

BUSINESS NEWS

Hunt on for operator to run city commuter trains

RATING



A Rift Valley Railways train. Photo/FILE

By JUSTUS ONDARI jondari@ke.nationmedia.com Posted Thursday, February 17 2011 at 18:36

A rail operator will manage the proposed commuter railway service in Nairobi and its environs once it gets going.

The Kenya Railways Corporation and InfraCo Africa Ltd, a donor-funded privately managed infrastructure development firm, has advertised an international tender in the Economist.

The Nairobi Commuter Rail Service is a public-private partnership between the State-owned Corporation and InfraCo, aiming to decongest city traffic.

“InfraCo Africa and KR are seeking an experienced rail operator to be the contract operator upon entry into service of the upgraded commuter rail system,” the partners say in the tender calling for Expression of Interest.

The system is expected to comprise 10-15 commuter train sets operating over four lines, one of which will be a new express link to the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport from the Nairobi Central (Railway) Station.

The successful operator is expected to have technical and operational resources.

“We want to incorporate the operator from the word go so that we don’t have a situation where once we bring an one on board (later), he or she starts saying the system can’t work or technically he or she will lose money,” KR managing director, Nduva Muli, told the *Nation* on Thursday.

Construction of a modern train station at Syokimau on Mombasa Road by El Noor Construction at a cost Sh250 million, which is the first phase of the ambitious railway service, has started.

The phase, which was allocated Sh600 million in the 2009/10 budget, will rehabilitate approximately 160km of the existing rail within Nairobi.

“We are about to tender for other stations,” Mr Muli said.

The project will also construct about 7km of a new track to JKIA’s Unit 3, and the rehabilitation or construction of stations along the network.

It was allocated Sh1.9 billion in the 2010/11 budget.

The entire project, estimated to cost Sh24 billion on completion, is expected to link the city centre with outlying towns of Thika, Limuru and Athi River/Lukenya.

Conceived in 1992 following a strike by matatu operators, the project begun in April 2009 when the corporation signed a joint development agreement with InfraCo.