

Nairobi smart traffic control system to go live in two years

By [Constant Munda](#)

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Nairobi's proposed smart traffic control system will go live in just over two years, officials said of the plan that seeks to ease congestion on key city roads at an estimated cost of Sh1.88 billion.



Photo by John O'Nolan on Unsplash

The plan, which is 80% funded by the World Bank Group, is benchmarked on the management of traffic flow in the United Kingdom.

The Nairobi Intelligent Traffic System (ITS) project will see traffic control technologies such as intelligent traffic lights, road markings and signage installed at 100 of the estimated 400 intersections during its first phase.

The ITS also has a component on enforcement measures such as violation of traffic lights and speed limit.

The Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA) is implementing the plan in partnership with Nairobi City County, National Transport and Safety Authority and the Transport ministry.



Under the plan, cameras at road junctions will capture oncoming traffic through digital number plates embedded with microchips and feed the same into an Integrated Traffic Management Centre (TMC) in real time.

TMC will house a command team comprised of engineers, system specialists and traffic police officers who will monitor and act on the data coming through, helping to remotely allocate more time to most congested roads.

Kura acting director-general Silas Kinoti said this should help remove traffic police officers from road junctions.

An almost similar plan to decongest the city by replacing the five major roundabouts with signalised intersections at a cost of Sh400 million failed in 2015.

That came after another unsuccessful bid in 2012 to ease traffic snarl-ups on city roads that wipe off an estimated three percent of GDP annually in lost time and fuel.

Modify rather than remove roundabouts

Kinoti said the planned ITS system will modify rather than remove roundabouts.

"This system is different in that two junctions can talk to each other because this has taken a network approach. One junction can even block traffic depending on what is happening on the other junction controlled from a traffic management centre," he said.

"The information will be relayed directly from the cameras to traffic control centre and the system itself has its own artificial intelligence."

German mobility firm HP Gauff, its traffic engineering counterpart Schlothauer & Wauer and UK's Wyg International, which in January won the Sh480 million consultancy deal, said they have developed a draft design for the project.



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The draft, based on UK's model, incorporated existing and planned link roads. The final design, to be done in three weeks, will help develop tender documents for contractors to procure and install the traffic control system at a cost of Sh1.4 billion, Wyg director John Pattinson said.

He said the tender documents will be ready by December, bidding will be done from January while suitable implementing firms will be identified by March.

"Construction will probably be starting towards the end of next year ... and if things go well, even by the middle of 2019, you may see the first junction coming online," Pattinson said in an interview.

"All junctions will be using signals and connect back to traffic management centre where computer systems will be calculating the timing required for them in real time. The traffic signals time will be changing constantly as the flow changes during the day."

ABOUT CONSTANT MUNDA

Thorough, outgoing, ambitious in my journalistic work. A bit laid back, calm, quiet and humble in personal life.
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