

SGR completes railway design reconciliations

By John Odyek

The Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) officials have said they have resolved one of the sticky infrastructure issues in Kampala with three government agencies that could have delayed the project.

The agencies include the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) and the Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited.

The three agencies' infrastructure plans, including a flyover that would pass by the Jinja Road Kitgum House junction, collided with those of the SGR.

SGR project co-ordinator Kasingye Kyamugambi, told journalists at the close of the week that the four have now reconciled and harmonised their infrastructural plans after months of discussion. The meeting took place at the offices of the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME), in Kampala.

Kyamugambi said this will

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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help avoid, wasteful breaking up of laid down infrastructure once construction commences by the end of the year.

He pointed out that many of the challenges they have had was as a result of lack of physical planning in many towns.

"Lack of detailed integrated infrastructure plans has led to review of some already finalised designs of expressways and flyovers," Kyamugambi added.

At the Kitgum House junction where the flyover is to be constructed, Kyamugambi said it will be raised higher and the SGR will have a separate grade crossing. The Jinja-Kampala Expressway is also expected to

run alongside the SGR

He said SGR officials are also in discussions with utility companies National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), Umeme and other entities to relocate their structures and infrastructure utilities that traverse the SGR line. About 17 conflict points with UETCL will require relocation of transmission lines, either by providing underground cables and/or shifting the lines.

The Export-Import Bank of China (China Exim Bank) team of experts has begun a final appraisal of Uganda's SGR \$3b (about sh10.8b) loan request. This is a critical stage of the project that will see Ugandans get high speed trains for transporting bulk commodities to and from Mombasa port, if the project design and plans meet the checklist of the Chinese. The team will also assess the project from the economic and engineering perspectives, according to Kyamugambi

The bank has committed to

provide funds to finance the construction of the 1724km of SGR to be built in a phased manner. It will start with the Malaba-Kampala route (eastern route 273km) followed by Tororo-Gulu-Nimule/Gulu-Pakwach-Vura (northern route 751km) and the Kampala-Bihanga/Mirama Hills/Bihanga-Kasese-Mpondwe (western route 662km).

Kyamugambi said he was confident Uganda would satisfy the requirements of the bank to enable construction to begin by November.

He hinted that the team has 26 stringent conditions that have to be met and they relate to various technical studies that have to be made on issues like earthquakes, vibrations, geology, construction designs, safety, environment and social impact assessments.

"There has been some distorted information about the project which may mislead the public. The land acquisition process is being hampered by encroachers on wetlands and forest reserves," he said.