CIVIL SOCIETY URGES GOVT TO INVEST IN ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT MODES

By Derrick Muduku

Stakeholders under the Civil Society Coalition on Transport (CISCOT) have appealed to the Government to increase the budget allocation for alternative transport means, such as rail and water, to boost the country's economic prospects.

The remarks were made during the National Transport Roundtable at Hotel Africana in Kampala under the theme, *Budgeting for Transport Systems as the Engine of Economic Monetisation – Transport Budget 2026/2027.*

According to statistics from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the percentage share of the national budget for transport increased slightly from 9.16% in 2025/26 to 10.47% in the 2026/2027 approved budget.

Roads and bridges realised a 34.1% increase against the 2026/27 budget. Railway transport experienced a 33.1% increase and air transport a 39.4% increase. However, water transport saw a decline of 8.1%, with construction standards and policy declining by 22.1%. Transport regulation and safety rose by 59.9%.



Globally, the transport sector contributes about 14% to gross domestic product (GDP). In Uganda, the sector contributes between 7% and 10% of GDP.

Despite the rise in the budget, concerns were raised over the limited investment in rail and water transport.

"For people who transport bulky goods, each kilometre on the road costs about 23 cents. On water, it is 3 cents and by rail, it is 11 cents, which can reduce the cost of production of goods. The Government is misplacing that allocation on water and railway," Dr Amos Sanday, a research fellow at the Economic Policy Research Centre, said.

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Sanday, a research fellow

He made a case for domestic airfields, highlighting that while emphasis is placed on airports receiving foreign visitors, they can be equally valuable to Ugandans within the country.

Joy Kawanguzi, the CISCOT vice-chairperson, said a lack of maintenance causes roads to depreciate rapidly.

"This increases transport costs due to issues, such as potholes, which affect manufacturing, productivity and competitiveness," she said.

The transport stakeholders also stated that Uganda's road coverage is still low, with about 6,000-7,000km of tarmac, compared to 21,000km in neighbouring Kenya.

TAXI AND BODABODA LEADERS SPEAK OUT

Kakaire Umaru, the chairperson of the Bus Drivers Advocacy Forum Uganda, pointed out that the Government's consideration of investing in more buses would ensure that congestion on roads is reduced.

"They carry a high number of passengers compared to taxis. They can be of great help if they are invested in and put on our roads," he said.

Simon Ibanda, a Class A motorcycle instructor, expressed concern over the growing number of accidents in the bodaboda sector, urging riders to always wear helmets when on the road.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

Brenda Nantumbwe, a senior economist at the finance ministry, reiterated that the Government is seeking to empower local contractors to take the lead in the construction of Ugandan roads through efforts to advance the Local Construction Bill.

Ministry of Works & Transport