collaboration with the UNRA investigation and compliance team, all corruption cases are investigated and the involved staff are dealt with," she said.