



UGANDA RAILWAYS CORPORATION

PRESS BRIFING AT THE UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE

June, 10 2025

1.0 About URC

Uganda Railways Corporation is a government enterprise mandated to construct, operate and maintain railways infrastructure, marine and road services for the carriage of passengers and goods.

VISION: The Preferred Freight and Passenger Transporter in Eastern Africa by 2040

MISSION: To provide reliable Railway & Marine Services for Social-Economic Transformation.

CORE VALUES: Accountability, Integrity, Teamwork, Reliability, Innovation, Efficiency, Safety and customer care

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop, rehabilitate and maintain railway infrastructure
2. To provide and adapt to modern technologies and innovation to enhance efficiency in operations and management of railway services.
3. To protect and develop assets to realize URC as a self-sustaining entity
4. To enhance the capacity of human resources in the railway transport sub-sector
5. To promote and enhance the image of URC

SERVICES OFFERED

- **Freight operations.** URC provides logistics freight solutions for exports, imports and local cargo within the region.

- **Marine services.** The entity offers a variety of marine services to transport cargo using Roll on Roll off facility using water vessels. The vessels include: MV Kaawa, MV Pamba for Uganda and supported by MV Uhuru for Kenya and MV Umoja for Tanzania.
- **Passenger services.** Currently, the passenger train plies two trips daily during working days between Kampala and Mukono.
- **Warehousing and Terminals.** Mukono Inland Container Depot, port bell and Jinja piers are a one stop centre. The warehousing facilities include Gulu Logistics hub, Mukono ICD, Kampala Good shed, Mbale Good Shed, and Tororo Good Shed.
- **Nalukolongo Railways workshop.** The workshop's core activities are maintenance and repair of the railway locomotives, wagons, coaches and other equipment. □ **Ports/Piers:** Port Bell Pier & Jinja Pier

2.0. Purpose of Briefing

- a. Safety along the railway reserve
- b. Encroachment and Vandalism/theft of railway material
- c. Updates in the sector

2.1. Safety

Accidents in the railway industry rarely happen. However, they are destructive when they do. Since the beginning of this year, two fatal accidents have happened along our reserve. The most recent accidents happened early this month when an unidentified female lost her life following a train accident at Nakawa. There is one that happened early this year in Malaba involving a boda boda rider with passenger on board. Video of this was shared widely and I guess many of us here saw it. Another accident happened last week in Namanve where unidentified man threw self into a moving train.

2.1.1 What are the causes

Investigation reports show that a number of these accidents are caused by the following.

- a. Pedestrians using the railway reserve as a walkway (some who use the reserve walk in the middle of the line which puts their lives at risk).
- b. Disregard of railway level crossing guidelines and sometimes motorists thinking they can be faster than the train as it happened in Malaba and other areas.
- c. We are also inclined to believe from observation that some of these accidents are cases of suicide.

2.1.2 URC guides as follows

- a. Stay away from using our railway reserve as a walk way.
- b. At level crossing, always stop to appreciate your surroundings before crossing. Do not over speed into the level crossing.
- c. At level crossings, avoid stopping on top of the line, especially during peak hours at Mukwano, Wankoko, Nakawa, Kireka and other places.
- d. Always respect guidance from our level crossing guards deployed at those sections. It will save your life.

2.2. Vandalism and theft of railway material.

Soroti has now become a hub for criminals vandalizing railway lines. In March this year, a number of people were arrested in the area with railway material. The operation followed complaints from the Tororo-Gulu contractor that 95 railway sleepers had been stolen.

In Kampala and Wakiso, thieves are collecting the ballast (stones) for their own construction needs. In Mukono, Kawolo and Jinja, fishplates, bolts and nuts are being removed from the functional lines and sold on the black market.

Such vandalism not only affects railway operations, but also plunges the Corporation into huge financial issues. A number of the accidents involving our cargo trains are attributed to vandalism.

2.3. UPDATES FROM THE SECTOR

We offer freight and passenger.

- **Cargo:** URC transports a total of 250,000 tonnes of cargo per annum against the target of 540,000 tonnes. The Cargo we move is mostly the heavy one such as steel coils and billets thus reducing the pressure on our roads. The low tonnage is attributed to the aged infrastructure which we are now working on. When all works are completed and rolling stock acquired, we shall be able to move over 600,000 tonnes per year.
- **Passengers:** We transport about 2000 passengers a day with the four (trips) between Kampala and Mukono. That's a total of about 48,000 passengers who travel by rail per month.

2.3.1 Projects

1. **Rehabilitation of Tororo - Gulu railway line.** The project officially commenced on July 20, 2023. As of April 20, 2025, the physical progress of on-site works stands at 44.45%, while the supply of track materials (including ballast) has reached 82.78% completion. Overall, the total completed works account for 62.5% of the contract value, with financial progress recorded at 65.6%.
2. **The East African Community Railway Rehabilitation Support Project for the Meter Gauge from Kampala to Malaba.** The project budget is USD 298 million and is funded by the African Development Bank. The project is aimed at improving efficiency in the railway sub-sector to serve Ugandans better.

Under the project;

- Railway line construction: Under the project, Kampala – Kyengera and Portbell lines will be constructed. Both lines will be fitted with concrete sleepers to enhance efficiency and passenger experience. When completed, both lines will serve both passengers and cargo transporters.
- Rolling stock: Funds have been earmarked to procure ten (10) brand new locomotives with the capacity to pull over 33 loaded wagons in a go or 1,200.
- Under the same project, 100 wagons will be acquired.
- Passenger facilities are also lined up for acquisition. The aim is to improve passenger experience and comfort. Namanve and Kyengera stations will be constructed as Park & Ride facilities with ample parking space and other amenities for our passengers. Halts at different points such as Kireka, Namboole and others are also lined up for reconstruction to modern standards. With these new improvements in the service, our target is to transport over 190,000 passengers daily, 4.5 million monthly.
- Automation of level crossings: Safety is at the fore of our operations. In a bid to ensure that road users are safe at all times, all level crossings within the Kampala Metropolitan Area will be automated and provisions made for Roads Users to be alerted in time before the train approaches these level crossings.
- Refurbishment of stations: The project funds are also earmarked for upgrades of stations along the Kampala – Malaba section. Stations like Kampala, Mukono, Kawolo, Lubanyi, Jinja, Iganga, Busembatia, Nagongera, Tororo are in plan. Portbell and Jinja pier infrastructure are also planned for reconstruction to address the shortage currently.

- **Marine Vessels:** One (1) multipurpose general cargo marine vessel with capacity to load containers, wagons and loose cargo will be built. A Service boat (Tag Boat) is also part of the project. This will further our capacity to operate on Lake Victoria. Currently, we transport 880 tonnes of cargo per route. With this marine vessel, we shall be able to transport about 1500 tonnes per route.
- Restocking of required spare parts to service the rolling stock is also catered for under the project. This will offer the much-needed parts for our engineers to use in servicing locomotives and wagons.

3.0. Challenges

- Inadequate and irregular financing
- Aged and insufficient rolling stock
- Dilapidated infrastructure
- Unresolved inter-rail connectivity issues with Kenya and Tanzania
- Widespread land encroachment
- Vandalization
- High operating costs: Ratio 1:2.5

4.0. What we are doing to mitigate the challenges

On the most critical challenges, the following are being done

a. Mobilization of Funds to Sustain Operations

- Fast-track recovery of **UGX 23Bn** awarded by court as compensation from UNRA and **UGX 243Bn** from the sale of Nsambya land as directed by H.E. the President.
- Accelerate effectiveness of the **USD 298 million AfDB-financed Railway Rehabilitation Support Project**, which includes acquisition of Rolling Stock, vessels, and ICT systems. I am reviewing the project scope to ensure optimal benefits to GoU and URC.

b. Rolling Stock

- Immediate repair of 9 locomotives and 300 wagons (**UGX 6Bn**).
- Procurement of 300 saddles (**UGX 6.6Bn**), to enable monthly transport of 24,000 tons and recover investment within 4 months.

- Supervise timely completion of **MV Kaawa** repairs by May 2025, which is projected to deliver **UGX 0.6Bn/month** in revenue.

c. **Track Maintenance:** Allocate **UGX 500 million monthly** for urgent repairs to improve train speeds, reduce derailments, and ensure safer operations as we await the full AfDB upgrade.

d. **Fuel Management Reform**

- Repair fuel storage at Kampala, Jinja, and Tororo (**UGX 0.6Bn**) and eliminate the use of fuel bowsers.
- Clear outstanding fuel debt (**UGX 2Bn**) and introduce a **UGX 10Bn reserve fund** to support steady operations.

e. **Strengthening Regional Railway Partnerships**

- Reinstate **Quarterly Joint Technical Committee and CEO-level meetings** with Kenya Railways (KRC) and Tanzania Railways Corporation (TRC).
- Resume **Quarterly Asset Verification Exercises (UGX 0.1Bn/year)**.
- Review and operationalize the **Tripartite Agreement** to resolve cross-border inefficiencies.

f. **Operationalization of Gulu Logistics Hub & rehabilitation of Tororo-Gulu MGR line**

- Prepare an operational strategy and mobilize rolling stock for the **Tororo–Gulu line**, expected to be fully rehabilitated within a year.

g. **Human Capital Development**

- Introduce **performance contracts** for top and middle management.
- Implement staff training programs in operations, maintenance, and planning.
- Establish a **leadership pipeline** and resolve long-standing labor concerns.

h. **Real Estate Development**

URC holds vast land across key urban centers. I intend to:

- Develop a **Master Plan** for commercial real estate to generate revenue and finance network expansion.

- Partner with **credible investors** to unlock this potential without burdening the national budget

i. **Customer-Centric Approach**

- Launch structured **customer engagement forums** and feedback platforms.
- Introduce **digital solutions** (real-time tracking, e-booking, ticketing).
- Undertake nationwide PR and marketing campaigns to boost corporate image and service uptake.

j. **Strategic Planning and Fiscal Discipline**

- Develop a robust **5-Year Strategic and Business Plan (2025/26–2029/30)**.
- Settle domestic arrears (**UGX 8Bn**) including staff entitlements and retirement obligations.

BENON M. KAJUNA MANAGING DIRECTOR

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