

Residents bank on tarmacking of Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo road



State minister for Transport Musa Eweru (left) and district leaders inspect a section of Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo Road, which is being tarmacked, at the weekend. PHOTO/ROBERT ELEMA

The locals and their leaders say the upgraded road will significantly reduce travel time and transport costs since it links the districts of Koboko, Yumbe, and Moyo. The road is also a key trade corridor connecting Uganda to South Sudan.

BY ROBERT ELEMA

Residents and leaders in West Nile have welcomed the ongoing tarmacking of the Koboko-Yumbe-Moyo road, describing it as a long-awaited intervention expected to boost trade, ease transport, and improve regional connectivity.

The works for the road are expected to cost Shs480 billion. The road, which links the districts of Koboko, Yumbe, and Moyo, is a key trade corridor connecting Uganda to South Sudan. For decades, motorists and traders have struggled with dust during the dry season and impassable muddy sections during heavy rains.

Traders lost perishable goods before reaching the markets. It has also claimed the lives of several travellers, with some left with permanent injuries. Now, as sections of the roads under tarmacking, the district leaders

and locals say the upgraded road will also significantly reduce travel time and transport costs.

Speaking during the inspection of the road project at the weekend, Mr Williams Anyama, the Moyo District chairperson, said this is going to be the first-ever tarmacked road in the district.

"This road has to be done well, and the contractors must speed up the process, but it shouldn't compromise quality," Mr Anyama said.

He added: "This road is the backbone of our economy. Farmers have been losing money due to high transport charges and damaged produce. The traders will now move smoothly up to Nimule to Juba in South Sudan because it is a key road. So, we expect increased cross-border trade."

The West Moyo MP, Mr Tom Aza, said residents will only benefit from this road once a bridge is built over the River Nile.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The 103.8-kilometre road project was launched in 2024 by Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja. Still, actual works were delayed for about a year, due to the absence of the environmental and social safeguard documentation, among other issues. However, the construction process officially commenced in January 2025 and is being undertaken by Zhongmei Construction Company, with completion expected in 2027.

Once completed, the tarmacked road is expected to mark a new chapter for West Nile, shifting the region from relative isolation to greater economic participation within Uganda and the wider East African Common Market network.

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"We can only enjoy the road if the barrier in the form of a ferry is addressed. As long as there is no bridge at Laropi, we shall not be able to fully use this road," MP Aza said.

He said the ferry is a very big stumbling block and unable to cater to cases of emergencies, especially for patients, because travellers sometimes wait for more than one hour to cross over.

Transporters have, however, appealed for installation of road safety tools, including signage and speed controls, especially in busy trading centres and school zones.

Mr Ratib Anguza, a driver who plies the Yumbe-Koboko route, said travelling on this road has become easy with the maintenance costs for vehicles reduced now.

"We used to take more than two hours to reach Koboko because of the bad state of the road then. This time we use at least one hour to reach Koboko. Cases of frequent breakdown of vehicles have been minimised now," Mr Anguza said.

He said in a month, he would spend close to Shs1 million in the repair of his car, but now, since some of the sections have been upgraded, he spends about Shs600,000 for repairs.

Mr Anguza, however, said the good

road has created a lot of excitement and there is recklessness by motorists and that sensitisation should be done on road usage to avoid road accidents.

Ms Sauda Bako, a roadside food vendor in Yumbe Town, said: "We have been facing a lot of problems because the food that we sell ends up being contaminated by dust. The contaminated food sometimes ends up causing health complications to our customers."

She said the road should have signs to curb accidents.

Fresh demands

As part of the project, the districts are to benefit from a new urban road that is going to be tarmacked.

But Mr Ashraf Mambo, the Yumbe District chairperson, noted that the 5km road provision is not enough.

"The 5km road provision was not what we wished. We requested the tarmacking of 14.7km of roads because we need improved roads," he said.

Mr Mambo said they will continue to demand more for easy commerce because there are certain facilities in the new district hospital, which is 4.5km away from the municipality.

Progress of the works

Mr Alex Otim, the project manager for the Ministry of Works and Transport, said the progress of the work is 10 percent.

He said they have three sections they are handling, and work on all the sections is being done concurrently.

"The speed at which we are working is 3-4 percent every month, so the work will make us conclude the works by the expiry of the extended period," Mr Otim said.

He said compensation of the people affected by the road project is 10 percent and that the money for the project is available.

"The money disbursed from the World Bank is \$85 million (Shs850 billion) and we have already disbursed 60 percent of the money. So, the amount of money for this project, including counterpart funding, is \$140 million (Shs493.15 billion)," Mr Otim added.

During the inspection of the works, the State Minister for Works and Transport, Mr Musa Eweru, urged contractors to ensure quality work.

"People using this road have suffered for a long time due to the insecurity with displacement of people to South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. So, it is important to have to promote trade and easy movement of the people," he said.

Mr Eweru added: "These roads are not just there for us to be proud of; they are strategic. They are supposed to link our people, facilitate trade, and consolidate security."