

Why previous attempts to ban boda bodas in Kampala failed

BY VICENT LUSAMBYA

KAMPALA. This is not the first time Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) has announced measures to kick boda bodas out of the central business district (CBD). Back in July 2020, towards the tail end of the first Covid-19 lockdown, Cabinet approved the boda boda-free zone and recommended banning boda bodas from the city.

KCCA went ahead to demarcate the Free Zone along various boundaries and was expected to procure boda boda stage signs to mark gazetted stages permanently, as well as traffic signs to define the zone.

However, the plan never got off the ground. Officials later admitted there was no existing policy framework under which it could operate, and instead shifted focus to a nationwide policy rather than concentrating only on Kampala, since taxis and boda bodas operate countrywide.

Month-long effort in 2022

The government dusted off the idea again in 2022 with

fresh plans to register all boda boda riders.

The exercise ran for a month until September 22, 2022. Despite threats to chase away defiant riders, many stayed away, leaving the plan dead in the water.

City Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago said this latest plan will also suffer the same fate, arguing that the same government pushing it is the one that failed several initiatives.

He cited initiatives including the Multi-Modal Urban Transport Master Plan for the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area (GKMA), which was meant to improve urban mobility and ease traffic congestion.

The Road Safety Expert and Safe Way Right Way General Manager, Ms Irene Namuyiga, said previous attempts were highly politicised, which is why they fell flat.

"There is never a time when there is no political interference. Most of these motorcycles are owned by politicians, some are given by the President, while quite many politicians rely on these cyclists for political capital. So in order for

it to work, the political leaders must be aligned with what KCCA is doing," she said.

Mr Sam Bambaza, the executive director of Hope for Victims of Traffic Accidents (HOVITA), said the absence of a mass public transport system has always been the Achilles' heel of such plans.

"In addition to fear by politicians to lose votes, the lack of the mass public transport system has always failed the initiative, with doubts of how passengers would get to the city if boda bodas have been chased out."

He recommended incorporating the Kampala Metropolitan Area (KMP) into the new plan, under which zoning would prevent boda bodas from one district crossing into another.

Mr Daniel NuweAbine, the head of corporate and public affairs at KCCA, said the body is considering adequate assessment and consultations with both the technical and political wings to ensure the new plan doesn't fall by the wayside like previous attempts.