

EAST AFR. PROT.
39006

33006
REGD
21/10/10



Nairobi - Meka Tramway

1910
4 Dec.
Previous Paper
37053

Submits than as to estimated receipts & cost of working, rates for passengers & goods, cost of tallying, &c. & rolling stock.

W. B. Fiddler

See also 39007 & transmit thereon
In 9. forward appears to be not
the various points raised in and
letter on 37053. but, if there was
no intention of tallying, the
cost of merely allocating to the
liquidity, banking, & do not understand
why it was so stated as to estimate
accompanying 37053

H.S.K. 12/15/10

Subsequent Paper
39007

33005

COLONIAL OFFICE

LONDON

21st December 1910.

173

Confidential



Sir,

Gov
24033

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch of the 15th December 1910.

With reference to Para. 2, in which an estimate of the anticipated receipts and annual cost of maintenance and working of the proposed Nairobi-Thika Tramway is requested, I beg to inform you that in a Confidential Despatch of this date I have furnished the figures requested.

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39007

In this paragraph I am also requested to estimate the annual net revenue likely to be secured by the Uganda Railway from traffic which would not reach the main line if the tramway were not constructed. This is a matter of more difficulty to estimate than that of the traffic which may accrue to the tramway itself. The total estimate put forward by the Traffic Manager is about £4,000 a year on 32 miles, exclusive of savings which might accrue to Government in the cost of existing transport.

Our present outwards goods traffic from Nairobi amounts to about 6,000 tons per annum. This tonnage is however drawn from a very much larger area than would be served by the Nairobi-

Yours

H. M. UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR THE COLONIES.

LONDON.

Theka Tramway, and it would be fair to suppose that at least one-third of the 6000 tons which the Traffic Manager estimates to be produced as outward traffic would be entirely new for the main line railway. The whole of this traffic would be carried over the railway as export trade proceeding to Mombasa.

Of the Inwards traffic, estimated at 2600 tons, at least 800 tons on the same principle can be safely estimated to be new traffic on the railway, so that a matter of at least 3000 tons - a very moderate estimate in my opinion - would be new traffic to be hauled ~~mainly~~ by the Uganda Railway, both in export and in import, over the whole length of the Railway as between Mombasa and Nairobi. The average profit made on the carriage of goods on the Uganda Railway for this distance amounts to Ten shillings per ton - so that £1500. of goods traffic is a very modest estimate of what may accrue.

In passengers it is also impossible to estimate returns. I have already in reports signified my disapproval of the exceedingly high 3rd Class rates maintained on the Uganda Railway - more especially in regard to fares

- 3 -

as between Nairobi and the Coast. Thousands upon thousands of labourers are continually passing between the Kikuyu country through Nairobi to the Coast plantations. These men, either going to work when perhaps they are ill provided with funds or when returning with their savings, rarely if ever travel by rail. There is no road between Nairobi and the Coast, and the astounding sight is to be seen throughout the year of these men in their thousands tramping alongside the railway line to seek work 300 miles away. Surely there can be no better evidence of the unnecessarily high rates maintained upon the Uganda Railway!

Now that the Coast is being opened up, the main source of labour to which they can look is the Wakikuyu country, from whence - within a period of six months - 50,000 natives have been counted proceeding to Nairobi. It ought to be quite possible to attract this large army to the use of railway carriage ~~by train~~ into Nairobi and down to the Coast, and I think this would furnish a very large item of increased revenue to the Railway Dept. and relieve for a considerable number of years any question of lack of labour for the development of the Coast plantations.

With regard to Para 3(a), there was no intention of utilising money allocated to the Uganda Railway for ballasting the line. This will be carried out, as also the bulk of earthworks, by

means

means of prison labour available at Nairobi. I may state that some 12 miles of earthworks and 5 miles of ballast have already been executed by this means, and should the decision be against the construction of a tramway line, the earthworks and ballast will be utilised in the conversion of the proposed tramway into a more permanent and shorter road than exists at present from Nairobi towards Fort Hall.

With reference to Para. 5, section 5, the suggestion made on my part was not one of saving money. My proposal for this tramway was to lay it with 40 lb. rails. The Manager of the Uganda Railway informed me that on the first 50 miles of the line as from Mombasa - owing to excessive curvature and gradient - the rails of the main line had very seriously deteriorated and that it would appear necessary to provide in the near future funds for their replacement. He pointed out to me the inadvisability of ordering new 40 lb. rails for such a tramway when he was in possession of 50 lb. rails practically worn down to this value, and requiring replacement on the main line. I could not fail to be struck with the weight of his argument, but as I could not be persuaded that a 50 lb. rail was necessary in the new line, I thought an excellent and obvious opportunity was afforded - should the Tramway be approved - of providing for new rails upon the Uganda Railway. My proposal

was, therefore, that 31 miles odd of new 50 lb. rails should be ordered, and that the difference in value as between a 40 lb. rail should come out of funds of the Uganda Railway, who would then supply worn down 50 lb. rails for tramway purposes, the Tramway being debited with their weight as 40 lb rails. Such a proposal would appear to me to be financially sound and quite in consonance with usual railway practice.

With regard to Para.3 (c), I found shortly after my arrival that certain engines and rolling stock quite unsuited to the working of the main line were about to be broken up. I delayed any action in this regard, ~~and therefore~~ ^{therefore} thought that it would be quite justifiable to hand them over to the Theke Tramway, as their scrap value in such a country as British East Africa would be practically nil.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your humble

obedient servant,


Governor.

390061
E.A.
Nairobi-THIKA RAILWAY

The project of a Railway from Nairobi to Fort Hall first came up at the beginning of 1906 in connection with the application of Sir F. Freyer, on behalf of the East Africa and Uganda Corporation, for various railway concessions in the two Protectorates. The Corporation finally narrowed their application down to a concession to build a railway from Nairobi in the direction of Mt. Kenia. A good deal of correspondence followed as to the Corporation depositing the money for the cost of survey of the proposed line. At the beginning of 1907, however, in view of the interest in railway development, excited by Mr. Churchill's visit to East Africa, it was decided to send out a Survey party under Captain Stevenson to make a survey and report on behalf of the Government on the prospects of a railway from Nairobi to Fort Hall and also on various schemes for connecting the waterways in Uganda. The survey party sailed for East Africa at the end of May 1907.

Nothing more was heard from the East Africa and Uganda Corporation with regard to the scheme, and the project for the construction of a railway came to nothing.

On the 25th of March 1908 the Governor (then Sir J. Hayes Sadler) sent home Captain Stevenson's

report

Stevenson's report on the Nairobi-Fort Hall proposal. Captain Stevenson considered the project feasible, but ^{proposed} ~~proposed~~ a route via the Thika River to the route originally proposed by the East Africa and Uganda Corporation. He estimated the cost of a railway by this route as far as the Tiba River (97 1/2 miles) at £382,558. ^{the Manager of the Uganda Railway} Mr. Currie thought that it was as well to wait for Captain Stevenson's report on the Jinja-Kakindu and Entebbe-Butiaba projects which he fancied were more likely to advance the future of the country. The Governor concurred in the Manager's views, though he hoped that it would be found possible to take into consideration the Nairobi-Fort Hall branch, and it was decided to wait for Captain Stevenson's reports on the other projects.

(Captain Stevenson reported in due course on various projects for connecting the Lakes Victoria and Albert Nyanza, and Treasury authority was obtained for a railway from Jinja to Kakindu at an estimated cost of £160,000, subsequently increased to £180,000)

The project for a railway from Nairobi to Fort Hall being for the time dropped, Lord Cranworth in a letter to Mr. Antrobus of the 14th of October, 1908, raised the question of the construction of a
monorail

monorail. The monorail scheme came to nothing, but Lord Cranworth started a system of motor transport on the Nairobi-Fort Hall road.

9605/1910

The question of a railway from Nairobi in the Fort Hall direction then slept until Sir P. Girouard's telegram of the 1st of April 1910.

Owing to the outbreak of East Coast Fever the Government had to quarantine the area between Nairobi and Fort Hall (where a large proportion of the best farmers in the Protectorate are) and to close all roads to ~~or~~ transport for two or three years. As the best way of relieving the situation, the Governor suggested the construction of a metre gauge tramway from Nairobi towards Fort Hall at a cost of £60,000-£40,000 of which he claimed to have saved on the original Estimate of £200,000 for the Jinja Kakindu Railway, while he proposed to find the remaining £20,000 from specific savings on the expenditure approved for 1910-11.

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In reply to this telegram the Secretary of State enquired whether the proposal was not barred by the assurance given to Lord Cranworth in April 1908 that there was no intention on the part of the Government of competing with his motor transport scheme within the space of five years. Lord Crewe further enquired what length of line the proposed expenditure would provide.

10536/10 Sir P. Girouard replied by telegram on the 9th of April that he had already consulted Lord Cranworth, who was only too ready to acquiesce, that the tramway would be built off the Nairobi-Port Hall Road on Captain Stevenson's survey, and that the proposed expenditure provided for 31 miles.

12071 Before expressing an opinion, the Secretary of State asked for more specific information as to the immediate receipts and annual cost of the tramway, as to the relief which it would afford, and as to its prospects in future when the present emergency was past.

33 Oct 10
 To these enquiries the Governor replied by a telegram urging the immediate construction of the tramway. He gave some information as to the amount of crops in the area affected and stated that Mr. Currie estimated the receipts at the outset at £2000. The telegram amounted to an assurance that the lines would pay, but gave no details as to annual expenditure and receipts.

On the strength of this telegram a letter was addressed to the Treasury, sending them a copy of all the correspondence, saying that the Secretary of State supported the proposal as an emergency measure, and that as to the future of the line, he could only rely on the judgment of the Governor. The letter asked that the Governor should be permitted to construct 20 miles at once, funds being provided to the extent of \$40,000 by means of a loan of that amount, and that permission to continue the line for another ten miles should be contingent on his effecting a saving of £20,000 on the 1910-11 estimates.

17187

To this letter the Treasury replied on the 6th of June that they could not sanction the proposed construction of the line, but suggested as alternatives an improved system of motor service or a monorail.

These alternatives were put to the Governor by telegraph, and he replied by telegraph on the 10th of June that, in order to make the Fort Hall Road available for efficient steam or motor traffic, larger expenditure would be necessary than he considered justifiable for this class of transport, and, as to a monorail, that the Yampala experiment was a complete failure, and that that system of transport was entirely unsuitable

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for, hilly country. He urged his original proposal

18403.

In a further telegram of 10th June Sir P. Girouard said that the Kampala monorail was working better than first reported, but he still adhered to his opinion that a tramway utilising old rolling stock of the Uganda Railway was the best solution.

18611.

A further and somewhat incoherent telegram followed from Sir P. Girouard on the 18th, in which he repeated that he did not recommend a monorail but suggested that reference might be made to the Consulting Engineers.

At this point a Conference took place between Mr. Read and Mr. Butler, and Mr. Gawston of the Treasury. As a result of this Conference it was decided that the monorail was out of the question, and that, before considering the tramway scheme, the Governor should be asked as to the actual cost of making the Fort Hall Road suitable for motor transport, whether, if the road were made suitable, Lord Cranworth would provide the vehicles, and, if not, what would be the cost of the Government's doing so.

BY74/19.

To this telegram Sir P. Girouard replied that it would cost 254,000 to make the Fort Hall Road suitable for motor traffic and that it would cost £30 per mile per annum to keep up - that Lord Cranworth was not prepared to increase his motor service

service - that motors would carry very little — and that to make them pay it would be necessary to charge rates which agricultural produce would not stand.

On the strength of this telegram a further letter was addressed to the Treasury, pointing out that it was clearly useless to seek a remedy either in a monorail or in an improved system of motor transport and that the only solution appeared to be a tramway. As to finance, the Secretary of State saw no reason to doubt that the saving of £40,000 on the Jinja Kakanda Railway would be realised (a hope which has not been fulfilled), and as to the commercial prospects of the line he trusted to the opinion of the Manager that the receipts from the line would cover interest and working expenses from the start. It was pointed out that not only would the line run through a district which was being actively developed, but that it would ^{the rich} tap agricultural districts further to the north.

27685/10.

To this letter the Treasury replied on the 6th of September pointing out that the information furnished with regard to the proposal was very meagre, and stating that, before giving authority for the construction of the line, they required fuller information with detailed estimates of cost of construction and equipment and a report on the traffic likely to be forthcoming. A telegram was

sent

sent to the Governor in this sense on the 13th of September.

(37033/10)

On the 1st of November Sir P. Girouard sent home a despatch forwarding detailed estimates for a railway 31 miles long to cost £260,000. He estimated the actual traffic to be anticipated at 7000 to 8000 tons annually, chiefly in maize, beans, and hemp - an estimate which he anticipated would be doubled in a very short time. He further stated that a very considerable passenger and casual goods traffic could also be expected.

Very shortly afterwards, Sir P. Girouard came home, and on his arrival in this country a letter was addressed to him, on the 15th of December, asking for more precise information as to the anticipated receipts, and also for an estimate of the total cost of working and maintenance of the proposed line, and at the same time making certain observations as to the estimate of the cost of construction.

To this letter Sir P. Girouard replied in two letters of the 21st of December, in which he met the points as to the Estimate of the cost of construction, and furnished the estimates for which he was asked. He estimated the working expenses of the tramway at £2200 per annum, and the receipts at £5000 in the first year, leaving a net revenue of £2800, to be doubled in the second year. He further estimated the profit on the new traffic which the tramway would bring to the Main Line at £1500 per annum.

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This further information was forwarded to the Treasury on the 4th of January in a letter stating that the Secretary of State trusted that, with this detailed information before them, the Lords Commissioners would see their way to approve in principle the construction of the tramway, leaving for later discussion the question of the provision of funds to meet the cost.

2254/10 In Colonial Office letter to the Treasury of the 10th of February the tramway was included as one of the three schemes for which a loan of £250,000 was asked for, but at present no official answer has been received either to this letter or to the letter of the 4th of January.