

Role of public in safeguarding toll infrastructure



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WHENEVER a toll gate is being constructed on any particular road, there is a lot of apprehension from the general public, especially motorists. While some members of the public worry about the financial burden incurred when accessing the road at first glance, others engage in debates such as whether the construction of the



toll gate is real development or whether the authorities will prioritise employing residents in that area. Issues of prudent financial management, safety and meaningful ways of enhancing value propositions through discounts like local user discounts and frequent user discount also form part of the discourse.

These and many other important questions are correctly asked by concerned citizens as stakeholders, and

to fund road construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation, as stipulated in the Tolls Act No. 14 of 2011.

In order to help NRFA achieve its objective and safeguard the toll infrastructure, the general public is expected to play the following significant roles:

Paying correct fees: Motorists should pay the correct toll fees to support road maintenance and avoid attempting to evade tolls by

they are right to do so.

But what is the role of the public in safeguarding toll infrastructure? In this guide, we will explore the indispensable role that every well-meaning Zambian citizen must play in protecting and supporting toll infrastructure, highlighting how collective responsibility can lead to safer, more reliable, and better-maintained transportation systems for all.

Toll infrastructure plays a vital role in maintaining efficient transportation networks, enabling smoother commutes, and supporting economic growth. However, the success and sustainability of these facilities depend not only on government agencies such as National Road Fund Agency (NRFA), Road Development Agency (RDA), and private operators but also significantly on the active participation and cooperation of the general public. From paying correct tolls to reporting maintenance issues and advocating for responsible usage, the general public's involvement is crucial in preserving the integrity and functionality of toll infrastructure.

The NRFA manages tolls

driving through a toll point fraudulently, forcibly or without paying the toll.

Avoiding causing damage to toll infrastructure: Protecting toll infrastructure from damage by avoiding vandalism and reducing motor vehicle speed when approaching the toll gate is crucial. Damage to infrastructure leads to costly repairs and sometimes interruptions in toll operations, affecting revenue collection. On November 30, 2024, a significant incident occurred at the George Kunda Toll Gate in Mkushi, Zambia, where a truck and trailer crashed into the toll gate, causing extensive damage to the toll infrastructure and injuring a toll collector. Following the accident, the NRFA immediately suspended toll operations at the gate for two weeks. The loss of revenue due to operational suspension underscores the important role that the general public plays in safeguarding the toll infrastructure to ensure continuous funding of road projects.

Furthermore, the general public is encouraged not to deposit glasses, garbage or any other offensive matter on a toll road, deface or remove any barricade, light, detour sign, or notice relating to the closure of a toll road, or use any part of a toll road which is closed to traffic. These offences are liable, upon conviction to a fine exceeding three hundred thousand penalty units or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years, or both. Meanwhile, the driver who crashed into George Kunda Toll Station was convicted and sentenced to three years imprisonment after being fined K140,000.

Reporting irregularities:

The general public has a significant role of ensuring that they report issues or incidents affecting toll operations to relevant authorities. Reporting issues helps maintain efficient toll operations, whilst reporting incidents can help ensure safety and security at toll points.

Cooperating with toll authority:

The public also has a role to follow rules and guidelines for using toll roads to support efficient operations. Following



SABINA Toll Plaza.

rules supports efficient toll road operations, while cooperation helps ensure smoother commutes for all users.

Promoting awareness: Raising awareness about the importance of toll infrastructure encourages responsible behaviour.

Providing feedback: Providing feedback to NRFA helps the agency improve toll operations and provide an efficient service, and better management of toll infrastructure.

Supporting efficient toll operations:

The public has a role to play in ensuring that they support technological-driven solutions, such as using electronic payment methods like e-toll cards to pay tolls. Using electronic payment methods like NRFA e-toll cards enhances efficiency at toll points and supports tech-driven solutions.

By safeguarding toll infrastructure, the public contributes to the upkeep of the road network, supporting

economic growth and safety. By understanding the important role of the public in safeguarding toll infrastructure, the public can appreciate how their contributions support the broader transportation network that underpins economic vitality and community wellbeing. This shared responsibility highlights why public awareness and cooperation are essential in protecting and sustaining these critical assets for current and future generations.

Look out for our next article next week and channel your feedback to: National Road Fund Agency, Plot 33 Fairley, P.O. Box 50695, Lusaka.

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