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Uganda-Tanzania SGR project moves closer with AfDB backing

Transport.

DOROTHY NAKAWEESI

The long-envisioned Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) linking Uganda and Tanzania has taken a step forward, following the African Development Bank's (AfDB) formal inclusion of the cross-border project in its 2026 NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility Priority Work Programme.

A status report by Works ministry on the Isaka–Lusahunga–Murongo/Kikagati–Mpondwe SGR project shows that the development marks a critical milestone in moving the railway from concept to structured project preparation.

However, Ministry of Works and Transport Permanent Secretary Waiswa Bageya, who serves on the project's Steering Committee, said the Uganda–Tanzania SGR is still at an initial phase of development, noting that the joint venture project by the governments of Uganda and Tanzania seeks to establish a railway connection linking Mwanza in Tanzania to the Ugandan border and onward into Uganda.

"We have signed a memorandum of understanding [with Tanzania] to enable us commence the preliminary studies. The preliminary study process is now underway, and we are receiving support from the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency and AfDB," he said.

The project is designed to connect northern Tanzania to Uganda, and eventually eastern DR Congo, creating a strategic trade corridor from western Uganda and mineral-rich eastern DR Congo to the Port of Dar es Salaam.

The railway was conceived by Uganda and Tanzania through the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency to extend the Dar es Salaam–Mwanza SGR line at Isaka into Uganda.

Momentum has steadily built over the past two years, with Uganda, Tanzania, and DR Congo holding a series of meetings, culminating in a December 2025 Steering Committee meeting of transport permanent secretaries that approved a memorandum of understanding to pave the way for ministerial signing ahead of AfDB's appraisal mission.

AfDB has started an appraisal process, with the report expected early next year. The appraisal will examine feasibility studies and preliminary designs, key steps in determining project cost estimates, financial viability, environmental and social impacts, and debt sustainability implications.

Bageya said no overall cost estimates have been determined yet noting that: "At this stage, we are undertaking preliminary studies." He also noted [illegible] government was optimistic that [illegible] tial studies could be completed [illegible] in about one year. The project pres[illegible] Uganda with an opportunity to di[illegible] sify its trade corridors and create [illegible] alternative to the Northern Corri[illegible] through Kenya's Port of Mombasa.

It also offers prospects for stimu[illegible] ing industrial parks and logistics h[illegible] in Mbarara, Kasese and border tr[illegible] while boosting cross-border tr[illegible] through Mpondwe. The status re[illegible] notes, however, that although DR C[illegible] participated in early discussions, it [illegible] quested to formally join once the Ug[illegible] da–Tanzania link materialises.

Its eventual connection is expected [illegible] transform the project from a bilate[illegible] infrastructure initiative into a regio[illegible] economic spine linking three countr[illegible] and some of Africa's most resource-r[illegible] territories.

Possible routes

Preliminary surveys have ident[illegible] fied multiple possible alignments o[illegible] both the Tanzania and Uganda side[illegible] In Uganda, proposed routes would ru[illegible] through key western towns of Mbara[illegible] Bihanga and Kasese before terminat[illegible] at Mpondwe, potentially stimulatin[illegible] property development, creating job[illegible] and operations, and expanding ware[illegible] housing and customs infrastructure.

While AfDB's endorsement does no[illegible] signal immediate construction, its co[illegible] firmation that the project meets elig[illegible] bility and technical screening signifi[illegible] cantly enhances its credibility amon[illegible] investors and regional stakeholders.

Uganda's SGR ambitions along th[illegible] Northern Corridor have faced pro[illegible] longed financing uncertainties and the[illegible] western corridor may prove commer[illegible] cially attractive due to its mineral po[illegible] tential and integration with Tanzania's[illegible] already operational SGR network.

With ministerial signatures expected[illegible] and AfDB appraisal looming, the Ugan[illegible] da–Tanzania SGR has transitioned[illegible] from vision to structured project devel[illegible] opment. If feasibility studies confirm[illegible] economic viability and financing is se[illegible] cured, the railway could reshape trade[illegible] flows across East Africa and anchor[illegible] western Uganda's industrial growth.

For now, while not yet on the ground[illegible] the project is edging closer to becoming[illegible] one of the region's most consequential[illegible] infrastructure undertakings.



Graphical representation of the proposed Uganda–Tanzania link connecting Isaka to Kasese, enhancing regional trade, transport efficiency, and cross-border integration. SOURCE / MINISTRY OF WORKS

Key figures

809 km

The Ministry of Works estimates the proposed route from Kasese in Uganda to Isaka in Tanzania to cover at least 809 kilometres.

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