



Drivers should stay alert to unusual roadside activity, obstacles, or irregular traffic patterns. PHOTO/MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

Roadworks everywhere: Here is your escape plan

Navigating traffic does not have to be a headache. Discover practical ways to beat road closures, cut fuel costs, and protect your vehicle from unnecessary wear.

BY DAPHINE NAKABIRI

Last Saturday morning, Earnest Kabuye, a taxi driver who ferries passengers from Namungoona roundabout to Namboole and back, found himself facing more than the usual rush-hour congestion. What should have been a routine trip has turned into a test of patience and an economic burden.

In a February 18 advisory, the Uganda Police Force noted that several routes around Kampala are temporarily restricted and called for increased caution.

Under the Kampala Capital City Authority's strategic plan to improve the city's outlook, long-term road rehabilitation and expansion programmes are underway. These focus on improving around 70 kilometres of key city roads, including drainage, junction upgrades, and non-motorised transport facilities such as walkways and cycle tracks, all designed to improve mobility and reduce congestion in critical urban arteries.

However, the projects have led to widespread closures across Kampala, including Kulambi Ring Road (Kiwatule-Kyanja stretch), Northern Bypass (Masanafu-Bwaise section), Buk

HOW NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES MANAGE ROAD CLOSURES

Kenya: Real-time updates and detours

In Nairobi, roadworks and closures are common due to major infrastructure projects such as the Thika Superhighway expansion. Authorities rely heavily on digital platforms, including the Kenya Urban Roads Authority website, social media, and radio alerts to inform commuters of closures and suggested detours. Buses and matatus are encouraged to follow alternative routes, and major junctions often have temporary traffic lights or police officers directing traffic.

Tanzania: Scheduled works and public notices

Dar es Salaam uses a more predictable, scheduled approach. Roadworks are often announced weeks in advance, and affected streets are clearly marked with signage. Contractors are usually required to maintain temporary lanes or bypasses for local traffic. Authorities also coordinate with public transport unions to minimise disruption to bus and commuter services.

Rwanda: Rapid response and traffic management

In Kigali, the Rwanda Transport Development Agency uses a combination of GPS tracking, live traffic cameras, and radio advisories. When roads are closed unexpectedly, traffic police quickly implement one-way alternations and detours, prioritising emergency vehicles and buses. Kigali also encourages staggered work hours in commercial areas to reduce peak-hour congestion.

Lessons for Kampala drivers

- Stay informed: Use traffic apps, local radio, and social media updates.
- Plan: Check roadworks schedules if available; leave earlier for unavoidable routes.
- Follow temporary traffic measures: Obey detour signs and traffic officers to reduce congestion and accidents.

sa Ring Road towards Muyenga, Buziga Hill roads, Kampala-Entebbe Expressway (night restrictions), Mityana Road beyond Buloba, Masaka Road beyond Nsangi, and key stretches in Nakawa, Kawempe, Makindye, Rubaga, and even the Busega-Mpigi Expressway. Some roads are partially sealed, while others operate under controlled or one-way traffic to manage congestion.

For Kabuye, taking shortcuts is not an option. Passengers disembark at different points along the main route, meaning he must stick to it regardless of delays. "A journey that normally takes me between 45 minutes to an hour now takes more than two and a half hours, depending on the day's traffic," he says.

The cost has been immediate. "This has reduced my income because I make fewer trips in a day. I used to spend about Shs70,000 on fuel daily. Now I spend more than Shs100,000, and that money is not easy to recover in one day."

Detours that drain your car

For commuters, delivery drivers, and parents dropping children at school, these disruptions are more than inconvenient; they are financially and emotionally taxing. Many motorists report frequent breakdowns from engine overheating or running out of fuel after underestimating travel time. Others admit exhaustion from hours spent navigating traffic, dusty murrum shortcuts, and earlier-than-usual wake-up calls just to beat the gridlock.

Mechanics across the city note a sharp rise in complaints, especially in the evening when drivers finally reach garages. Najib Muhammad, based in Mulago, explains: "Many people think traffic only wastes time, but when a car stays for long hours in stop-and-go traffic, several mechanical problems begin to develop."

One of the most common issues is accelerated brake wear. "In heavy traffic, you are constantly pressing the brake pedal. That friction wears out brake pads much faster than normal driving," he notes.

Engines also get strained. Idling for too long in hot weather can overheat