City description

Jinja Municipal Council lies 81 kilometers east from the capital of Kampala, Uganda, also in the Busoga sub-region. Jinja has the second largest economy in the country, after Kampala. It is located at the source of the River Nile and is on the northern shores of Lake Victoria with rich freshwater ecosystems and wetlands. Jinja forms part of the emerging Entebbe-Kampala-Namataba-Jinja corridor and is connected by railway. It also has a small airport with national and regional flights.

Given its strategic location, Jinja enjoys good links to other major urban centers. Its beautiful sceneries and cultural sites make it a high tourism attraction.

City vision and mission

The Uganda Vision 2040 aims to attain an integrated network and connectivity by optimizing the use of rail, road, water and air transport modes. One of the key strategies is to establish special economic zones (SEZs) and Jinja, as the core industrial region in Uganda, was named. This is also aligned to the National Development Plan (NDP, 2015/16 – 2019/20), whereby Jinja is identified as one of the five regional and strategic cities to spur national urban growth, with a focus on industrial development.

Kampala-Jinja Expressway (KJE) is one of the five major which serves as a trade link to the sea from the land-locked country. KJE is 95 kilometers long and includes an 18km bypass to the South of Kampala City and is expected to cost approximately 1.0 billion US dollars. The project aims to reduce vehicle operating costs, reduce congestion and promote efficient transport system to spur economic growth.

Thematic areas

Active mobility

Active mobility or non-motorized transport (NMT) i.e. walking, and cycling, is the most popular means of transport in Uganda. Since the Pan African Bicycle Conference (PABIC) held in Jinja in 2001, there have been discussions on developing a NMT Master Plan for Jinja to ensure appropriate and safe infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. However, Jinja Council rejected the proposed master plan. One of the reasons was that car parking spaces, which were an important source of income in the municipality, would have been removed because of the proposed cycle lanes (Heyen-Perschon, 2004).

According to the national NMT policy, developed by the Ministry of Works and Transport since November 2012, urban footways exist in Jinja. However, most are in poor condition, not continuous or universally accessible. In the central area, there have been footways which were designed to be comfortable for pedestrians; however they are often congested by motorcycle taxis (boda boda) and small businesses. Lack of proper maintenance and encroachment by vehicles also result in road accidents and other problems. In addition, only several office buildings provide cycling rack in Jinja. Most racks are in the form of front-wheel bicycle racks which is less...
popular due to poor security. Nevertheless, the national NMT policy stipulated regulatory framework and guidelines for walking and cycling in transport planning, street design and infrastructure provision. What is lacking is consistent enforcement in the municipality.

**Informal transport**

With the government disengaged from providing an efficient public transportation system, informal sectors such as the matatus (minibus taxis, typically a 14-seater bus) and boda bodas flourish. The matatus have unregulated routes, inconsistent stops and fares based on demand. As in many other cities and towns in Africa, informal transport is firmly entrenched and dominates the public transport scene in Jinja.

While the matatus can be seen as mass transport, boda boda functions as taxis in the Western understanding. It is estimated that the numbers of boda boda operators in each division of Jinja are close to 1500. However, the municipality authorities do not know the exact numbers due to their informal nature: no tax collection, no registration. Sentiments towards boda bodas are conflicting. On one hand, the municipality recognizes its contribution to the public as they provide short distance, low-capacity passenger and freight services. From the social perspective, it is an important source of income for operators/drivers. On the other hand, regulating this informal sector is challenging and often poses safety problem due to aggressive or untrained drivers.

**Water transport**

The geographical location of Jinja as an inland port city makes it well connected to other regional cities. However, the port is not regularly used and is in poor condition with most of the rail infrastructure deteriorated and the rail links poorly maintained. Against this backdrop, the National Transport Master Plan (2008-2023) emphasizes that large investments will be made at ports with high traffic potential, including Jinja Port. The national government plans to rehabilitate the port and develop an alternative route to the sea through Lake Victoria as to reduce dependence on the northern corridor and improve overall connectivity.

**References**