

Political officials at the helm visit DART system



Former President Ali Hassan Mwinyi entering one of the DART stations through a turnstile during his site visit in the DART corridor on June 9, 2016.

It goes without saying that for success to happen in any introduced social lifestyle there must be a political node; this is not different from what is happening in Tanzania vis-à-vis new and modern urban public transport system in Dar es Salaam city christened as Dar Rapid Transit (DART).

Very recently, many political leaders in Tanzania have visited the long awaited project with which many city dwellers in Dar es Salaam expected a change in their lifestyle in terms of commuting to and from their work or business place. If one can just recall, it is of course hardly two months ago today that the Dar Rapid Transit project bus operations commenced along Morogoro, Kawawa and Msimbazi roads. The three roads make a total of 20.9 kilometres that make up the size of DART project Phase1.

Scrambling to board the small buses popularly known as Daladala in the DART corridor has become a phenomenon of the past for most commuters living along the phase 1 DART corridor; now they can spend much less time when travelling to their destinations at an affordable bus fare and comfortably.

As experience shows all over the world, it would have not been easy for the project to materialize at this time had it not been for a political will in the government which has appeared to be in the frontline to promote the DART project despite the complexity in its implementation.

Of recent, the erstwhile Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, with his wife Sitti Mwinyi, paid a site visit to the DART corridor as a clear demonstration that the project in question has been getting a back-up from the government. During his visit, the former President implored Dar es Salaam residents and visitors to safeguard the DART infrastructure that has cost a hefty amount of money in order that they may benefit from it for a long time because the system is new and modern.

The government of Tanzania started to conceptualize it far back in 2002 through the Dar es Salaam City Council. The commencement of bus operations on May 10 this year may sound to have taken too long if you count years from 2002. But it does not mean that the government was not supportive but rather the project had been marred by many hurdles originating mostly from some people not being ready to release lands that were earmarked for the project and sometimes even wanting to put the government into temptations of entering into a wrangle in the process of making the way clear for the project. But this was not the only factor that delayed its full implementation. Because the said project is new to Tanzania and perhaps to many African countries; it was also difficult to get the right contractors. Thank God that last we had Strabag International, a company from Germany.

During his recent visit to the DART project, President Mwinyi was therefore delighted to see many city dwellers commuting in the DART buses and the way the buses operate in contrast with the small size buses operating in the old urban public transport popularly known as Daladala.

To express his happiness on the DART system, the President has said: “During my tour on the BRT project, I have learnt and experienced a lot of things...it is a very good idea to come up with this project; and I can say that although there has been a delay in the arrival of the project in the country, it was expected have started operating many years ago.”

The former Tanzanian President has also underscored the importance for the residents of Dar es Salaam and visitors who come to the city for one reason or another to adhere to education and communication campaign programmes that DART Agency conducts through different media so that they understand the project very well, especially its importance and regulations.

With the commencement of the DART project bus operations, the number of tourists can be envisaged to increase day by day due to the unique view of the DART infrastructure, the president has said.

Although the former president noted some challenges in the current bus operations, he is encouraging DART Agency staff to get the bus operators to work together in improving the service while solving some hurdles that occur.

Since one trunk DART bus can carry as many as 120 passengers and that there is a large number of buses in all routes, the former president has urged private car owners to park their cars and instead board the buses so as to cut down their travelling time and other expenses associated with

car maintenance. He has said that the move he proposes will help decongest the current traffic jam along Morogoro road if many people decide to opt for the DART system.

Due to the big population of Dar es Salaam, the former president has also advised the relevant government authorities to increase the number of buses operating during the interim service in order to provide an efficient service according to international standards. He has even gone further to say that there must be special buses for some groups of people such as students and tourists.

During the visit, the president was also accompanied by DART Chief Executive, Eng. Ronald Lwakatare, UDA-RT Chief Executive, Mr. David Mgwassa and Kinondoni District Commissioner, Mr. Ally Hapi.

The visit which took place on June 9 this year covered areas such as Morocco, Kinondoni, and the Kivukoni Terminal.

In the same development, the Minister of State in the President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government, Hon. George Simbachawene (MP), also paid a site visit with other government officials in a bid to emphasize the need for the Dar es Salaam residents to make correct use of the newly built bus rapid transit (BRT) infrastructure for the benefit of all stakeholders in the urban public transport system.



Minister of State in the President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government, Hon. George Simbachawene (MP), waiting to board a bus in one of DART stations during a visit to the DART system on June 17, 2016. On his right is DART Chief Executive, Eng. Ronald Lwakatare while on his left is UDA-RT Chief Executive, Mr. David Mgwassa.

Minister Simbachawene instructed all government authorities mandated to manage the DART system to apply all laws and regulations that have been enacted to protect the project.

The Minister has warned all drivers who deliberately go against proper use of the infrastructure as they would face capital penalties if they continue to break the rules and regulations that govern the management of DART infrastructure.

Hon. Simbachawene has cited other good examples from foreign countries which are implementing BRT systems without wasting their time with their citizens on how to observe traffic rules as is with Tanzanians in Dar es Salaam. He says: "It is very absurd to find some Tanzanian drivers doing all they could to damage road infrastructure which basically has been built for their own benefit. It is also very strange that the same people may be ready to obey the same rules when they visit other countries but they remain defiant of same rules in their own country."



A cross-section of DART passengers commuting together with the Minister of State in President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government, Hon. George Simbachawene (MP) during a site visit in the DART system on June 17, 2016.

During the same site visit the Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, Hon. Paul Makonda, also cemented the government stance that all activities including petty businesses especially those conducting on streets should be done in the earmarked places instead of in the DART corridor.

Hon. Makonda has also promised that he would personally make close follow-up to make sure that the DART infrastructure is not misused either by unscrupulous drivers or street hawkers.

The Regional Commissioner has emphasized too that it is important to keep the DART infrastructure clean, including taking care of all sites set apart for gardens in the city.

The site visit which has involved the Minister of State in the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government, Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, management from DART Agency, UDA-RT and other government dignitaries was conducted on June 17 this year.