

Why solving Mbagala's transport puzzles holds key for BRT success

● BRT fares are capped at Sh1,000, whereas daladalas charge between Sh600 and Sh800, making the BRT a luxury for many residents

BY THE CITIZEN REPORTER

Dares Salaam. Mofat, the operator of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services along Kilwa Road, has recently called for the removal of minibuses (daladalas) from the route to increase demand. This situation highlights deeper structural and socio-economic issues in Mbagala that may create significant challenges for transport companies.

Experts have informed The Citizen that while Mofat's concerns are understandable, it is crucial to have a more nuanced understanding of Mbagala and its surrounding communities. This understanding is essential for policymakers aiming to design sustainable transport solutions that benefit all parties without discouraging major investors.

Mofat's Chief Operations Officer, Mr Mabrouk Masasi, shared with The Citizen's sister publication, Mwananchi, that the company has been incurring losses since it began operations in October of last year. He stated that daladala, bajaji, and bodaboda vehicles were expected to be removed from the corridor but continue to operate. "By having these vehicles operate alongside ours, we share passengers and make no profit. This is why we have only 40 buses on the road while 160 remain idle. From a business perspective, this is not sustainable. We have loans to repay for these buses and more than 187 drivers, not all of whom are fully utilized, yet salaries must be paid every month," he explained. As a result, Mofat has written to the Land Transport Regulatory Authority (Latra) requesting the removal of daladala and bajaji from the route. Latra has confirmed the



receipt of the letter and noted that the matter requires consultations with other stakeholders.

While acknowledging the challenges Mofat faces and the presence of competing transport options, analysts stress the importance of recognizing the unique characteristics of Mbagala in comparison to other BRT corridors, such as Morogoro Road and upcoming routes along Nyerere and Bagamoyo Roads.

"Understanding these differences is crucial if authorities wish to make decisions that ultimately benefit everyone and attract large-scale investors like Mofat," said Mr. Salim Mbonde, a resident of Mbagala Rangji Tatu.

He explained that Mbagala serves as

a self-contained commercial hub where residents can find almost everything available in Kariakoo. As a result, many

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The number of Mofat buses that are currently in operation, leaving 160 vehicles sitting idle

people who might typically travel to the city center conduct their business locally.

"You're considering people from Toangoma, Kongowe, Mwandege, Vikindu, Kisemvule, Mkuranga, Charambe, Chamazi, Mbande, Kisewe, Kilungule, Msongola, Kitonga, and even Chanika

and Gongolamboto," he said.

Many residents carry out their daily activities within Mbagala before returning home, and some neighborhoods are home to a growing middle class, with many individuals opting to travel by private vehicle.

Ms Ashura Mchinjita, also from Mbagala Rangji Tatu, noted that residents frequently travel between Mbagala and other locations such as Chanika, Gongolamboto and Kawe, complicating the business case for a BRT operator whose service mainly covers the city centre route to Posta and Kariakoo/Gerezani.

She said authorities must appreciate these commuting patterns to design a system that works for both residents and investors.

Mbagala's population is diverse, comprising working Tanzanians, bodaboda riders, petty traders, artisans, domestic workers and small-scale entrepreneurs living side by side in a tightly knit community. Many residents are young families attracted by relatively affordable housing, while others are long-term settlers who have witnessed Mbagala's transformation from a semi-rural settlement into a bustling urban neighbourhood.

Housing reflects this social mix, with modest concrete-block homes and multi-family compounds that remain affordable to low- and middle-income earners. The area also hosts a growing number of industries, attracting workers from surrounding communities.

A source familiar with the sector said Mbagala's relatively low cost of living encourages many residents to seek employment beyond the neighbourhood. However, the source added that Mofat's struggles also reflect some systematic weaknesses.

"Some people find it hard to adopt the system because they have to queue as they wait for the buses," he said.

Latra director general Mr Habibu Suluo acknowledged that BRT Phase Two faces business-related challenges.

"Mofat, like Udart, is a service provider contracted by the Dares Salaam Rapid Transit Agency (Dart) to operate specific corridors. Latra's role is that of a regulator. Operators have exclusive rights along their routes," he said.

Mr Suluo explained that Mofat wants bodaboda, bajaji and da-

