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THE NEW TRADE CORRIDORS OF CENTRAL AFRICA



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Executive Feature with Maybin Madiba Mudenda



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Building the Conversation Around Africa's Trade Future

Logistics Now was created from a simple conviction: Africa's economic future depends, in no small measure, on how easily African countries are able to trade with one another. When trade moves, opportunity moves. When it is difficult, potential is lost.



Tawanda S. Hojane
Executive Publisher

LOGISTICS NOW

Across the continent, there is no shortage of ambition. New corridors are being developed, ports are being expanded, railways are being restored, border systems are being digitised and private capital is beginning to follow the movement of goods with renewed interest. Yet the practical realities of trade remain difficult. Trucks lose valuable time at borders. Businesses struggle with fragmented supply chains. Warehousing capacity remains uneven. Infrastructure gaps continue to raise costs, slow down investment and limit the competitiveness of African businesses.

It is within this context that Logistics Now enters the conversation.

Our ambition is to provide high-quality, commercially relevant coverage of the systems that keep business moving. We examine logistics, transport, warehousing and supply chains as they exist today, but we also look beyond the present. We explore where these systems are heading, where investment is flowing and, most importantly, where we believe the sector should be going.

Our role is not only to report what has happened. It is to ask better questions about what should happen next. Which corridors will create the greatest economic value? Which infrastructure will genuinely reduce the cost of trade? How can the public and private sectors work together more effectively? What changes will allow African businesses to compete more confidently within the continent and beyond?

These are the questions that guide our editorial direction.

Through our regular franchises – Corridor Watch, Mining Logistics, Border and Trade Facilitation, Infrastructure and Investment, Fleet Focus, Logistics Financing, Technology and Data, Supply Chain and Critical Minerals Logistics – we build a broad but connected view of the sector. Each franchise examines a different part of the logistics economy while contributing to a larger understanding of how trade, infrastructure and enterprise intersect.

We pay attention to the operating realities behind the headlines. A new road, railway, border post or logistics hub only becomes meaningful when it improves reliability, reduces cost, attracts investment and creates real opportunity for businesses and communities.

This first issue, themed The New Trade Corridors of Central Africa, explores how the geography of trade is changing and how infrastructure, minerals, finance and policy are reshaping the region's commercial future.

But Logistics Now is more than a magazine.

Through our website, social platforms, podcast and future intelligence products, we aim to create a continuous platform for ideas, insight and informed debate.

We are grateful to everyone who reads, follows, listens and engages with our content. Your participation will help shape what this platform becomes.

We are committed to curiosity, discipline and ambition. Africa's trade future is too important not to get right.

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ABOUT LOGISTICS NOW

Logistics Now is a transport and logistics business intelligence platform covering Zambia, Central and Southern Africa. We examine transport, trade corridors, supply chains, warehousing, infrastructure, technology and investment — and where these systems should be heading.

Through our magazine, digital platforms, intelligence and podcasts, we provide commercially relevant insight for the businesses, policymakers, investors and operators moving Africa forward.



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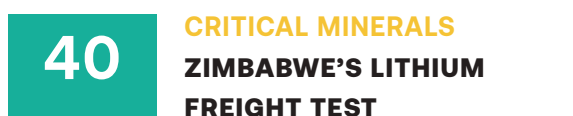
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logisticsnow

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THE NEW TRADE CORRIDORS OF CENTRAL AFRICA

Trade has always followed the path of least resistance. The countries that reduce that resistance shape the geography of commerce.

Trade has always been one of civilisation's greatest organising forces. Long before modern states emerged, merchants determined which cities prospered, which ports expanded and which societies accumulated wealth. Roads, rivers and railways mattered not because they were feats of engineering, but because they reduced the cost and uncertainty of moving goods between people who wished to buy and sell.

That principle has never changed.

Throughout history, economies that made commerce easier have consistently outperformed those that made it difficult. Geography certainly influences trade, but geography alone has never guaranteed prosperity. Nations become commercial centres when infrastructure, institutions and markets work together to reduce friction. Every hour removed from a journey, every border delay eliminated and every improvement in reliability expands the practical size of a market. Over time, distance becomes less important than accessibility.

This simple idea is quietly reshaping Southern and Central Africa.

Across the region, governments are investing in railways, highways, ports, bridges and border infrastructure on a scale not seen for decades. Development finance institutions are committing billions of dollars to strategic transport programmes. Private investors are expanding logistics parks, warehousing capacity and freight services. Mining companies are demanding more efficient export routes, while manufacturers increasingly view neighbouring countries as viable markets rather than distant opportunities.

Viewed individually, these developments appear unrelated. Viewed together, they reveal something far more significant. The consequences remain visible today.

Although intra-African trade has expanded steadily over the past two decades, it still represents a relatively small proportion of the continent's total trade compared with Europe or Asia. Successive studies by the World Bank and the African Development Bank have consistently identified logistics costs, border inefficiencies and transport reliability as among the most significant barriers preventing African businesses from fully accessing regional markets.

The African Continental Free Trade Area represents one of the most ambitious economic integration projects in modern history. It brings together 54 African countries into a market of approximately 1.5 billion people with a combined gross domestic product exceeding US\$3 trillion. Yet trade agreements do not move freight. Trucks, trains, ports, warehouses and border systems do. If AfCFTA provides the legal architecture for continental trade, logistics will determine whether that vision becomes commercial reality.

This distinction matters because trade corridors are frequently misunderstood.

Roads do not create commerce simply because they exist. Railways do not automatically attract freight because they have been rehabilitated. Border posts do not become economically valuable merely because new buildings have been constructed. Infrastructure creates possibility. Commercial competitiveness determines whether that possibility is realised.

That is precisely why today's investment cycle deserves closer attention. The projects currently under construction across Southern and Central Africa are responding to structural changes already taking place within the regional economy. Population growth is expanding consumer markets. The global energy transition has intensified demand for the region's critical minerals. Manufacturers are reassessing supply-chain resilience following years of global disruption. Governments increasingly recognise that attracting investment depends not only on tax incentives, but also on the efficiency with which goods move.

The corridors are not driving these changes. They are responding to them.

Across Southern and Central Africa, several transport corridors are simultaneously attempting to answer the same commercial question: which route can move freight more competitively?

To the west, the Lobito Corridor has emerged as one of the continent's most strategically significant infrastructure initiatives. Linking Angola's Atlantic coastline with the mineral-rich regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo and north-western Zambia, the corridor has attracted substantial international financial backing and renewed geopolitical interest because it offers more than an alternative export route. It seeks to reshape investment patterns across an entire economic region by combining rail rehabilitation, port development and private-sector participation into a single commercial system.

To the east, renewed attention has turned towards TAZARA. Built during the 1970s as one of Africa's most ambitious railway projects, the line was originally conceived as a strategic alternative for Zambia's external trade. Today, however, the conversation has shifted. The question is no longer whether trains can travel between Kapiri Mposhi and Dar es Salaam. The question is whether TAZARA can evolve into a modern freight corridor capable of attracting private logistics investment, supporting regional manufacturers and providing the predictable services demanded by contemporary supply chains.

Further south, the North-South Corridor continues to benefit from established freight volumes and mature logistics ecosystems, while Beira, Maputo, Walvis Bay and Nacala each compete on different combinations of distance, port efficiency and regional connectivity. Rather than replacing one another, these routes are gradually expanding the strategic choices available to businesses seeking efficient access to regional and global markets.

This is perhaps the most important development currently taking place across African logistics.

The question is no longer which corridor exists. The question is which corridor performs.

Performance is determined by far more than infrastructure. A

AfCFTA: Africa's Market at Scale

54 participating countries

Nearly the entire continent is being brought into one commercial framework.

1.5 billion people

A consumer and labor market larger than any single African economy could create alone.

US\$3 trillion combined GDP

The scale is continental, but the opportunity will be won corridor by corridor.

The world's largest free trade area by member-state participation. AfCFTA is not simply a trade agreement. It is an attempt to reorganize how Africa produces, moves and sells.

The promise is one African market. The test is whether goods can cross borders as easily as the agreement suggests.

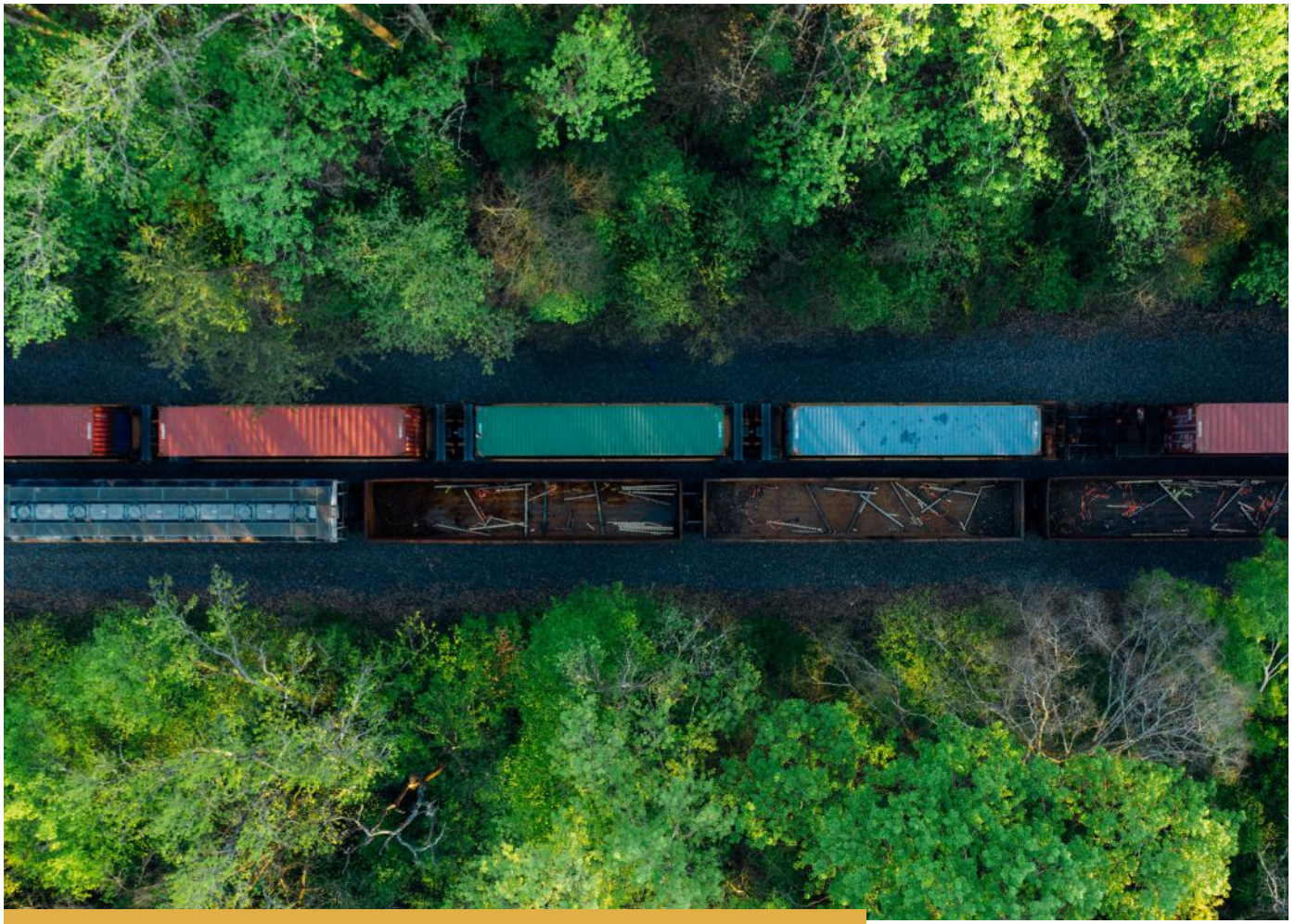
railway operating below capacity contributes little to regional competitiveness. A modern border post still creates delays if documentation remains fragmented. A world-class highway loses much of its value when unpredictable customs procedures offset the time saved on the road.

The corridors themselves are not the competition. The systems built around them are.

Successful corridors function as integrated commercial ecosystems. Infrastructure, customs administration, warehousing, freight forwarding, financial services, technology platforms and regulatory coordination all contribute towards reducing the total cost of moving goods. Remove weakness in any one of those components and the corridor becomes more competitive. Ignore one, and the entire system suffers.

A road carries freight. A logistics system carries commerce.

This is why transport investment increasingly attracts industries extending well beyond construction. Industrial property developers, warehouse operators, cold-chain specialists, fleet technology providers, banks, insurers and supply-chain software companies all recognise that efficient trade corridors generate demand far beyond transport itself. Every tonne of freight creates secondary



economic activity. Every additional shipment requires financing, maintenance, insurance, storage, tracking and professional services.

Trade corridors are therefore not simply transport assets. They are economic ecosystems.

Few countries are positioned more advantageously within this changing landscape than Zambia.

Bordering eight neighbouring states and sitting between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean gateways, the country occupies one of Africa's most strategically important geographic positions. Geography has already made Zambia central. Competitiveness will determine whether it becomes indispensable.

The distinction matters because transit traffic alone rarely transforms an economy. Sustainable logistics hubs emerge when freight movement attracts investment in warehousing, manufacturing, distribution, industrial property, financial services and technology. The movement of goods creates value. The services built around that movement create prosperity.

This is where Zambia's greatest

opportunity may lie.

Critical minerals have already accelerated infrastructure investment across the region. Copper, cobalt and increasingly lithium have strengthened the commercial case for improved transport corridors connecting Central Africa with global markets. Yet history suggests that commodity cycles eventually change. The corridors most likely to succeed over the long term will be those capable of supporting diversified trade that includes manufacturing, agriculture, consumer goods, construction materials, pharmaceuticals and industrial equipment alongside mineral exports.

Border efficiency will prove equally decisive. Modern highways cannot compensate for unpredictable customs procedures. Railways cannot achieve their full commercial potential if documentation remains fragmented across multiple agencies. Businesses invest where supply chains are reliable because reliability reduces inventory costs, improves customer confidence and

lowers commercial risk.

Reliability has become infrastructure. Technology will increasingly reinforce this transition. Digital customs platforms, cargo visibility systems, predictive border management, integrated warehouse operations and intelligent fleet management are becoming as important to corridor competitiveness as the roads and railways themselves. The next generation of African logistics will be measured not simply by how quickly freight moves, but by how consistently it arrives.

That reality has important implications for both policymakers and the private sector. Governments may construct infrastructure, but businesses ultimately determine whether corridors become commercially successful.

Manufacturers decide where to build factories. Logistics providers decide where to establish distribution centres. Investors decide where to deploy capital. Every commercial decision either strengthens or weakens the long-term viability of a corridor.

The infrastructure now taking shape across Southern and Central Africa therefore represents the beginning of a much larger story rather than its conclusion.

The businesses most likely to benefit will not be limited to transport operators. Warehouse developers, industrial property owners, cold-chain providers, fleet-management companies, customs brokers, insurers, banks, technology firms and freight platforms all stand to gain from deeper regional trade. Their role will be to convert movement into value by making freight more visible, financeable, secure and predictable.

This is where the next contest will be won.

The question is no longer whether Zambia sits at the centre of Southern and Central Africa. The question is whether it can become indispensable to the region's trade.

Achieving that will require more than flagship projects. Roads, railways, inland terminals, industrial parks, border facilities and warehousing investments must complement rather than compete with one another. Public investment must create confidence for private capital. Regional cooperation must reduce friction rather than introduce additional complexity. Policy consistency must provide businesses with the confidence to invest for the long term.

“The corridors themselves are not the competition. The systems built around them are.”

The same test applies to every corridor now under development. The western corridors may offer shorter Atlantic access. Eastern gateways may benefit from established port infrastructure. Southern routes may retain the advantage of mature freight ecosystems. Yet none of these advantages will be decisive if the systems surrounding them remain unreliable.

The question is no longer which corridor is shortest. The question is which corridor businesses trust.

Trust is built through performance. It is built when border agencies share data, when customs procedures are clear, when rail services run to schedule, when warehouses protect product integrity and when logistics operators can tell customers where cargo is and when it will arrive. In

modern supply chains, predictability is not a secondary benefit. It is the product.

That is why the race now unfolding across Southern and Central Africa cannot be reduced to kilometres of road, tonnes of rail or the capacity of individual ports. The deeper contest is over which countries and corridor authorities can build commercial systems capable of attracting sustained freight, private investment and industrial activity.

Trade has always followed the path of least resistance.

For generations, Africa's transport networks were designed to connect the continent with the rest of the world. The infrastructure now emerging across Southern and Central Africa suggests a different ambition. It is beginning, deliberately and at considerable scale, to connect Africa with itself.

Whether that ambition succeeds will depend on far more than roads, railways and ports. It will depend on the quality of institutions, the efficiency of borders, the confidence of investors and the competitiveness of logistics businesses that bring those corridors to life.

Infrastructure may define the route. Commerce will decide whether it matters. **LN**

Five Forces Will Define the Next Generation of African Trade Corridors

1. **Reliability - Predictable movement every time:**

The corridor that consistently delivers freight on schedule will outperform one that is merely shorter. Reliability reduces inventory costs, increases business confidence and attracts long-term investment.

2. **Connectivity - Integrated systems rather than isolated infrastructure.**

Successful corridors seamlessly connect roads, rail, ports, dry ports, warehouses and border posts into one logistics ecosystem. The strength of the network matters more than the strength of any

single asset.

3. **Technology - Visibility creates efficiency.**

Digital customs, cargo tracking, predictive border management, warehouse management systems, fleet telematics and AI-driven logistics planning will increasingly determine corridor performance

4. **Investment - Infrastructure must attract enterprise.**

Roads and railways create opportunity, but competitive corridors also attract logistics parks, warehousing, manufacturing, industrial property, financial services and private capital. The goal

is not simply to move freight but to stimulate economic activity.

5. **Partnership - Regional cooperation removes friction.**

Corridors cross borders. Their success depends on customs authorities, transport agencies, port operators, governments and the private sector working together. Harmonized regulations and coordinated border management are as important as physical infrastructure.

BEYOND REHABILITATION: WHAT THE TAZARA CONCESSION MUST DELIVER

Trade has always followed the path of least resistance. The countries that reduce that resistance shape the geography of commerce.

The US\$1.4 billion revitalization programme promises new track, locomotives, wagons and logistics infrastructure. The harder test is whether it can turn TAZARA into a commercially reliable railway that wins back cargo, reduces pressure on regional roads and gives shippers a dependable route to Dar es Salaam.

Zambia, Tanzania and China signed a revitalization agreement with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation in September 2025, establishing a long-term freight concession. The package includes US\$1.17 billion in initial investment and US\$238 million in periodic reinvestment.

The programme covers rehabilitation of the roughly 1,860-kilometre railway, signaling upgrades, workshop refurbishment, new rolling stock and an inland logistics port at Kapiri Mposhi.

The investment is substantial. What remains to be proven is whether it can convert physical rehabilitation into reliable commercial performance.

A railway is not restored when the track is repaired

Track condition is foundational, but freight customers do not purchase rehabilitated track. They purchase reliable movement.

For cargo owners, the questions are practical. Is rolling stock available? Will the train depart when promised? Can arrival times be predicted? Will cargo move efficiently through the Port of Dar es Salaam?

TAZARA expects freight volumes to rise from around 400,000 tonnes



ENGINEERS ON THE GROUND

Construction commencing and site surveys underway – a significant step towards a revitalized TAZARA

to 1.2 million tonnes in the first year of full operations, before exceeding 2.4 million tonnes within four years. Transit time between Dar es Salaam and New Kapiri Mposhi is targeted to fall from roughly seven to ten days to below five. Those targets establish the standard against which the concession should be judged.

The first test is operating reliability

The Zambian government says the programme will provide 34 locomotives, 760 wagons and 16 passenger coaches.

Yet fleet numbers alone will not determine service quality. The concessionaire must keep locomotives and wagons available, rather than allowing a large nominal fleet to conceal a much smaller operational one. Availability, wagon

turnaround times, breakdown rates and repair times should therefore become central performance indicators.

Periodic reinvestment matters because railways often decline after the initial capital injection when routine maintenance and asset replacement are deferred. The concession will only be sustainable if maintenance is treated as an operating discipline rather than a future rehabilitation project.

The second test is whether cargo returns

TAZARA may have strategic value, but strategy does not fill wagons.

The railway must recover cargo from roads and competing corridors, supported by long-term

commitments from mines, traders, importers and logistics operators.

The projected increase to more than 2.4 million tonnes means TAZARA must attract several times its current freight volume. That will not happen automatically when construction is complete.

Cargo owners will need competitive tariffs, predictable transit times, sufficient wagons and confidence that improvements will last. TAZARA and the concessionaire will also need anchor customers whose volumes support regular train services, alongside a broader cargo mix that reduces dependence on a few mining contracts.

Copper and other minerals will remain central, but resilience will depend on a broader two-way cargo mix. Empty or lightly loaded return journeys would weaken asset utilization.

The third test is corridor integration

A corridor is only as strong as its weakest operational junction.

For TAZARA, one of the most important interfaces is the Port of Dar es Salaam. The concession includes modernization of dedicated berths, while the Kapiri Mposhi logistics hub is intended to provide bonded warehousing, customs clearance and cargo-consolidation services.

These investments could improve cargo movement, but they will require close coordination among the railway, port, customs, shipping lines and freight owners. Track rehabilitation may reduce journey times, but those gains can disappear if trains wait for port access, containers are delayed in clearance or cargo transfers remain poorly coordinated. The corridor should therefore be evaluated on total door-to-port performance, not only the time spent moving between New Kapiri Mposhi and Dar es Salaam.

Kapiri Mposhi could become an inland gateway linking the Copperbelt, Lusaka, central Zambia and regional cargo flows to the port. However, a logistics hub requires more than warehouses. It needs throughput, efficient connections, customs presence, reliable power, security, digital systems and private

investment.

The fourth test is governance

Only TAZARA's freight operations have been concessioned, while passenger services remain with the bi-national railway authority. TAZARA is expected to receive a fixed concession fee of US\$15 million per year once commercial operations begin, together with a variable fee equivalent to two percent of gross freight revenue.

This structure may protect passenger operations from being subordinated to freight priorities, but it also creates coordination risks. Track access, maintenance windows, scheduling, signaling, staffing, safety responsibilities and shared infrastructure will require clear rules.

Open-access arrangements may allow other private rail operators to participate. If implemented transparently, this could expand capacity and competition. If access charges, dispatch priorities and operating rights remain unclear, it could create another layer of uncertainty.

The concession will therefore depend not only on what is built, but on how responsibilities are divided, performance is monitored and disputes are resolved.

TAZARA and Lobito should not be treated as opposites

The TAZARA revival is often framed against the Western-supported Lobito Corridor as part of geopolitical competition around Central Africa's copper and critical minerals.

For Zambia, however, the useful question is not which corridor should win, but whether the country can secure access to several ports and reduce dependence on any single route.

TAZARA provides an eastern outlet through Dar es Salaam, while Lobito offers a western route to the Atlantic. The North-South Corridor, Beira and Nacala provide additional options.

A functioning TAZARA would strengthen Zambia's corridor portfolio rather than weaken the case for Lobito. Different corridors may serve different mines, markets,

cargo types and commercial relationships. The national interest lies in optionality.

The real measure of success

Visible construction activity should not replace transparent performance reporting. Stakeholders should track infrastructure completed, rolling stock availability, transit times, freight volumes, port dwell time, wagon turnaround, investment attracted, modal shift and safety.

These indicators would help distinguish construction progress from commercial recovery.

TAZARA does not need another revival defined only by expenditure, equipment deliveries and ceremonial milestones. It needs a railway that customers choose to use.

The concession will succeed if it creates a service reliable enough for mines to commit cargo, efficient enough for logistics operators to schedule around and commercially disciplined enough to finance maintenance. It should also reduce heavy road freight, support investment and give Zambia a dependable eastern trade route.

The US\$1.4 billion programme can restore the physical railway. Whether it restores market confidence will depend on what happens after the new rails, locomotives and wagons arrive.

Logistics Now Insight

The concession should ultimately be judged against four outcomes:

Reliability: Can cargo owners depend on scheduled departures and predictable arrivals?

Capacity: Can the railway move more than two million tonnes without returning to chronic equipment shortages?

Integration: Can rail, port, customs and inland logistics facilities operate as one corridor system?

Commercial discipline: Can the concession generate enough traffic and revenue to maintain the railway beyond the initial investment period?

Rehabilitation creates the opportunity. Operational execution will determine whether TAZARA becomes a modern freight corridor.

LN

THE CORRIDOR CAPITAL RACE

What committed financing reveals about Central Africa's competing trade routes



Lobito and TAZARA have attracted the clearest large-scale capital commitments, while the North-South Corridor continues to be financed project by project and Mpulungu remains between technical preparation and financial close. The figures reveal more than which route has raised the most money. They show different stages of infrastructure maturity, risk and commercial readiness.

Africa's corridor conversation is filled with billion-dollar announcements covering railway concessions, ports, roads, border posts and industrial zones. Yet these figures can create the impression that every route is fully financed and moving toward implementation at the same pace. The reality is more complicated.

The corridors serving Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the wider Central African mineral belt are advancing through different models. Some have reached financial close, others rely on long-term concessions, while established routes receive funding through separate national projects. Mpulungu has completed technical preparation but still lacks full

construction capital.

The first discipline is to distinguish committed financing from announced ambition. Financial close, approved development finance and signed concession obligations carry more

certainty than project values, memoranda or political pledges. Related figures should also not be combined without checking whether they overlap.

Viewed this way, the capital race is not producing one obvious winner. It is producing five different financing stories.

Lobito has crossed the financial-close threshold

The Lobito Corridor has become the most visible international effort to improve Atlantic access to the Central African Copperbelt. Its strongest recent milestone is the US\$753 million financing package for the Lobito Atlantic Railway.

The transaction combines US\$553 million from the United States International Development Finance Corporation with US\$200 million from the Development Bank of Southern Africa. It supports the existing railway concession across Angola, linking the Port of Lobito with the eastern border and the connection into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Financial close matters because it moves a project beyond political intention into a deployable financing structure. However, the US\$753

million should not be presented as fully financing a new railway from Lobito into Zambia. The proposed Zambian connection remains part of a wider programme of rail, roads, border facilities and economic-development projects requiring separate financing.

Lobito therefore has two capital stories: financing secured for the existing Angolan concession, and continuing efforts to fund the wider regional extension. Its next test is whether investment in the operating railway improves reliability, freight volumes and confidence sufficiently to unlock further capital.

TAZARA carries the largest integrated concession commitment

TAZARA is being approached through a long-term concession with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, carrying an investment commitment of about US\$1.4 billion. The package combines initial rehabilitation and equipment expenditure with periodic reinvestment over the concession period.

The programme covers railway rehabilitation, signaling upgrades, new locomotives and wagons, workshop refurbishment and an inland logistics port at Kapiri Mposhi.

As one integrated route commitment, TAZARA carries the largest headline package in this comparison. Its periodic reinvestment component is particularly important because many African railways decline again after rehabilitation when maintenance and asset renewal are deferred.

The framework does not remove execution risk. New equipment must become dependable train capacity, track rehabilitation must reduce speed restrictions, and governance

must work because passenger and freight operations will sit under different arrangements.

TAZARA's central question is no longer whether a large capital framework exists. It is whether that capital can create a railway that cargo owners trust and return freight from road to rail.

The North–South Corridor is financed as a system

The North–South Corridor cannot be captured by one credible financing total because it is not a single concession, road or railway. It is a regional freight system linking the Copperbelt and the Democratic Republic of Congo with southern African ports.

One identifiable investment is Zambia's Chinsali to Nakonde Road Rehabilitation Project, supported by US\$193 million from the African Development Bank and US\$50 million from the Africa Growing Together Fund, alongside Zambian counterpart financing.

Yet this is only one component. Kazungula Bridge, Chirundu, road sections through Zimbabwe and Botswana, South African port infrastructure and several border-management projects are all part of the commercial route but were financed separately.

The absence of one headline number reflects a deeper, more fragmented investment history. The route is being modernized while already carrying substantial freight.

Its main financing challenge is coordination. A rehabilitated road section creates limited value if another section deteriorates, a border remains congested or port access becomes unreliable. The important measure is therefore whether separate national investments reduce the full cost and duration of the freight journey.

Beira exposes the danger of forcing a single number

The Beira Corridor faces a similar comparison problem. It is an established route built around the Port of Beira and its road and rail links through Mozambique and Zimbabwe, serving several inland markets.

Investment continues to flow into Mozambique's transport infrastructure, but not every rail, port

or rolling-stock programme can automatically be attributed to Beira. Each project must therefore be assessed before being counted as corridor capital.

For this reason, no current corridor-wide committed-financing figure can be stated with confidence. Beira's capital story is dispersed across port investment, railway rehabilitation, road programmes, operator expenditure and sovereign infrastructure projects.

That does not weaken its commercial significance. It shows why mature corridors should also be judged through port throughput, rail reliability, road condition, vessel connectivity, border performance and total transit time rather than through one artificial headline figure.

Mpulungu has preparation, but not construction finance

Mpulungu is at the earliest financing stage of the five routes. The proposed modernization of the port forms part of a wider plan to develop Lake Tanganyika as a regional transport corridor connecting Zambia with Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.

An African Development Bank-supported study, valued at approximately UA1.02 million, covered engineering investigations, demand forecasts, environmental and social studies, detailed design and bidding documents.

This improves bankability, but it is not construction finance.

The modernization programme is estimated at around US\$120 million and includes quay extension, access roads, cargo-handling infrastructure, navigation aids and a possible railway connection. That amount should be described as the investment requirement rather than secured capital.

Mpulungu's immediate milestone is therefore financial close. The studies exist and the project scope is clearer. What remains is a financing structure capable of moving the port into procurement and construction.

Five corridors, three stages of maturity

The comparison divides the routes

into three broad groups.

Lobito and TAZARA have the strongest identifiable implementation commitments. Lobito has reached financial close on a major railway package, while TAZARA has a signed concession with substantial rehabilitation and reinvestment obligations. Their test is execution.

The North–South and Beira corridors continue to attract capital through individual roads, bridges, borders, railways and port assets. Their challenge is coordination, because multiple investments must work together to improve the full corridor journey.

Mpulungu is technically prepared but not fully financed. Its test is to convert engineering preparation into bankable implementation capital.

Capital is only the first performance indicator

The largest financing package will not necessarily produce the most competitive corridor. Capital can rebuild infrastructure, but it cannot guarantee cargo.

Shippers choose routes based on total transit time, tariff certainty, security, border performance, port dwell time, equipment availability and the operator's response when disruption occurs. A route with a smaller capital package but stronger operating coordination may outperform one that receives more money but fails to integrate rail, road, border and port systems.

For Lobito, the question is whether financial close on the existing railway can support a commercially viable connection with Zambia.

For TAZARA, it is whether the concession delivers reliable assets and wins freight back from the roads.

For the North–South Corridor, it is whether fragmented national investments reduce total journey time.

For Beira, it is whether continuing investment strengthens its regional value proposition.

For Mpulungu, it is whether technical preparation can unlock the capital required to build the Great Lakes gateway.



Tim Motors Zambia is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tim International, a China-based automotive and logistics industry group serving Belt and Road markets. The company's business is structured around three core sectors: Trucks, Passenger Vehicles, and Logistics. In Zambia, Tim Motors places particular emphasis on the passenger vehicle segment, supporting the development of reliable, safe, and sustainable mobility solutions for both private and institutional users.

In the passenger vehicle sector, Tim Motors Zambia supplies authorized passenger vehicle products through established Chinese automotive brands. Our portfolio includes MG, a world-renowned automotive brand with over 100 years of history and a leading position in China's automobile export market. MG's passenger vehicle lineup focuses on SUVs, covering large, multi-functional models as well as compact and economical options, with powertrain technologies including internal combustion engines, plug-in hybrid systems, and pure electric vehicles.

We also supply JMC passenger vehicles, including pickup-based passenger-use models and multi-purpose vehicles designed for daily mobility, institutional use, and mixed urban-rural operating conditions. These vehicles are recognized for their durability, safety, and adaptability to African road and usage environments.

To ensure long-term vehicle reliability and customer confidence, Tim Motors Zambia has established its own after-sales service centers in Zambia, providing maintenance, diagnostics, warranty service, and technical support. Our after-sales operations are supported by experienced Chinese automotive technicians, who work alongside local teams to ensure technical standards, skills transfer, and consistent service quality. This localized after-sales capability is a core pillar of our commitment to the Zambian market.

In addition, Tim Motors Zambia leverages a mature automotive spare parts supply chain in China, enabling the stable and timely supply of genuine spare parts for all passenger vehicle models. This ensures reduced vehicle downtime and reliable lifecycle support for end users.

Operationally, the company has built a localized platform including company-owned showrooms, a dedicated customs clearance and compliance team, warehousing facilities, and in-house transport fleets. This integrated structure supports efficient importation, distribution, after-sales service, and regulatory compliance.

Tim Motors Zambia is committed to long-term investment and responsible operation in Zambia. Through localized after-sales services, technical capacity building, and cooperation with public institutions, the company aims to contribute positively to the development of Zambia's passenger vehicle market and broader transport ecosystem.



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THE GREAT LAKES GATEWAY

Can Mpulungu Turn Northern Zambia into a Regional Logistics Economy?



NORTHERN GATEWAY

Mpulungu Harbour is more than a lake port. It is Zambia's northern gateway into the Great Lakes trade economy.

Zambia's plan to modernize Mpulungu Harbour could give Northern Province a stronger commercial role in the Great Lakes region. Yet the opportunity depends on more than expanding the port. Cargo commitments, dependable lake services, supporting infrastructure and the proposed railway connection to TAZARA will determine whether Mpulungu becomes a functioning corridor or remains an underused strategic asset.

Much of Zambia's corridor

debate focuses on routes to the sea. Lobito offers Atlantic access, TAZARA connects the country to Dar es Salaam, and the North-South Corridor links Zambia to southern African ports. Mpulungu serves a different purpose. Located on Lake Tanganyika, it is Zambia's only international inland-water gateway and provides access to Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the wider Great Lakes economy.

The region requires food, fuel,

construction materials, mining inputs, machinery and consumer goods. Eastern DRC is especially important because of its population, mining activity and dependence on difficult supply routes. Northern Zambia is well placed to serve parts of this market.

Proximity alone will not make Mpulungu competitive. Lake transport depends on vessel availability, sailing frequency, cargo handling, storage, insurance,

customs and coordination between national authorities. Mpulungu must therefore be treated as an end-to-end logistics system rather than a harbour project in isolation. The port is the physical gateway, but the network around it will determine its commercial value.

From strategic potential to commercial structuring

The project has moved beyond a conceptual stage but has not reached full construction readiness. The SADC Investment Portal values the Lake Tanganyika Transport Corridor Development Project at about US\$120 million and classifies it as being in project structuring. The scope includes a quay extension, access roads, a railway component and rehabilitation of navigation aids. Financing arrangements and a procurement timetable are still being developed.

A 2026 market assessment supported by AUDA-NEPAD and GIZ identified three priorities: port modernization, commercial partnerships and offtake agreements capable of creating a dependable cargo base. Discussions with prospective users, including DRC mining companies, begin to answer the project's central question: who will use the infrastructure?

The next test is whether planning, commercial demand and operating standards can produce bankable projects, committed cargo and an implementable procurement plan.

Capacity will not create cargo automatically

The programme aims to increase annual cargo handling from about 200,000 tonnes to roughly 800,000 tonnes by 2030. Such growth would require more than a longer quay. Mpulungu would need storage, handling equipment, dependable access, regular vessels, security and predictable cross-lake services.

Mines, manufacturers and traders will use the route only if it offers a credible combination of cost, reliability, transit time and manageable risk. Infrastructure can provide capacity, but commercial commitments will determine whether that capacity is used.

The missing railway connection

The proposed Nseluka–Mpulungu railway remains central to the long-

term vision. The line, estimated at roughly 195 to 202 kilometres, would connect the harbour to the TAZARA network. Feasibility work has been completed, but there is no confirmed financing package, timetable or principal contractor.

A direct connection could move bulk and containerized freight from the Copperbelt and other production areas to the lake with less dependence on long-haul road transport. It could also support reverse flows and integrate the harbour more closely with the national economy. TAZARA is entering a major rehabilitation cycle under a US\$1.408 billion revitalization arrangement. However, the Mpulungu spur is not confirmed as part of that programme and must still secure its own financing and cargo case.

Where the cargo could come from

A viable gateway will need diversified cargo flows. Mining-related freight is one of the clearest opportunities because eastern DRC requires machinery, fuel, chemicals, spare parts and construction materials.

A few anchor customers could provide enough volume to support regular lake services and further investment.

Agricultural and food products could form a second layer, including mealie meal, flour, sugar, fertilizer and edible oils. Cement, steel and general merchandise could add volume if Mpulungu becomes a consolidation point for goods from Lusaka, the Copperbelt and regional manufacturing centres.

Return cargo will also matter. Agricultural produce, fish products and minerals could reduce empty repositioning and improve vehicle and vessel utilization. The challenge is converting possible commodities into committed, schedulable and financeable cargo flows.

Building Northern Zambia's logistics economy

The largest economic effect may occur outside the harbour. Higher freight volumes could support warehouses, truck yards, cold-chain facilities, workshops, customs services and distribution centres around Mpulungu, Kasama, Mbala and Nseluka.

Agricultural producers could gain

better access to regional markets, while manufacturers and distributors could establish northern hubs instead of serving the region entirely from Lusaka or the Copperbelt. Corridor infrastructure changes regional economics not only by moving more tonnes, but by creating commercial density for businesses, investment and employment.

Mpulungu therefore offers Northern Province a third economic proposition alongside agriculture and tourism: logistics.

What must happen next

The US\$120 million project profile must become a final scope, financing structure, procurement plan and timetable. Offtake discussions must produce real cargo commitments. Vessel capacity, safety and regular sailing schedules must improve alongside the port works. Road access and the Nseluka railway must be tied to realistic demand and financing. Customs, documentation, insurance and operating procedures across Lake Tanganyika must also be coordinated so users can trust the full journey.

Mpulungu should not be presented as a competitor to Lobito or Dar es Salaam. Lobito provides Atlantic access, TAZARA connects Zambia to the Indian Ocean, and the North–South Corridor links the country to established southern markets. Mpulungu opens the Great Lakes economy.

Together, these routes strengthen Zambia's position as a multimodal regional logistics platform. The commercial test is whether Zambia can turn project preparation and corridor ambition into committed cargo, dependable services and bankable infrastructure.

LOGISTICS NOW INSIGHT

Mpulungu will not become a major gateway merely because the harbour is expanded or a railway is proposed. It will become one when Zambia offers cargo owners a dependable end-to-end system linking production, storage, customs, road, rail, lake transport and multiple regional markets.

Infrastructure creates the route. Commercial coordination creates the corridor. **LN**

KASOMENO-MWENDA: THE NEW CORRIDOR THAT COULD CHANGE COPPERBELT FREIGHT ECONNOMICS

The Kasomeno-Mwenda Corridor is being built around a straightforward commercial proposition: shorten the journey between the Copperbelt-Katanga mining region and the Port of Dar es Salaam while expanding Zambia's portfolio of trade gateways into the Democratic Republic of Congo. If successful, the project could reshape freight economics across Central Africa - not by replacing existing routes, but by giving transport operators another commercially competitive option.



For decades, freight moving through the Copperbelt has followed familiar routes. Copper cathodes, cobalt concentrates, mining consumables, heavy equipment and fuel have flowed through a network of established border crossings linking Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with exports then dispersing towards ports on both the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts.

Within that network, Kasumbalesa has emerged as the dominant commercial gateway serving the Copperbelt-Katanga mining economy. Although Zambia also trades with the DRC through border posts such as Mokambo, Sakania and Kipushi, the sheer concentration of mining-related

freight through Kasumbalesa has made it one of Africa's busiest and most strategically important land borders. It has also become one of the region's most persistent logistics bottlenecks, where congestion, border formalities and infrastructure constraints can extend transport cycles and increase the cost of moving cargo.

The Kasomeno–Mwenda Corridor has been conceived as a response to that challenge. Rather than replacing Kasumbalesa or rendering existing crossings obsolete, the project introduces another strategic freight gateway capable of serving the growing trade between Haut-Katanga Province and Zambia while offering a shorter route towards the Port of Dar es Salaam. In doing so, it represents more than a road project. It is an attempt to improve the economics of one of Africa's most valuable mineral supply chains.

Freight Economics, Not Road Construction

Large transport projects are often described in terms of kilometres of road built or the size of the infrastructure investment. Those metrics are important, but they do not explain why private operators choose one corridor over another. Freight decisions are ultimately commercial decisions. Mines, transport companies and commodity traders evaluate routes according to total transport cost, reliability, transit time and operational risk.

The Kasomeno–Mwenda Corridor has been designed with that commercial logic in mind. The project comprises approximately 184 kilometres of highway, a cable-stayed bridge across the Luapula River, a modern One Stop Border Post and associated logistics infrastructure linking southeastern DRC to Zambia's road network. According to the concessionaire, the route is expected to reduce the journey between Haut-Katanga and the Port of Dar es Salaam by approximately 500 kilometres. That reduction has the potential to lower fuel consumption, improve fleet utilisation, reduce tyre and maintenance costs and shorten delivery cycles for exporters serving eastern markets.

For mining companies operating hundreds of truck movements each month, relatively modest



savings on individual trips can translate into significant reductions in annual logistics expenditure. The commercial attraction of the corridor therefore lies not in the road itself, but in its ability to improve the competitiveness of freight moving through the Copperbelt–Katanga mining belt.

Why the Bridge Matters

The project's defining piece of infrastructure is the bridge across the Luapula River. While the highways on either side improve regional connectivity, the bridge transforms two separate national road networks into a continuous cross-border freight corridor. Without it, traffic would still rely on existing border crossings to move between Zambia and the DRC.

Recent construction updates indicate encouraging progress.

Foundation works have been completed, structural steel components have arrived on site for assembly, road construction continues on both approaches and work on the One Stop Border Post is advancing. Public project updates currently target phased completion during 2027, although, as with any major cross-border infrastructure project, final delivery will depend on construction progress, regulatory

approvals and operational readiness.

The significance of the bridge therefore extends beyond engineering. It creates a new commercial pathway capable of supporting future growth in regional mining production and trade.

Distance Alone Does Not Determine Cost

The prospect of reducing the journey to Dar es Salaam by approximately 500 kilometres has understandably attracted attention across the logistics sector. However, experienced transport operators recognise that a shorter route does not automatically produce lower transport costs. The corridor is being developed as a tolled concession, and the tariff structure has yet to be publicly announced. Until those charges are known, it is impossible to determine the net financial benefit of using the route.

Operators are therefore likely to evaluate the corridor using a broader set of commercial criteria. Fuel savings, vehicle utilisation, maintenance costs, customs clearance times, road quality, toll charges and schedule reliability will all influence route selection. A corridor that shortens the journey but introduces high toll costs or operational delays may

prove less attractive than existing routes. Conversely, if efficient border management and reliable infrastructure offset concession charges, the corridor could become a preferred option for freight destined for eastern Africa.

Ultimately, the project's success will depend on reducing the total cost of moving cargo rather than simply reducing the distance travelled.

Corridor Performance Extends Beyond the Border

Infrastructure functions as a system, not as a collection of individual projects. Even if the Kasomeno–Mwenda Corridor delivers faster road transport and more efficient border processing, overall freight performance will still depend on downstream logistics. Port operations at Dar es Salaam, customs efficiency, inland transport capacity within Tanzania and the performance of connecting infrastructure such as TAZARA will all influence end-to-end transit times.

This broader systems perspective is increasingly important as governments across the region invest in transport corridors. A well-engineered highway cannot deliver its full commercial value if congestion simply shifts to another point in the supply chain. For exporters, what matters is the performance of the complete logistics chain rather than the quality of any single asset.

Strengthening Zambia's Gateway Network

One misconception surrounding the project is that it will replace Kasumbalesa or fundamentally alter the role of existing border crossings. That is unlikely. Kasumbalesa, Mokambo, Sakania and Kipushi each serve different geographies, industries and freight flows, and all will remain important components of Zambia's cross-border trade with the DRC.

The more significant implication is that the country's logistics network becomes more diversified. Additional gateways provide operators with greater flexibility, distribute traffic more efficiently and reduce exposure to disruptions affecting any single crossing. As mining production expands and



His Excellency President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and His Excellency President Hakainde Hichilema of the Republic of Zambia (Zambia) officiate groundbreaking ceremony at the bridge site on the Luapula River - October 2023. Credit: GED Africa

regional trade volumes continue to grow, that resilience becomes increasingly valuable.

From a national perspective, the corridor therefore represents an expansion of Zambia's logistics architecture rather than a redistribution of existing traffic.

Part of a Changing Regional Logistics Landscape

The Kasomeno–Mwenda Corridor is one element of a much broader transformation taking place across Southern and Central Africa. The Lobito Corridor is creating new access to the Atlantic Ocean, TAZARA continues to underpin eastern trade through Dar es Salaam, and ongoing investment in Mpulungu Port seeks to strengthen Zambia's connection with the Great Lakes region. Together, these projects reflect a gradual shift towards a more diversified regional transport network in which exporters have greater choice over how goods reach international markets.

For logistics companies, the strategic question is no longer which single corridor will dominate regional trade. It is how different corridors will compete on cost, reliability and service quality, and how operators position themselves to take advantage of those changing dynamics.

Final Thoughts

The Kasomeno–Mwenda Corridor should not be judged solely by the kilometres of road it adds or the bridge it constructs. Its true

significance lies in whether it improves the economics of freight movement across one of the world's most important copper-producing regions.

If the corridor delivers lower operating costs, reliable border performance and seamless integration with the wider eastern logistics chain, it could become an important addition to Central Africa's transport network. If it fails to achieve those objectives, it will remain an impressive infrastructure project without fundamentally changing freight behaviour.

Either way, the project illustrates an important reality about modern logistics. Competitive advantage is no longer created simply by building infrastructure. It is created by building infrastructure that moves cargo more efficiently, more reliably and at a lower total cost than the alternatives.

Logistics Now Insight

The Kasomeno–Mwenda Corridor is not competing with Kasumbalesa, Mokambo or Sakania. It is competing with transport cost, transit time and supply chain risk. Its long-term success will be determined not by the number of trucks that use it, but by whether it becomes the most commercially efficient route for freight moving between the Copperbelt–Katanga mining region and eastern Africa. **LN**

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BEYOND ROADS: HOW ZAMBIA'S REVISED MCC COMPACT SUPPORTS TRADE, MINING AND AGRICULTURE

The US\$491 million programme aligns infrastructure, logistics, agriculture and critical minerals development behind Zambia's Lobito Corridor strategy.

Zambia's latest amendment to the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact is about far more than road rehabilitation. It represents one of the clearest signals yet that the country is aligning major international development financing behind the Lobito Corridor and the broader goal of transforming trade, mining and agricultural production

into long-term economic growth.

With US\$491 million committed under the revised programme, the focus is shifting from infrastructure as a public works project to infrastructure as a catalyst for investment, exports and industrial development.

Zambia and the United States Government have signed an amendmeant to the MCC



Illustration: President Hakainde Hichilema and MCC CEO Alice Albright, against a backdrop of trade, mining and agriculture – sectors supported by Zambia’s revised MCC Compact.

Compact that realigns programme investments toward supporting the country’s agricultural and critical minerals sectors through the Lobito Corridor, one of Africa’s most significant emerging trade and logistics routes.

The amended Compact will see the United States Government contribute US\$458 million, while Zambia will provide US\$33 million, bringing the total programme value to approximately US\$491 million.

Secretary to the Treasury Felix Nkulukusa said the revised programme is designed to unlock economic opportunities and accelerate sustainable growth through targeted infrastructure investments and governance reforms.

“The programme will unlock economic opportunities and advance sustainable growth through

strategic infrastructure investments and governance reforms” Nkulukusa said.

Under the Roads and Access Project, priority road segments identified for rehabilitation have now been aligned with the Lobito Corridor in the North-Western and Copperbelt provinces, regions that are increasingly becoming focal points for mining investment, agricultural production and cross-border trade.

The decision reflects a broader evolution in Zambia’s infrastructure strategy. Rather than treating roads, energy, agriculture and mining as separate development priorities, the revised Compact positions them within an integrated corridor development framework designed to stimulate economic activity and private sector investment.

Nkulukusa described the Lobito Corridor as one of Africa’s most important emerging trade and logistics corridors, noting that compact investments will extend beyond transport infrastructure to include access to finance for electricity, irrigation, logistics, processing equipment and supporting infrastructure for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The programme will also support project developers across agricultural value chains, helping to strengthen production, aggregation, processing and export capacity in areas expected to benefit from improved corridor connectivity.

For the logistics sector, the implications are potentially significant. Improved road infrastructure linked to the corridor is expected to strengthen freight movement between mining operations, agricultural production zones, logistics hubs and export markets. At the same time, investments in processing facilities, energy access and productive infrastructure could create new opportunities for transport operators, warehouse developers, freight forwarders, equipment suppliers and logistics service providers.

The revised Compact also includes reforms aimed at increasing private investment in grain production and trade while strengthening governance within the mining sector to encourage mineral exploration and development.

Taken together, these measures suggest that Zambia’s corridor

“The ultimate measure of success, however, will not be the value of funding committed or the kilometres of road rehabilitated.

It will be whether these investments generate new exports, higher freight volumes, increased processing capacity and greater private-sector investment along the corridor.”

strategy is becoming about much more than moving goods. The Lobito Corridor is increasingly being positioned as an economic development platform capable of attracting investment, supporting industrialisation, improving market access and strengthening regional supply chains.

The ultimate measure of success, however, will not be the value of funding committed or the kilometres of road rehabilitated. It will be whether these investments generate new exports, higher freight volumes, increased processing capacity and greater private-sector investment along the corridor.

The amended MCC Compact represents an important step in that direction and reinforces the growing importance of the Lobito Corridor in shaping Zambia’s future trade, logistics and industrial development agenda. **LN**

THE ECOSYSTEM BUILDER

Maybin Mudenda built his entrepreneurial portfolio by following one commercial problem into the next. His journey offers a useful blueprint for how Zambia can turn new trade corridors into productive economic systems.

Following the Economic Activity

Maybin Mudenda gets bored easily, although not in the conventional sense of losing interest in business or walking away when the hard work begins. For him, boredom arrives when a problem has become familiar, the operating model understood and the intellectual challenge begins to recede. He is energized by the uncertainty of the next problem and the possibility of finding a commercially useful solution.

That instinct has taken him through logistics, insurance, mining services, commodities, trade finance and infrastructure. On paper, the portfolio appears diversified. In practice, it follows a disciplined logic: use the customers, relationships, knowledge and capabilities created by one business to identify and solve the next problem around it.

His commercial instincts appeared early. As a schoolboy, Mudenda sold compact discs and blank cassette tapes on train journeys between Livingstone and Lusaka. The enterprise was modest, but the instinct behind it would remain consistent throughout his career: observe movement, understand what people need and place a solution in their path.

His first significant professional exposure to logistics came through work supporting humanitarian operations involving Oxfam and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Western Province. There, logistics was not a background function. Procurement, planning, transport, documentation and execution had to work



together. Failure in one part could compromise the entire operation. Mudenda later moved into

insurance, a transition less disconnected than it might appear. Logistics had exposed him to

movement; insurance exposed him to the risk surrounding that movement.

An opportunity to sell insurance through ZIGI Insurance took him to the Copperbelt, where mines represented concentrated economic activity, valuable assets and significant insurance requirements. They also exposed him to contractors, equipment, cargo, finance and operational continuity.

He followed production because production was generating problems businesses would pay to solve.

His involvement in moving a major copper consignment from the Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa crystallized the lesson. A copper transaction requires far more than a truck and a destination. It needs a producer, buyer, transporter, insurer, financier, border agents, documentation, security, route planning and working capital.

The truck is the visible asset. The real business is the system that keeps it moving.

From Products to Platforms

Selling insurance gave Mudenda insight into customers' risks but also exposed the limitations of operating only as an intermediary for products designed and controlled by others.

That led to African Grey Insurance and later Insizwe Private Brokers. The opportunity evolved from selling cover to understanding operations, identifying exposures, negotiating appropriate protection and remaining involved when claims arose.

Insurance also provided a privileged view into clients' operating lives. A transporter did not only need insurance. It needed cargo, working capital, maintenance, security and predictable routes.

A mining supplier needed finance to procure inventory, access to manufacturers and the ability to deliver on time. Commodity transactions depended on funding, warehousing, documentation, transportation and risk management.

Mudenda's curiosity increasingly moved beyond the product being sold toward the commercial system in which it was being used.

The Strategy of Adjacency

The danger in a career spanning several sectors is undisciplined

diversification. Mudenda's approach has instead been to enter businesses adjacent to problems he already understands.

Clients overlap. Relationships transfer. Information compounds.

Insurance provides insight into operational risk. Finance reveals why businesses cannot execute. Commodity trading exposes failures in sourcing, storage and delivery. Transport reveals where physical movement breaks down.

Curiosity identifies the next constraint; adjacency ensures that solving it reinforces what has already been built. In random diversification, businesses compete for attention. In an ecosystem, each increases the usefulness of the others. Mudenda Capital represents the point at which that strategy



Agriculture does not merely consume logistics services. It creates the cargo, transactions and recurring movement that allow logistics businesses to grow. The corridor is the platform. The ecosystem determines whether the platform creates value."

- MAYBIN MADIBA MUDENDA

expanded into a broader investment and transaction platform spanning trade finance, commodity transactions, private equity, investment banking and project financing.

The underlying problem is familiar across African commerce. A supplier wins a contract but cannot finance inventory. A transporter acquires a truck but lacks working capital for fuel, tyres and maintenance. A warehouse is constructed without committed cargo. A processor installs equipment without securing predictable volumes.

The opportunity exists, but the ecosystem around it is incomplete.

Mudenda's experience produces a practical investment test: it is not enough to ask whether an asset can be purchased. The more important question is whether the commercial system surrounding that asset can sustain it.

"A truck without reliable cargo is not yet a logistics business. It is a financed asset searching for work," Mudenda says passionately.

Capital must therefore follow cargo, contracts and productive activity.

Returning to Physical Trade

Seneca Commodities brought the portfolio back to the physical movement of goods through commodity sourcing, industrial and mining supplies, logistics support and warehousing for goods in transit.

Here the pieces converge. Insurance manages risk. Capital enables execution. Commodities create transactions. Warehousing protects and positions goods. Transport completes movement. Partnerships allow the system to operate at scale.

Mudenda's participation in logistics businesses, including Southern Logix, follows the same philosophy. The objective is not necessarily to own every part of the chain, but to identify friction and determine whether a business, investment or partnership can remove it.

This matters in African logistics, where fragmentation can be as damaging as missing infrastructure. A country may have trucks but poor cargo visibility; warehouses but weak production; railways but inadequate last-mile connectivity;



modern borders but insufficient support services.

The most effective orchestrator does not perform every task. It ensures that the tasks work together.

Local Content That Outlives Construction

Mudenda's journey also suggests a more ambitious definition of local content.

Procurement percentages, local employment and domestic sourcing matter, but the deeper question is what remains after a contract ends.

Did a local company acquire capabilities usable on the next

project? Did it strengthen its systems, technical knowledge and balance sheet? Did temporary participation become a permanent position within the trade ecosystem?

Corridor investment should develop Zambian businesses across transport, insurance, finance, engineering, warehousing, agricultural aggregation, technology, customs, maintenance, security and industrial supply.

The objective should not simply be to give local firms a share of construction expenditure. It should be to create companies that continue earning because commerce continues moving.

Production Before Movement

For all the attention placed on infrastructure, logistics remains derived demand. There must first be something to move.

Mining already provides substantial freight volumes, but agriculture offers Zambia an opportunity to diversify cargo and extend logistics activity beyond traditional mining routes.

Agriculture generates movement before production begins as seed, fertilizer, machinery, irrigation equipment and fuel reach farms. After harvest come aggregation, grading, storage, processing, packaging and distribution. Perishables require cold chains; grain requires controlled storage; processors need predictable inbound volumes.

Agriculture therefore does more than consume logistics. It creates the recurring cargo and transactions that allow transporters, warehouses, equipment suppliers, financiers, insurers and technology providers to grow.

Production creates the volume. Logistics converts that volume into commerce.

This is why Zambia's agriculture, industrialization and corridor strategies cannot be separate conversations.

A Corridor Is Only the Beginning

Zambia is entering a period of renewed corridor investment. Lobito is reopening Atlantic access. TAZARA is positioned for rehabilitation. Kasomeno–Mwenda could reshape freight movement between Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mpulungu offers access toward the Great Lakes, while Kazungula has strengthened the North–South Corridor.

Each solves an access problem. None solves the complete commercial problem.

A corridor may reduce distance while transporters still lack secure parking, maintenance, finance and return cargo. A railway may increase capacity while producers cannot aggregate sufficient volumes. A modern border may accelerate clearance while warehousing, cargo technology and support services remain underdeveloped.

The corridor is the platform. The

ecosystem determines whether the platform creates value.

Governments therefore need to plan beyond engineering milestones. The questions are commercial: What goods generate the cargo? Where will they be aggregated and processed? Which local businesses provide the services? How will they be financed? Who coordinates the information and ensures the system works together?

The Orchestrator Ambition

Zambia has confronted this challenge before. Despite the weaknesses of the Kaunda-era economic model, it understood an important spatial principle: production and transport infrastructure needed to be planned together.

Manufacturing and industrial activity developed around Kafue, Kabwe and the Copperbelt. Zambia Railways connected productive centers along the country's central spine, while TAZARA provided an eastern outlet through Kapiri Mposhi.

The lesson is not to recreate the ownership structures of the past, but to recover the instinct for economic coordination and combine it with private capital, commercial discipline, technology and local enterprise.

Kapiri Mposhi again illustrates the opportunity. It connects Zambia Railways and TAZARA, sits on the Great North Road and is surrounded by agricultural production with potential for aggregation, processing

and distribution.

Its ambition could extend beyond being a place where goods change trains. It could aggregate and process agricultural output, consolidate mining and industrial supplies, maintain transport equipment and host finance, insurance, security, customs and technology services. That moves Zambia toward a larger ambition: not merely being a transit country, but becoming a logistics orchestrator for Southern and Central Africa.

An orchestrator understands cargo before it moves. It knows where goods originate, which routes are available, where they can be stored, where value can be added and which commercial services are missing.

Mudenda's journey is ultimately a story about the same principle.

He entered insurance because economic activity created risk. He moved toward capital because credible businesses lacked execution capacity. He entered commodities because finance needed to connect with actual trade, and logistics because trade ultimately depends on storage, transport and delivery.

At every stage, curiosity revealed another problem. Strategy ensured that the next solution leveraged the businesses, relationships and knowledge already created.

That may be the larger lesson for Zambia's corridor economy.

Lobito, TAZARA, Kasomeno–

Mwenda, Mpulungu and the North-South Corridor should not be treated simply as separate transport projects. They are components of a wider system connecting production, capital, logistics services and markets.

Zambia already has the geography and productive potential. Its next challenge is building the commercial ecosystem capable of turning those advantages into an orchestrator role.

Mudenda does not discard a solved problem when he moves to the next challenge. He turns the first solution into leverage.

Zambia's corridor strategy should do the same. **LN**



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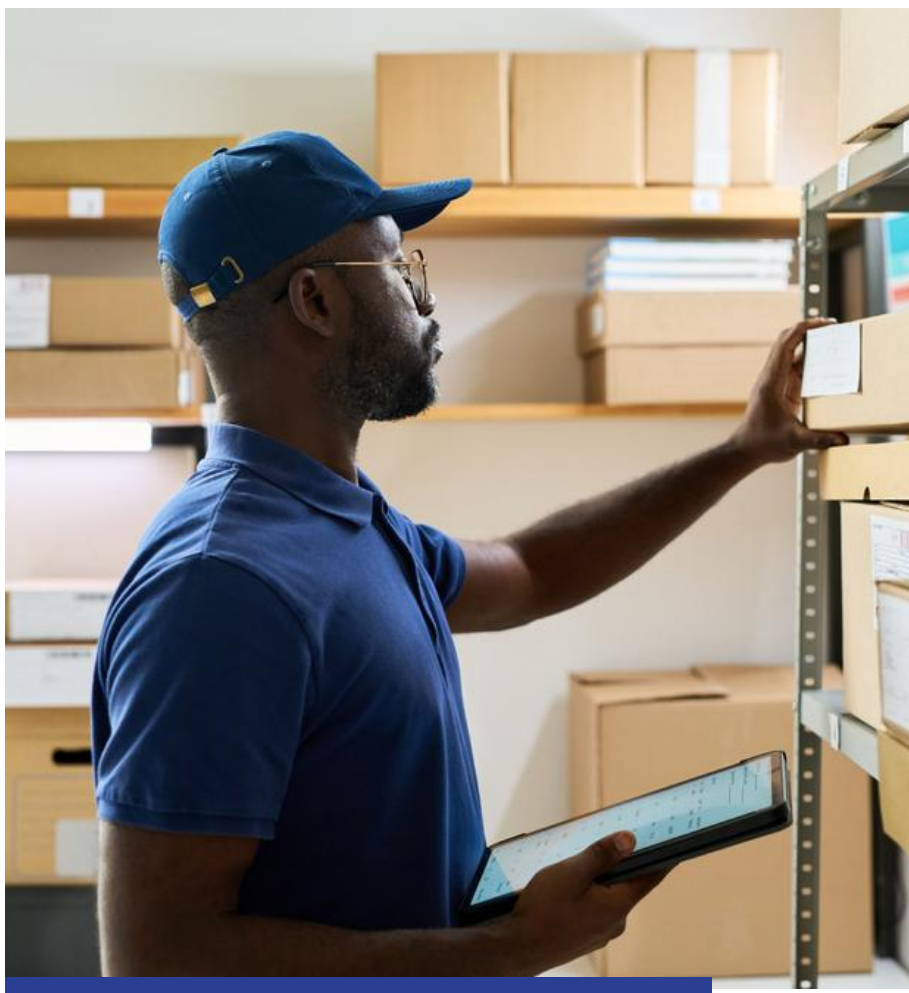


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WHY GOOD BUSINESSES DON'T ALWAYS GET FUNDED

What the bank is actually Looking at - and what your credit file may be missing



There is a conversation that repeats itself across Zambian business almost word for word. An operator says the banks do not understand his business. A credit officer, describing the same file, says the numbers were not there. Each believes he is describing a failure on the other side. Usually they are describing the same failure, from opposite ends.

The gap is rarely appetite. Idle capital earns nothing, and lenders in this market are actively looking for businesses they can put money behind. The gap is evidence - and the difference between a business that gets funded and one that does not is more often a documentation problem than a performance problem.

What Lenders Actually Look For

Strip away the forms and the covenant language and a credit decision reduces to one question: can this business generate enough cash, reliably enough, to service this facility - and can someone other than the borrower demonstrate it?

That second half carries more weight than most operators expect. A credit officer is not deciding whether to believe you. He is deciding whether he can defend the file to a committee, an auditor and, eventually, a regulator. Sincerity does not travel through that chain. Records do.

Four things carry a file:

Cash generation that repeats. Not a good year. A pattern. Lenders are looking for the floor, not the ceiling - the worst quarter in the record tells them more than the best one.

Verifiable records. Bank statements that reflect the trading described. Management accounts produced monthly rather than assembled once a year for the Zambia Revenue Authority. Contracts and invoices that reconcile to what came into the account.

Behaviour under pressure. Payment history, prior restructures, how a previous facility was handled when things tightened. A business that disclosed a problem early and renegotiated is a stronger credit than one that went quiet and cured it privately.

Separation between the business and the owner. Where drawings are irregular and undocumented, a lender cannot tell what the business actually costs to run, which means it cannot tell what the business can actually afford to repay.

There is also a mechanic operators rarely see. Under IFRS 9, lenders recognise expected credit losses from the point a loan is originated and reassess those losses as the credit risk changes. The practical consequence is that uncertainty around a borrower's performance is not simply treated as neutral while the lender waits for clarification. Weak or incomplete information can feed into the lender's assessment of risk, provisioning and ultimately the terms on which credit is offered. A borrower whose performance cannot be evidenced is therefore not merely harder to approve; the uncertainty itself can make the credit more expensive. Understanding that point explains many declines that can feel arbitrary from the outside.

Where Operators Fall Short

The failures are consistent, and almost all of them are fixable in advance.

The most common is banking. Revenue arrives across cash, mobile money and two or three accounts, some of them personal. The account submitted for assessment then shows a fraction of real turnover, and the operator is left arguing that the business is larger than the evidence he has provided. The lender cannot lend against an assertion.

The second is timing. Operators typically approach a lender at the point of need - when a contract has already been awarded, or worse, when working capital is already tight. That is the weakest possible moment to open a relationship. Facilities are approved on history, and history takes time to



accumulate.

The third is framing the request around the asset instead of the contract. "I need a truck" invites the question of how the truck will be paid for. "I have a twelve-month haulage contract that this truck services, here are the terms, here is the margin" answers it. The asset is the security; the contract is the repayment. Lead with the repayment.

The fourth is silence. When a business slips, the instinct is to stay quiet and trade out of it. From the lender's side, an unexplained missed payment is the point at which the file is reclassified and the relationship changes character. A borrower who calls before the arrears is having an entirely different conversation to one who calls after.

What a Sound Business Can Do About It

None of the remedies are expensive. They are mostly a matter of doing ordinary things consistently and early.

Run everything through one business account, and start at least twelve months before you intend to borrow. This single change does more than any presentation. It converts your trading into a record a third party can read.

Produce monthly management accounts. They do not need to be audited or elegant. They need to exist, to be produced on the same basis each month, and to reconcile to the bank statement. A rough set produced consistently is worth considerably more than a polished set produced once.

Pay yourself a salary. Stop taking ad hoc drawings. It clarifies the business's true cost base for the

lender and, more usefully, for you. Open the relationship before you need it. Meet the asset finance team. Let them see the business trading normally, not under pressure. When the request comes, it lands on someone who already has context.

Bring the contract, the offtake or the order book alongside the quotation for the asset. And bring the downside: what happens to repayment if the contract ends early, what the equipment is worth secondhand, who else you could service. An operator who has thought about the failure case is more credible, not less. Disclose early, always.

The Point Both Sides Tend To Miss

Lenders carry part of this too. Credit processes designed around audited financials and formal collateral do not fit the way most Zambian businesses actually operate, and the institutions that learn to read alternative evidence — mobile money flows, offtake agreements, supplier payment histories — will reach good businesses that their competitors are declining on form rather than on substance.

But the operator carries the part he can control. The lender's job is not to believe you. It is to be able to prove you, to people who will never meet you. Make that easy, and most of what looks like a closed door turns out to have been a paperwork problem all along.

About The Author

Malete Nyeleti is an ACCA-trained business and financial consultant with more than a decade of experience across audit, advisory and business development, including seven years with Deloitte & Touche Southern Africa. He currently serves as Lead Consultant at Sunfield Energy.

THE INTELLIGENT BORDER

How artificial intelligence could become Africa's next logistics infrastructure.

The World Bank recently demonstrated that satellites and artificial intelligence can monitor truck queues across more than 70 African border crossings. On the surface, the project appears to be a technical breakthrough in traffic observation. In reality, it raises a much larger question: if artificial intelligence can already see Africa's borders, could it eventually help manage them? As Southern Africa invests billions of dollars in transport corridors, railways and border infrastructure, AI may emerge as the missing operational layer that transforms border crossings from reactive checkpoints into protective intelligent logistics systems.

The Border Problem

When people think about infrastructure, they usually visualize concrete assets: dual-carriageway highways, steel rail tracks, expansive cargo terminals, and deep-water ports. Across Southern Africa, massive investments are currently expanding these physical assets. Major regional corridors like the Lobito Corridor, the rehabilitation of TAZARA and Zambia Railways, and modern bridges like Kazungula are dramatically increasing physical trade capacity.

However, expanding raw processing hardware without optimizing the software layer leads to systemic bottlenecks. For decades, border crossings have operated under a purely reactive paradigm. Customs officials respond after queues form. Fleet operators adjust transit schedules only when drivers call in reporting multi-day delays. Importers and exporters absorb unpredictability as an unavoidable cost of doing business.



Consider a typical commercial transport scenario. A truck carrying goods leaves Kitwe bound for the port of Durban. The fleet manager can accurately calculate fuel usage, plan the highway route, and monitor GPS coordinates in real time. Yet the moment that vehicle approaches an international border checkpoint, all predictive calculations break down. Clearing customs could take two hours, eight hours, or twenty-four hours. Traditional logistics software simply cannot answer the question before the vehicle joins the queue.

This lack of visibility ripples throughout the entire economy. Manufacturers hold expensive safety stock because component deliveries are unreliable. Retailers mark up consumer prices to cover inventory holding costs. Working capital remains locked in cargo idling on tarmac instead of generating economic growth. What has traditionally been treated as an inevitable cost of cross-border trade

is actually a data fragmentation problem waiting for a modern solution.

The Technical Breakthrough

In July 2026, the World Bank unveiled a major technical proof of concept. Researchers demonstrated that orbital satellites, paired with computer vision models, can continuously identify, count, and track heavy commercial vehicles across more than seventy border crossings throughout Africa.

The technical achievement relies on combining high-resolution optical imagery with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR). Unlike traditional cameras, radar-based satellite sensors penetrate dense cloud cover and operate seamlessly in total darkness. This allows automated algorithms to maintain continuous, 24/7 visibility over critical trade corridors regardless of weather conditions.

For technology professionals, the

real innovation is not simply counting trucks from space. The real value comes from data transformation. When congestion becomes continuously measurable, it becomes mathematically analyzable. When raw visual data is aggregated over time, hidden correlations emerge.

When those correlations become consistent, predictive machine learning models become possible. This transition marks the exact moment artificial intelligence evolves from a trendy corporate buzzword into a critical operational capability. Just as modern healthcare uses predictive models to detect illness early, or financial platforms use machine learning to stop fraud before transactions clear, cross-border logistics is entering an era of proactive disruption management.

Integrating Disparate Data Streams

Border crossings are naturally data-dense environments, but historically that data has lived in isolated corporate and government silos. A modern enterprise trade platform acts as an intelligence aggregator, fusing multiple distinct data streams:

- **Vehicle Telematics:** Continuous GPS location, speed, and engine telemetry broadcast by commercial transport fleets.
- **Customs Information Systems:** Digital clearance logs, inspection queues, document processing timestamps, and tax verification records.
- **Weighbridge & Port Sensors:** Automated axle weight measurements, gate pass scans, and terminal container handling metrics.
- **Geospatial & Environmental Feeds:** Satellite radar imagery, weather forecasts, and local road incident reports.

Viewed in isolation, none of these data sources tells the full story. A satellite image confirms a long line of stationary trucks, but cannot explain whether the bottleneck is due to system downtime, reduced customs staffing, or a broken

weighbridge. Customs databases show transaction processing times, but have zero visibility into incoming traffic volume approaching fifty kilometers away.

An AI-powered logistics platform solves this by synthesizing these inputs into a single unified operational picture. Imagine a real-time scenario at the Kasumbalesa border. On a Thursday afternoon, telematics data indicates an unusual spike in freight traffic heading toward the border.

Historical customs records show that similar traffic surges regularly create severe Friday morning bottlenecks. Meanwhile, weather feeds forecast heavy overnight rainfall, and satellite radar confirms queue formation is starting earlier than normal.

Instead of reporting delays after hundreds of trucks are already trapped, the predictive model issues an automated alert eight hours in advance. Transport managers can temporarily delay departures, reroute cargo through alternate corridors, or inform destination facilities before delivery contracts are breached.

Customs agencies can proactively reallocate inspection staff while traffic is still manageable. Uncertainty is replaced with actionable intelligence.

AI as The Connective Tissue of Regional Trade

For over a century, economic competition between nations was decided purely by physical capacity: who built the largest ports, the widest highways, or the longest railway networks. Southern Africa is entering an era where physical infrastructure is increasingly interconnected. Consequently, competitive advantage is shifting from physical capacity to operational intelligence.

Artificial intelligence does not replace physical roads or rail lines; it acts as the digital connective tissue that allows physical assets to operate as an intelligent network. Think of it like air traffic control. Airports provide the runways, but digital tracking systems and predictive algorithms ensure aircraft

land, unload, and take off safely without catastrophic overcrowding.

This digital intelligence layer is especially vital for the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Policy reforms and tariff reductions are essential, but trade cannot flourish if physical goods remain stuck at border posts for days. By giving governments and logistics operators visibility over regional supply chains, AI drastically lowers the total cost of moving goods across borders.

The Roadmap: Implementation Realities

Now, we recognize that software is not a cure-all solution. An algorithm cannot repair a damaged bridge, fill a road pothole, or fix ineffective administrative policy. Predictive border management requires disciplined technology execution and cross-border cooperation:

- **Open Data Standards & APIs:** Customs software, port management systems, and private logistics platforms must connect through secure, standardized interfaces.
- **Robust Cybersecurity & Data Governance:** Commercial trade data must be protected with enterprise-grade encryption and clear legal protocols respecting national sovereignty.
- **Institutional Alignment:** Border personnel and administrative staff must be trained to use predictive dashboards to drive daily operational decisions.

The World Bank's satellite project demonstrates that the technical building blocks are ready today. The long-term transformation of African trade will not only be measured in kilometers of new asphalt or tons of steel rail. It will be measured by our ability to harness data, predict bottlenecks before they occur, and build an intelligent logistics ecosystem for the entire continent.

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THE HIDDEN COST OF KEEPING FLEET VEHICLES TOO LONG

Why delaying fleet replacement could be costing your business more than you think

For many organisations, replacing fleet vehicles is often viewed as an expense to be postponed rather than an investment to be planned.

On paper, the logic appears sound. If a vehicle has been fully paid for, why replace it? Surely another year of service means another year without monthly repayments or capital expenditure.

Unfortunately, fleet economics are rarely that simple. The true cost of an ageing fleet is often hidden across multiple areas of the business. Maintenance bills increase gradually. Fuel consumption creeps upward. Vehicle reliability begins to decline. Drivers lose productive hours while vehicles are being repaired. Customers experience delays. Workshop visits become more frequent, and management attention shifts from growing the business to keeping ageing assets on the road. Individually, these costs may appear manageable. Collectively, they can become significant.

Maintenance Costs That Keep Rising

Every vehicle reaches a point

where maintenance shifts from routine servicing to component replacement. Suspension systems, transmissions, clutches, injectors, cooling systems and electrical components all have finite service lives. As vehicles age, these failures become more frequent and increasingly expensive.

The challenge is that maintenance costs rarely rise in a straight line. They often remain relatively stable for several years before increasing sharply as major components begin reaching the end of their operating life.

For fleet managers, recognising this inflection point is critical. Downtime Is More Expensive Than Repairs. Repair costs are easy to measure. Downtime is not. Every day a delivery vehicle, sales vehicle or service truck sits in a workshop represents lost productivity. Drivers may still need to be paid. Deliveries may be delayed. Customers may need alternative arrangements. Rental vehicles may be hired at additional cost.

For logistics operators, mining contractors and service businesses, vehicle availability is often more valuable than squeezing another year out of an ageing asset.



Reliability has an economic value.

Fuel Efficiency Slowly Declines.

Even well-maintained vehicles become less efficient over time. Engine wear, ageing components and evolving vehicle technology all contribute to higher operating costs.

When fuel represents one of the largest operating expenses for commercial fleets, even modest reductions in efficiency can translate into substantial annual costs across dozens or hundreds of vehicles.

The cost increase is gradual enough that many organisations fail to notice it.

Safety and Compliance

Modern vehicles continue to introduce improvements in braking systems, stability control, collision avoidance technologies and occupant protection.

While older vehicles may remain roadworthy, newer fleets often



provide improved driver safety and reduced operational risk.

For organisations operating under strict health, safety and environmental requirements, fleet renewal is increasingly becoming part of broader corporate risk management.

Customer Perception Matters

Fleet vehicles are often the most visible representation of a company's brand.

A clean, reliable and modern fleet projects professionalism and operational excellence. Ageing vehicles that frequently break down can send the opposite message, regardless of the quality of service being delivered.

For customer-facing businesses, fleet condition forms part of the overall customer experience.

The Replacement Decision

The question is not whether vehicles

should eventually be replaced.

The question is whether they are being replaced at the optimal point. Replace them too early and valuable asset life is lost. Replace them too late and the business begins absorbing rising maintenance costs, operational disruption and declining efficiency.

The objective is to identify the point where the total cost of ownership begins to exceed the cost of replacement. That point is different for every organisation.

A Shift Towards Lifecycle Fleet Management

Around the world, fleet operators are moving away from the mindset of "run it until it fails." Instead, they are managing vehicles as strategic assets with planned replacement cycles based on utilisation, operating costs, reliability and residual value.

This lifecycle approach allows businesses to budget more

effectively, improve fleet availability and reduce unexpected costs.

As Zambia's automotive market continues to mature, fleet managers are gaining access to more structured replacement options, including dealer-supported trade-in programmes, certified pre-owned vehicles and flexible financing solutions.

These developments are encouraging organisations to think differently about fleet ownership.

Rather than asking, "How much longer can we keep this vehicle?" the more strategic question may be, "When does replacing it become the more profitable decision?"

For businesses that depend on vehicles every day, the answer could have a significant impact on profitability, customer service and long-term operational performance.

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WHEN SHOULD A COMPANY REPLACE A FLEET VEHICLE?

How fleet managers can identify the optimal point to sell an ageing vehicle and acquire a replacement

Replacing a fleet vehicle should not be based only on age. Some vehicles operate efficiently for many years. Others become costly much earlier because of mileage, operating conditions, utilisation and maintenance history.

The optimal replacement point is reached when the cost and risk of retaining the vehicle begins to outweigh the financial benefit of delaying replacement. Fleet managers therefore need to consider several variables together.

1. Maintenance Cost Trend

The first question is not simply how much the vehicle costs to maintain today. The more useful question is: How quickly are maintenance costs rising?

A single expensive repair does not always justify replacement. However, repeated repairs across several systems may indicate that the vehicle is entering a more costly phase of its lifecycle.

Fleet managers should track:

- Routine servicing costs
- Unscheduled repair costs
- Replacement parts
- Labour costs
- Breakdown frequency
- Recovery expenses
- Maintenance cost per kilometre

A consistently rising cost per kilometre can be an early warning that retaining the vehicle is becoming uneconomic.

2. Downtime

Maintenance expenditure tells only part of the story. A vehicle may have manageable repair bills while still spending too much time off the road.

Downtime can result in:

- Missed deliveries



- Delayed service calls
- Lost revenue
- Overtime costs
- Vehicle rental costs
- Reduced customer satisfaction
- Lower driver productivity

For critical fleet vehicles, the cost of downtime may be more important than the repair bill itself. Fleet managers should calculate both the number of downtime days and the estimated business cost of each unavailable day.

3. Fuel Consumption

Fuel efficiency can decline gradually as vehicles age. A small increase in fuel use may appear insignificant when looking at one vehicle. Across an entire fleet and over thousands of kilometres, however, the additional cost can become substantial. The analysis should compare:

- Current fuel consumption
- Original or historical fleet consumption
- Consumption of equivalent newer models
- Annual kilometres travelled

- Expected future fuel prices

The fuel savings available from a replacement vehicle should form part of the replacement decision.

4. Utilisation and Business Criticality

Not every vehicle should follow the same replacement cycle.

A lightly used administrative vehicle may remain economical for longer than a delivery truck operating daily under heavy loads. Replacement decisions should reflect:

- Annual mileage
- Load carried
- Road conditions
- Operating environment
- Journey frequency
- Vehicle function
- Customer impact
- Availability of backup vehicles

Vehicles that are central to revenue generation may need earlier replacement because the cost of failure is higher.

5. Residual Value

Fleet vehicles usually lose value

as they age and accumulate mileage.

There is often a point at which delaying disposal produces only a small amount of additional useful life but results in a significant reduction in resale or trade-in value.

Fleet managers should monitor:

- Current market value
- Expected value in twelve months
- Expected value in twenty-four months
- Demand for the vehicle model
- Condition
- Service history
- Dealer trade-in value
- Private-sale value

A vehicle may still be mechanically usable but financially approaching the best point for disposal.

6. Financing and Replacement Cost

The cost of a new vehicle must be compared against the complete cost of keeping the existing one.

The replacement calculation should include:

- Purchase price
- Deposit
- Monthly repayments
- Interest
- Insurance
- Registration
- Expected maintenance
- Fuel savings
- Warranty benefits
- Trade-in value
- Expected resale value

The replacement decision should be based on net cost rather than the sticker price alone.

7. Safety and Compliance

A vehicle may still operate while no longer meeting the safety, operational or corporate requirements of the organisation.

Fleet managers should consider:

- Braking performance
- Driver-assistance systems
- Crash protection
- Emissions requirements
- Client site requirements
- Mining or industrial compliance rules
- Insurance conditions
- Corporate health and safety policies

For some organisations, safety and compliance can trigger replacement even before

maintenance costs become excessive.

8. Reliability Risk

A vehicle that breaks down unpredictably creates planning uncertainty.

The organisation may not know which delivery will be delayed, which customer will be affected or when the next major repair will occur.

Fleet managers should examine:

- Breakdown frequency
- Repeat mechanical failures
- Parts availability
- Repair lead times
- Vehicle age
- Mileage
- Workshop recommendations
- Driver reports

Once reliability becomes unpredictable, the vehicle may be creating more business risk than financial value.

The Replacement Decision Matrix

A simple decision framework can score each vehicle against six categories. A vehicle showing high-risk results across several categories should be prioritised for replacement assessment.

A Practical Replacement Formula

Fleet managers can compare the annual cost of keeping the vehicle with the annualised cost of replacing it.

Cost of Keeping

- Maintenance
- Repairs
- Fuel
- Downtime
- Insurance
- Licence and compliance
- Expected loss in resale value

Cost of Replacing

- Finance or capital cost
- Insurance
- Scheduled maintenance
- Fuel
- Depreciation
- Less trade-in or disposal value
- Less estimated productivity and fuel savings

The optimal replacement point occurs when the projected cost of keeping the vehicle becomes equal to or greater than the net cost of replacing it.

Avoiding the Run-to-Failure Trap

Many businesses continue operating vehicles until a major mechanical failure forces a decision. This can be one of the most expensive replacement strategies because the business may face:

- Emergency procurement
- Reduced trade-in value
- Major repair bills
- Unplanned downtime
- Weak negotiating leverage
- Disrupted operations

A planned replacement process allows the business to evaluate finance, compare vehicles, negotiate pricing and dispose of the existing asset before its value deteriorates significantly.

The Better Question

The decision should not be based on asking: Can this vehicle continue operating?

The better question is: Is this still the most economical, reliable and productive vehicle for the work the business needs it to perform?

For fleet managers, that change in thinking is the foundation of effective lifecycle management. **LN**

CATEGORY	LOW RISK (1 POINT)	MEDIUM RISK (2 POINTS)	HIGH RISK (3 POINTS)
MAINTENANCE COST TREND	Stable Costs remain steady and predictable.	Rising Costs increasing month-on-month.	Rising sharply Costs escalating significantly.
DOWNTIME	Rare Minimal disruption to operations.	Increasing More frequent downtime beginning to impact delivery.	Frequent Regular downtime causing major disruption.
FUEL EFFICIENCY	Stable Efficiency consistent with expectations.	Declining Noticeable drop in fuel economy.	Significantly worse Much higher fuel consumption.
RELIABILITY	Consistent Dependable performance across routes.	Uncertain Breakdowns occurring more often.	Unpredictable Vehicle reliability cannot be relied upon.
RESIDUAL VALUE	Strong Good resale value retained.	Falling Market value declining.	Approaching weak resale Little value recovery expected.
SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE	Fully compliant Meets all current safety and regulatory standards.	Ageing standard Standards nearing end of acceptable life.	Operational concern Safety or compliance risk present.
TOTAL RISK SCORE (OUT OF 18)	6 OR LESS LOW RISK Monitor and maintain Continue regular monitoring.	7-12 MEDIUM RISK Plan and prepare Build a replacement plan within 6-12 months.	13 OR MORE HIGH RISK Replace or act now Replacement should be prioritised.

HOW TO USE

1 **Score each vehicle**
Assign 1, 2 or 3 points for each category.

2 **Add the total**
Maximum score = 18 points
(6 categories x 3 points)

3 **Interpret the result**
The higher the score, the greater the financial and operational risk of keeping the vehicle.

“Replacement is not about age – it’s about managing risk cost and reliability.”



TOYOTA ZAMBIA'S TRADE-IN PROGRAMME

OPENS NEW FLEET RENEWAL OPTIONS FOR BUSINESSES



For many businesses, replacing fleet vehicles has traditionally been one of the most challenging aspects of fleet management. Ageing vehicles become increasingly expensive to maintain, yet disposing of them can be time-consuming, unpredictable and administratively burdensome.

Finding buyers, negotiating prices and coordinating replacements often delays fleet renewal decisions long after vehicles have reached their optimal replacement age.

Toyota Zambia's expanded Trade-In programme seeks to simplify that

process.

The initiative allows eligible vehicle owners to trade in their existing vehicles as part of purchasing a new Toyota, creating a more structured pathway for fleet renewal. While trade-in programs are common in more mature automotive markets, their formalisation within Zambia's franchised dealer network represents an important development for businesses that manage vehicle fleets.

For fleet managers, the significance extends beyond the convenience of exchanging one vehicle for another. The programme introduces a clearer lifecycle

approach to vehicle ownership. It encourages organisations to plan fleet replacement rather than simply react to rising maintenance costs or unexpected breakdowns.

The economics of ageing fleets are well understood. As vehicles accumulate mileage, maintenance costs typically rise, reliability declines and downtime becomes more frequent. Fuel efficiency may also deteriorate, while older vehicles often lack the safety and technology improvements found in newer models. The result is that a vehicle which appears cheaper to retain can quietly become more expensive to operate.



A structured trade-in programme offers businesses another option. Instead of disposing of vehicles individually through private sales, organisations can potentially use the value of their existing fleet to offset the cost of replacement vehicles while reducing the time and uncertainty associated with disposal.

For transport operators, distribution businesses, mining contractors and service companies that rely heavily on vehicle availability, minimising downtime can be just as valuable as maximising resale value. Although a private sale may sometimes achieve a higher price, many fleet managers may conclude that the operational efficiency and speed of a dealer-managed trade-in process justify the difference.

The programme also signals a broader evolution within Zambia's automotive industry.

Vehicle dealerships are increasingly moving beyond the traditional model of selling new vehicles. Across global markets, manufacturers and dealers are building integrated ownership

TRADE-IN ELIGIBILITY

More brands now qualify. The Trade-In programme is not limited to customers who originally purchased from Toyota Zambia.

Eligible vehicles may include **Toyota, Ford, Nissan and Isuzu** supplied by authorized distributors in Zambia, as well as Toyota vehicles from South Africa.

Vehicle Age Limits

- **Up to 7 years:** Toyota vehicles supplied by CFAO Mobility Zambia
- **Up to 5 years:** Other eligible brands and Toyota vehicles from South Africa

Other Requirements

- Vehicle must have a verifiable franchised-dealer service history.
- Customer must intend to immediately replace the trade-in with a new vehicle.
- CFAO Mobility Zambia will evaluate the vehicle before making an offer.
- Once the offer is accepted, the customer pays the difference between the trade-in value and new-vehicle quotation.
- First evaluation is covered by CFAO Mobility Zambia. If it expires and another evaluation is required, the customer bears the subsequent evaluation cost.

ecosystems that include financing, servicing, genuine parts, maintenance programmes, certified pre-owned vehicles and structured replacement cycles. Trade-in programmes form an important component of that lifecycle approach.

For Zambia's corporate fleet market, this raises an important question. Could structured trade-ins encourage businesses to replace vehicles earlier and manage fleet assets more strategically?

If adoption grows, the benefits could extend beyond individual companies. Newer fleets generally deliver improved safety, lower emissions, better fuel economy and greater operational reliability. All of these factors contribute to a more efficient transport sector.

Whether other franchised dealers introduce similar programmes remains to be seen. However, Toyota Zambia's move may represent the beginning of a broader shift towards lifecycle fleet management. It provides businesses with more structured options for renewing their vehicle fleets while strengthening the formal automotive market.

For fleet managers evaluating their next replacement cycle, the question may no longer be simply when to replace ageing vehicles, but whether structured trade-in programmes can become part of a longer-term fleet management strategy. **LN**





ZAMBIA'S COLD CHAIN CHALLENGE: THE TECHNOLOGY IS AFFORDABLE, BUT TRUST IS STILL EXPENSIVE

A few years ago, I met a Lusaka-based logistics operator who ran a small fleet of refrigerated trucks. I asked him why he had not installed real-time temperature sensors, given that the devices were becoming more affordable. His answer was simple: "It's not the price of the box. It's everything that comes after you plug it in."

That comment captures one of

the central realities facing Zambia's cold-chain sector. From vaccines and pharmaceuticals to fruits, vegetables, dairy, fish and meat, temperature-controlled logistics is becoming increasingly important. Yet adoption of IoT-based cold-chain monitoring remains slower than the technology's growing availability might suggest. The devices are accessible, the commercial case is increasingly persuasive and the

losses they can help reduce are real.

In Zambia, post-harvest losses for fruits and vegetables are estimated at between 30% and 50% of annual production. Across Africa, the cold-chain monitoring market is projected to grow from roughly US\$300 million in 2025 to around US\$600 million by 2031, representing an annual growth rate of approximately 10.2%. At the same time, the upfront cost of sensors, connectivity and digital platforms remains a major restraint, particularly for small and medium-sized operators.

Cost, however, does not fully explain the slow uptake.

The deeper issue is confidence

In my recent MBA research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight participants across three stakeholder groups: three logistics operators, three technology providers and two industry experts with national-level experience in cold-chain logistics, public-health supply chains and laboratory services. The study was exploratory and qualitative, designed to identify recurring commercial and operational concerns rather than to claim statistical representation of Zambia's entire cold-chain market.

A common theme emerged

Operators are not necessarily afraid of the devices; they are cautious about the data. Once temperature breaches are recorded automatically, the resulting information can become evidence for clients, regulators, insurers or auditors. For a transporter working on tight margins, that visibility may feel less like protection and more like exposure.

This matters because Zambia's logistics environment is already demanding. Long routes, power interruptions, last-mile delivery challenges and uneven infrastructure can all affect temperature-sensitive cargo. In agriculture, poor storage and handling continue to contribute to significant post-harvest losses, particularly for perishables.

In health logistics, cold-chain reliability is essential because vaccines, laboratory materials and other temperature-sensitive products must remain effective from storage through to final delivery.

Pilots are not the same as systems

Public-health stakeholders often see cold-chain monitoring as a necessity rather than an optional upgrade. Their concern is that many projects begin well but are not always sustained. Sensors are installed, dashboards are launched and reports are produced, but the funding cycle eventually ends. Without clear ownership, maintenance budgets and local technical capacity, the system gradually loses momentum.

For logistics providers, this is an important lesson. A cold-chain solution should not be sold as a gadget; it should be designed as part of an operating model. That means answering practical questions from the outset. Who owns the data? Who responds when an alert is triggered? Who pays for maintenance after the first year? How will the system help the operator protect contracts, reduce claims and improve service quality?

Operators need results, not just dashboards

Technology providers often speak about uptime, connectivity, sensor accuracy and analytics. Operators tend to think in terms of failed deliveries, rejected loads, damaged client relationships, audit findings and unpaid claims. The gap between those two languages is where many promising solutions lose momentum.

Temperature data carries real commercial weight. A single recorded breach can determine whether a load is accepted or rejected at the receiving end, whether an insurance claim is honoured or denied and whether a contract is renewed or terminated. It can also determine where liability sits between the transporter, shipper and receiver, and, for regulated goods such as vaccines and pharmaceuticals, whether a shipment remains compliant at all.

A sensor becomes valuable when it helps a business make better decisions, demonstrate compliance and protect revenue.

What needs to change

For Zambia's cold-chain market to grow, affordability must be matched by trust, accountability and practical commercial value. Four issues should be agreed in

every deployment, from the first pilot onward.

Data ownership

Clients need confidence that the data generated by their products is protected, and that it is clear who holds it, who may access it and how it can be used in a dispute.

Commercial incentives

Operators need pricing models that fit local cash-flow realities, with a clear connection between the cost of monitoring and the claims, penalties, product losses or lost contracts the system helps them avoid.

Local maintenance capacity

Public-health programmes and commercial operators alike need systems that survive beyond pilot funding, supported by technicians, replacement parts and service capacity available in-country.

Agreed incident-response procedures

Farmers, distributors, shippers and transporters need to know in advance who responds when a breach is flagged and how responsibility will be determined between the parties before the incident becomes a dispute.

The opportunity is clear. Zambia does not simply need more cold-chain technology; it needs solutions that fit the way the logistics sector actually operates. If the industry can combine affordable monitoring tools with fair data practices, local maintenance capacity, clear incident-response procedures and stronger commercial incentives, cold-chain monitoring can move from an interesting pilot to a standard feature of professional logistics. **LN**

About the Author

Prince Dube is Regional Manager at Axis Solutions Africa Limited, a Pan-African integrated ICT and healthcare-solutions provider with a footprint across 12 African countries. He recently completed an MBA dissertation on the commercial viability of IoT cold-chain monitoring in Zambia. He has been involved in the logistics of medical devices for the past eight years and is a VCARE-certified Supply Chain Leader (CSCL).

ZIMBABWE'S LITHIUM TRAIN TESTS THE NEW ECONOMICS OF MINERAL FREIGHT RAIL

Zimbabwe's first dedicated lithium concentrate train to Maputo is modest in volume but significant in structure. By combining committed mineral cargo, a privately operated railway, a state rail network and direct port access, the service offers a practical lesson for countries trying to move bulk mining freight from road to rail without waiting for complete network rehabilitation.



A train carrying 1,000 tonnes of lithium concentrate departed southern Zimbabwe for the Port of Maputo, opening a new rail freight option for one of Africa's fastest-growing mineral industries.

The cargo originated at Tsingshan Holding Group's Gwanda Lithium Mine and is being moved through a partnership involving the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Beitbridge Bulawayo Railway (BBR) and Zimbabwean logistics company Silvergill. Its approximately 1,000-kilometre journey crosses three connected railway systems: from Gwanda to Beitbridge on BBR, onward through Zimbabwe on NRZ, and through Mozambique on the Limpopo line to Maputo.

One thousand tonnes is not transformational freight volume. What makes the shipment important is the operating model behind it.

Zimbabwe has not built a new railway between Gwanda and Maputo. Instead, existing infrastructure, a new transshipment facility, committed mineral cargo and cooperation between public and private operators have been assembled into a functioning freight service.

A Small Link into a Long Corridor

The service follows the commissioning of a US\$1.5 million lithium transshipment rail siding at West Nicholson in Matabeleland South. Developed through cooperation involving BBR, Silvergill and NRZ, the facility can handle lithium concentrate and potentially other bulk minerals including chrome, ferrochrome and iron ore.

The siding is comparatively small infrastructure, but performs an important commercial function: connecting mine output to a railway capable of moving bulk cargo over a long distance to an export port.

This is often the missing layer in African rail discussions. A country may have railway infrastructure, mines may produce significant volumes and ports may have capacity, but freight does not automatically shift from road to rail. Cargo must be consolidated, efficiently loaded, scheduled and transferred between operators without excessive delay or cost.

For the customer, the individual railway systems must ultimately function as one commercial route.

The Limpopo Line Matters

The service also follows the reopening of Mozambique's

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GLOBAL LITHIUM MINE PRODUCTION

2024

(Lithium content)

01

AUSTRALIA

88,000 t

37.1% of world total

02

CHILE

49,000 t

20.7% of world total

03

CHINA

41,000 t

17.3% of world total

04

ZIMBABWE

22,000 t

9.3% of world total

AFRICA'S LARGEST PRODUCER

Source: USGS (2024) / Natural Resources Canada (USGS data)

*US production excluded from the published global ranking because USGS withholds domestic data.



22,000 t

LITHIUM CONTENT PRODUCED
2024



1.13M t

SPODUMENE CONCENTRATE
EXPORTED
2025



~15%

OF CHINA'S LITHIUM
CONCENTRATE IMPORTS
IN 2025 CAME FROM
ZIMBABWE

SOURCES: USGS (2024) / NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA (USGS DATA) / REUTERS (FEB 2025)

Limpopo railway after approximately three months of flood-related disruption.

According to Mozambique's state railway and port company, CFM, the interruption prevented more than 100 trains from operating and caused estimated losses exceeding US\$47 million, including lost freight revenue and infrastructure repairs.

Its return restored a key Zimbabwe-Maputo connection, but also demonstrates the vulnerability of long-distance mineral corridors. A route may look attractive on a map; its commercial performance depends on every railway, border handover, loading facility and port terminal functioning reliably.

The first lithium train proves the route can work. It does not yet prove how consistently it will work.

Cargo as the Commercial Anchor

Zimbabwe's growing lithium industry provides the kind of freight around which rail services can be organized.

The country exported approximately 1.13 million tonnes of lithium-bearing spodumene concentrate to China in 2025, while Chinese companies have invested an estimated US\$2 billion in Zimbabwean lithium mines and processing facilities since 2021.

As volumes increase, scalable transport becomes increasingly important. Heavy mineral trucking

consumes fuel, contributes to road deterioration and requires large fleets to replicate rail's carrying capacity.

Railways work best when they secure predictable, high-volume cargo over long distances. For NRZ, that opportunity is particularly important. Annual freight volumes have declined from approximately 12 million tonnes in the 1990s to around two million tonnes in 2025.

Lithium does not solve NRZ's wider recapitalization problem, but it provides revenue-generating cargo around which capacity can be mobilized.

This suggests a different approach to African rail recovery: instead of waiting for an entire network to be rehabilitated before attracting customers, identify anchor cargo, mobilize the infrastructure and equipment required for that service and use freight revenue to support further recovery.

A Public-Private Operating Model

The structure is as important as the cargo.

BBR is privately operated and part of South Africa's Grindrod group. NRZ is state-owned. Silvergill provides logistics and freight-management capability, while CFM provides the Mozambican connection to Maputo.

No participant controls the entire corridor.

This may offer a useful model for regional rail: rather than waiting for one institution to rebuild an entire route, partners contribute track access, rolling stock, terminals, freight management and port connectivity.

The complexity remains. Every handover can introduce delays, costs and accountability gaps. Customers will ultimately judge the total Gwanda-to-Maputo service, not the performance of individual railway sections.

One Train Is Not a Freight Revolution

The first shipment should not be mistaken for proof that Zimbabwe's lithium will now predominantly move by rail.

The service must establish frequency, contracted volumes,

turnaround times, wagon availability and competitive pricing. Empty wagon movements must also be managed or return cargo identified.

A single 1,000-tonne train is an operational milestone. A scheduled train moving thousands of tonnes consistently is a logistics system.

Rail must compete with trucking's flexibility. Its advantage will depend on lower unit costs, greater carrying capacity and, critically, dependable delivery.

What Zambia Should Be Watching

The lesson is relevant to Zambia as it pursues annual copper production of three million tonnes by 2031. Achieving that ambition will require significant additional transport capacity serving mines, smelters, borders and export corridors.

Zambia Railways is itself pursuing recovery, seeking to increase annual freight haulage from approximately 800,000 tonnes in 2024 to 2.6 million tonnes by 2028.

But Zimbabwe's lithium service suggests Zambia's strategy should not be framed only as a railway recapitalization programme.

It should also be framed as a series of freight products.

Which mines can commit sufficient cargo to scheduled trains? Which routes offer the strongest combination of infrastructure, port access and demand? Can private operators provide locomotives, wagons or terminals where state capacity is constrained? Can dedicated trains be built around copper concentrates, finished copper, sulfur, fuel, fertilizer or other high-volume commodities?

These questions shift the discussion from whether every kilometre of railway has been rehabilitated to whether commercially viable freight services can be built across usable parts of the network.

The Corridor Is the Service, Not the Line

Southern Africa has no shortage of railway infrastructure. Its deeper problem is a shortage of dependable end-to-end freight services.

A railway only becomes a functioning corridor when cargo owners can obtain wagons, secure predictable schedules, cross borders efficiently and reach destination markets at competitive total cost.

Zimbabwe's lithium train matters because it brings those components together around actual cargo. Now it must demonstrate repetition.

If it becomes reliable, the service could show that Southern Africa's rail recovery can be built not only through billion-dollar rehabilitation programmes, but through smaller, commercially targeted interventions connected to bankable cargo.

For Zambia, producing three million tonnes of copper will only be part of the achievement. Moving it competitively will require new capacity, operating partnerships and closer alignment between mining investment and transport planning.

Zimbabwe has put the first 1,000 tonnes onto that model.

The region should be watching what happens to the next train.

LOGISTICS NOW INSIGHT

The most important infrastructure behind Zimbabwe's lithium train is not the US\$1.5 million siding or any single section of track. It is the commercial alignment between cargo, operators and port access.

Railways recover when they stop being treated only as infrastructure and begin being organized as freight services. For Zambia, dedicated mineral logistics products built around committed cargo could increase railway utilization while wider rehabilitation continues.

That may be the fastest route from railway ambition to railway utilization. **LN**

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