

Passengers suffer as rising fuel costs drive up fares

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BY MONITOR TEAM

Passengers travelling long distances across Uganda are bracing for the worst following a fresh fare adjustment imposed by taxi and bus operators. The rise in transport fares is driven by higher fuel prices and operating expenses.

Justifying the increment, transport providers say the new charges are necessary as vehicle maintenance costs continue to rise.

Currently, petrol prices range from Shs6,900 to Shs7,000 per litre, while diesel costs between Shs5,780 and Shs6,000 at the various filling stations across the country.

This surge has been partly linked to global supply disruptions, caused by tensions in the Middle East that have affected key oil transport routes.

Mr Brian Kwizera, a bus operator, noted that passengers travelling distances of between 80 and 100 miles will pay an additional Shs5,000 under the revised pricing. For journeys beyond 100



Fuel prices are rising and the supply is inconsistent. PHOTO/FILE

miles, an extra fee of Shs10,000 will be charged.

"For international routes to neighbouring countries like Kenya, Rwan-

GOVT RESPONSE

The Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, Ms Ruth Nankabirwa, recently outlined measures to stabilise fuel supply and prices, including importing about 163 million litres of petrol, more than 200 million litres of diesel, and about 22.4 million litres of Jet A-1 fuel between May and mid-June. She said the strategies being implemented are reforms under the 2023 amendment law, such as bulk procurement through a single supplier for the Uganda National Oil Company and efforts to diversify fuel sourcing to improve supply resilience.

da and South Sudan, fares are expected to rise by between Shs20,000 and Shs25,000, depending on the destination," he said.

Mr Kwizera said the previous fare structure is no longer sustainable, citing the rising fuel costs, spare parts prices and general vehicle maintenance.

He added that the situation has been compounded by inconsistent fuel supply at some filling stations.

"Fuel prices are increasing almost daily, and at times drivers cannot access fu-

el because some filling stations run dry. This has affected our schedules and forced us to revise fares," he said.

Mr Kwizera noted that passengers travelling upcountry destinations such as Mbarara, Hoima, Mbale and Kabale should expect to pay slightly more to ensure service continuity.

He added that the adjustments are also intended to prevent exploitation by unregulated operators who often take advantage of shortages to charge excessive fares.

"We want to maintain order and fairness in pricing. Passengers should only pay at designated booking offices to avoid being overcharged because as operators, we are working with authorities to curb fraud," he said.

Taxi operators cautious

Unlike bus companies, taxi operators have not yet formally announced fare increase, but say they are closely monitoring the situation.

Mr Rashid Ssekindi, the chairperson of the Federation of Uganda Taxi Operators, described the current fuel situation as worrying, warning that it could disrupt the entire transport sector if it persists.

"Fuel prices have risen and now we are seeing occasional shortages. This puts pressure on operators and could affect service delivery," he said.

Mr Ssekindi called on the government

to intervene and stabilise fuel prices, noting that continued increases would inevitably be passed on to passengers.

"We will discuss possible fare adjustments, but are mindful not to overburden passengers," he added.

However, Mr Ssekindi acknowledged that some taxi operators have already begun increasing fares on certain routes. For example, in Kampala and surrounding areas, passengers are already feeling the pinch. Commuters on routes such as Bugolobi, Luzira, Kireka, Bweyogerere, Zana and Namusuba report paying an extra Shs500 for short-distance travel.

"On longer routes to towns like Mbale, Mbarara, Hoima, and Busia, some fares have increased by as much as Shs5,000, even without an official directive," Mr Ssekindi said.

Passengers feel the pinch

The rising transport costs have sparked concern among passengers, many of whom are already struggling with the high cost of living.

Ms Joan Nakayiza, a businessperson, said people are cancelling non-essential trips while others are seeking cheaper alternatives. Some have resorted to staying at home and make phone calls because they are already struggling to cope with the rising transport fares.

Ms Nakayiza added that in urban areas, alternatives such as electric motorcycles are gradually gaining popularity, offering a more affordable option compared to fuel-powered transport.

She urged the government to intervene in this crisis, emphasising that unless fuel prices stabilise, transport costs will remain high, placing continued pressure on both operators and passengers.