

E-transport eases Busoga fuel crisis

On the ground, riders are already feeling the difference. Out of 8,900 boda boda riders in Jinja, about 300 have already switched to electric motorcycles.

BY MONITOR TEAM

As fuel prices continue to rise across Uganda amid global disruptions in oil supply chains, electric transport (E-transport) is steadily emerging as a practical and sustainable alternative.

Electric buses, motorcycles and bicycles are now offering relief to commuters and transport operators who have long struggled with fluctuating fuel costs and unreliable availability.

Across Jinja and surrounding districts in the Busoga Sub-region, the shift toward electric mobility is beginning to reshape how people move, work and trade, as it comes with lower costs, improved reliability and reduced environmental impact.

At Clive Road East in Jinja City, passengers boarding electric buses describe a noticeable change in transport reliability.

Even as fuel-powered vehicles face frequent disruptions, electric buses are maintaining steady operations and consistent fares.

Mr Musa Taalaba, an electric bus driver, says the transition has transformed his daily experience on the road.

"With this fuel crisis, drivers spend hours in queues at filling stations and sometimes work only half a day," he says. "With the electric bus, I simply charge and operate without worrying about fuel availability. It has made my work more predictable and less stressful."

Taalaba adds that operating costs have reduced significantly, allowing operators to maintain stable transport charges.

Passengers relieved

Passengers also say the service has improved their daily lives.

Ms Sarah Nabyire, a market vendor, says electric buses have helped her plan her business more efficiently.

"Transport fares used to change every day depending on fuel prices, but now the cost is fair and consistent," she says.

For university student David Kato, the benefits go beyond cost.

"These buses are quiet and clean. You



Commuters line up to board an E-bus in Jinja City last week. PHOTO/MONITOR

don't feel the smoke like in other vehicles, and even during this fuel shortage, we are not stranded," he says.

According to Ms Ruth Nasejje, the senior product and process information officer at Kiira Motors Corporation, electric buses are reducing operational costs for transport operators.

"Electric buses are cheaper to run because electricity is more affordable and stable than diesel or petrol, and they have fewer moving parts, which lowers maintenance costs," she says.

Kiira Motors Corporation launched Uganda's first electric mass mobility pilot in Jinja on November 24, 2024, deploying 16 buses that have since transported over 360,000 passengers, covered more than 614,000 kilometres, and reduced emissions by over 398 tonnes.

On May 1, 2026, the project expanded to the Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area with eight buses operating along Electric Route One from the central business district to Ntinda via Nakawa and Wandegaya.

"We are scaling up to ensure reliable, affordable and clean transport for urban commuters," Ms Nasejje says, adding that the company targets 300 buses in Greater Kampala by June 2027 and 1,500 buses across 14 cities by 2031.

Government policy also supports this transition under the Fourth National Development Plan and the National E-Mobility Strategy, which aims for 100 percent electric passenger vehicle sales by 2040.

alongside expanded charging infrastructure.

Electric motorcycles ease pressure

For boda boda operators in Busoga, electric motorcycles are proving to be a financial lifeline amid rising fuel prices.

Ms Esther Kisukye, the brand and communications lead at Watu Credit Uganda Ltd, says riders using electric motorcycles are seeing significant cost savings.

"Riders can save up to 50 percent on daily operating costs when using electric motorcycles compared to fuel," she

says. "With incomes ranging between Shs35,000 and Shs100,000 per day, these savings translate into meaningful weekly and monthly gains."

Ms Kisukye explains that electric motorcycles cost about Shs99 per kilometre compared to Shs120–Shs140 for petrol-powered motorcycles.

Although transport fares remain regulated by market platforms such as SafeBoda, Uber and Faras, electric bike riders retain higher profits due to lower operating expenses.

Battery swapping technology has fur-

ther improved efficiency, allowing riders to replace batteries in under two minutes at designated stations.

"We currently have more than 180 battery swap locations and riders can operate throughout the day without interruption," Ms Kisukye says.

Busoga accounts for nearly half of the company's electric motorcycle network, with continued expansion planned.

Watu Credit is also supporting adoption through flexible financing, hire purchase options and incentives such as referral bonuses and battery credits.

However, challenges remain, including limited awareness, high upfront costs and behavioural resistance among riders.

Despite this, Ms Kisukye remains confident. "As fuel prices rise, electric motorcycles become the more practical option. Adoption is already strong in Busoga and will continue to grow as infrastructure expands," she said.

On the ground, riders are already feeling the difference.

Out of 8,900 boda boda riders in Jinja, about 300 have already switched to electric motorcycles.

Mr Eria Musoby, the chairperson of Jinja Boda Boda Riders' Association Ltd, says electric motorcycles have improved profitability.

"Recharging a battery costs about Shs8,500 and the battery covers 85 kilometres. Previously, I would spend Shs25,000 on fuel for the same distance," he says.

Mr Musoby adds that electric motorcycles riders rarely turn away customers, unlike fuel riders who sometimes reject trips due to fuel costs.

However, he points out challenges such as limited charging centres and long queues during peak hours.

Mr Musoby also highlights lower maintenance costs since electric motorcycles do not require engine oil changes.

He urges private sector participation in managing battery-swapping stations to expand access.

Another rider, David Masaba, says the switch has transformed his livelihood.

"Sometimes I would work the whole day and end up with almost nothing because fuel had taken everything. I now save more, support my family better and work with less stress," he says.

Fuel prices currently range between Shs5,700 and Shs6,000 per litre in the region.

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