



A taxi loads passengers on Luwafu road on its way to Kampala City centre yesterday. The new KCCA measures, which aim to create order, restore sanity, and reorganise the taxi business, bans taxis from operating outside their designated parks. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

KCCA bans taxi street drops, pick ups in new regulations

Taxi business faces overhaul amid congestion concerns.

BY MONITOR TEAM

Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) is set to unveil a new transport plan that will ban all taxis from picking up and dropping off passengers outside designated stops.

Currently, the 14-seater omnibuses are the most common means of transport in Uganda, with commuters boarding or getting off at any point along the road.

But the new measures, which aim to create order, restore sanity, and reorganise the taxi business, will also bar taxis from operating outside their designated parks.

Mr Daniel Nuwabine, the KCCA spokesperson, told this publication that the initiative is intended to improve urban mobility and address traffic congestion.

"The business of having illegal stages is to end, and all taxis must operate within the parks, and not along the road. We are working with the leadership of the Uganda Taxi Operators Federation (UTOF) to ensure these people get back to their designated places. For instance, all taxis plying the Entebbe road must go into Usafi Park, and we are already in the process of enforcing that," Mr Nuwabine said.

He added: "Some may complain about being left out, but the city is not elastic and we will not expect Kampala to swell. There is a specific number of

taxi operators that the city can accommodate, but whatever that is, it should also be supplemented by mass transport."

Mr Nuwabine said KCCA is in final preparations with Kira Motors to bring buses on board to offset any transport bottlenecks that may arise.

"The plan we are undertaking for taxis is holistic, just as we've done with the vendors. We want to have a comprehensive one but in the meantime, order must be restored," he said without disclosing when the plan would be announced.

Legal, illegal taxi stages

Some of the recognised city taxi parks include the Old Taxi Park, New Taxi Park, Usafi Park, particularly for Entebbe Road taxis, Namayiba Taxi Park, and Kisenyi.

Some of the notorious spots for banned roadside taxi stages include on Ben Kiwanuka Street, the Katwe Flyover on Entebbe Road, the City Square, and Jinja Road near the Parliamentary Avenue, Wampewo Avenue, and Nakawa.

The KCCA census of commuter taxis conducted before the COVID-19 lockdown indicated that more than 15,000 taxis were operating in some 10 taxi parks in Kampala's central business district (CBD). But Mr Nuwabine said the number is estimated to have gone higher.

The exact number of taxis in Kampala and the country is not known because no exhaustive census has been conducted in recent years.

The taxi numbers

Without differentiating by type, the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), in its latest Annual Data Book, revealed that

BY THE NUMBERS

- 15,000+ taxis were operating in Kampala's CBD before Covid-19 (KCCA census).
- 10 recognised taxi parks in the central business district.
- 66 stages and parks proposed for gazetting in the 2020 KCCA report.
- 137 routes proposed across the five city divisions.
- 282,992 motor vehicles imported in FY 2023/2024 (URA data).

282,992 motor vehicles were imported in the FY 2023/2024, up from 39,205 imported in the FY 2022/2023. The same data showed 40,353 motor vehicles were imported in the FY2021/2022, and 64,059 motor vehicles in the FY2020/2021.

Mr Nuwabine's revelation reinforces an earlier statement on restoring the order of Kampala trade and transport, issued by Mr Kabuye Kyofatogabye, the Minister of State for Kampala Metropolitan.

"Illegal roadside taxi stages are banned, and vehicles operating outside authorised areas will be impounded," he had warned.

Mixed reactions from leaders

A section of taxi drivers in the city welcomed the initiative, but others faulted KCCA for failing them.

Mr Rashid Ssekindi, the chairperson of the Uganda Taxi Operators Federation, said they would receive the plan with open hands, but implored KCCA to designate more parks.

He said the current number of taxis

cannot be accommodated in the existing taxi parks.

"While we are willing to embrace the plan, KCCA should consider putting in place more parks because all the taxis can't fit in the existing parks. There is also a need to create space for those who would be willing to join the sector," he said.

His deputy, Mr Mustafa Mayambala, tasked KCCA to crack down on boda boda taxi operators near the various taxi parks to allow effective usage of taxis in the designated parks.

"It is so difficult to get passengers in our taxi parks as they are diverted by the roadside taxi stages. A person can sit in the car for about two hours in our parks without, which demoralises many," he said.

He added, "The industry is also rocked by grievances, for example, drivers already operating inside the parks wouldn't allow those operating on streets to enter the parks for fear of direct competition. KCCA needs to first resolve such disputes," he added.

Lord Mayor reacts

Mr Erias Lukwago, the outgoing Lord Mayor of Kampala, said the absence of the law and will by the government to regulate the transport system in Kampala makes whatever they are planning a myth.

Efforts to regulate the taxis and boda boda businesses in Kampala have been ongoing since 2013. The Taxi Ordinance 2013 was drafted under the first tenure of Mr Lukwago as the Lord Mayor, but it was never passed by the Council.

The draft Taxi Ordinance 2013 sought to, among other things, streamline the apex body for taxi operators and their tenure, constitution, composition of the

taxi executive, disciplinary matters, register of the taxi operators, and gazetting stages.

The ordinance also set out to manage stage route identity, solid waste management, taxi fares, safety of luggage, safety of passengers, protection from liability, and filing periodic reports.

It was, however, never considered, and the KCCA technical wing commenced broad consultations in 2016, birthing the 2020 report, which the then Minister of Kampala, Ms Betty Amongi, unveiled to the country.

In the technical report, the authority sought to gazette 66 stages, including parks, and 137 routes in the five divisions; Nakawa, Kawempe, Makindye, Rubaga, and Kampala Central.

At the time, Ms Amongi told reporters that the authority would also introduce route numbers and route colours for all the taxis to enhance order in the business. Also to be introduced were Identification of drivers/riders, which was to include uniforms and badges for easy identification and tracking, tracing and controlling crime.

Mr Lukwago yesterday said: "We have the Multi-Modal Urban Transport Master plan for Kampala Metropolitan Area (GKMA) launched about seven year ago.

"In addition, we have the public transport ordinance plan to regulate boda boda and matatus, and all that was required was a law from which we came up with the Public Transport Ordinance, which didn't come to fruition because of several technical and political challenges that we encountered. So unless there is law, all the intended regulations are just a gamble."

Taxi operators shirk

Mr Moses Balagadde, the secretary of defence at Busabala-Kategula stage in Makindye Division, criticised the government for its failure to effectively plan for the taxi industry despite receiving taxes from them.

Mr Balagadde said after three months, every taxi operator pays Shs180,000 to KCCA through the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), but the Authority has failed to allocate proper stages for all drivers.

Similarly, Mr Ali Lukyamuzi, the Usafi Park chairperson, urged the government to improve accessibility and infrastructural development of Usafi Taxi Park to attract more drivers and passengers. He said many shunned the park for being remote.

"It is inevitable for the government to evict taxis from the streets, but we urge the government to start modernising this [Usafi] park to the desired level to attract more passengers. Currently we can accommodate all cars from the streets," Mr Lukyamuzi said.

However, Mr Zubir Muwanika, a mobiliser at the Entebbe stage, Old Taxi Park, told Daily Monitor that all cars must be re-allocated to parks to minimise insecurity and theft.

"Vehicles from the streets are associated with theft scandals, sometimes they lie to passengers that they are driving to Entebbe but change along the way, but when all cars originate from the parks, such insecurity can be easily detected and minimised," Mr Muwanika said.

Mr Stephen Turibagenyi, a taxi operator at the Mukono stage in the Old Taxi Park, said the presence of roadside taxi stages have contributed to heavy traffic jams as they occupy a lot of space, asking the government to expand the infrastructure to reduce the heavy traffic.

Compiled by Vicent Lusabya, Busein Samilu, David Walugembe & Ibrahim Khalil Manzil.