

Uber rolls out new electric motorbike fleet in Kenya

Ride-hailing firm Uber on Thursday launched an electric motorbike service in Kenya, its first in Africa, as the company seeks to make its global platform emissions-free by 2040.



An Uber boda boda rider takes a selfie after the launch of the company's first fleet of electric product in Nairobi, Kenya, 31 August 2023.
Reuters/Monica Mwangi

The rollout in Kenya will be followed by a "potential announcement" this year for the rest of its markets in the region, said Kagiso Khaole, Uber's general manager for sub-Saharan Africa.

Uber's other markets in sub-Saharan Africa are Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa.

Uber's new green product in Kenya, dubbed Electric Boda in a nod to the Swahili term for motorbike taxis, will comprise 3,000 bikes within six months, or just under a fifth of its fleet.

Drivers will see a 30-35% drop in their operating costs, and users of the platform will pay 15-20% less than they do for a regular Uber motorbike trip, the company said.

"You will experience lower vibrations, less sound," Khaole said.

In Kenya, which generates more than 90% of its power from renewable sources and has been positioning itself as a hub to lead Africa's shift to green transport, Uber previously carried out small pilots for electric bikes with external partners.

The growth of the electric vehicles market in Africa has been slowed by a lack of adequate electric charging infrastructure and associated equipment.

Sensing an opportunity, local firms have been setting up battery-swapping stations in major cities like Nairobi to save drivers time.

Kenya's President William Ruto said last month that he wanted to see the number of electric motorbikes on the road increase from the current 2,000 to more than 200,000 by the end of 2024.

Motorbike transport is a big employer in Kenya, absorbing millions of people who are unable to secure formal jobs.

(This story has been corrected to say that 'an announcement will be made' for the other markets in paragraph two).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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