Rwandan senators have raised concerns over aging vehicles and the rising number of motorcycle accidents, urging the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) to tighten safety standards and accelerate the modernization of urban transport.

During a meeting with RURA officials on Wednesday, members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Security questioned why old vehicles, some over 30 years in service, continue to operate as public transport. Senators warned that such vehicles pose serious safety risks and contribute to frequent road accidents.

Sen. Hadidja Murangwa Ndangiza, chair of the committee, said outdated buses and taxis are among the main causes of traffic incidents. “One of the issues we raised with RURA is why vehicles that are clearly old and unsafe are still licensed to carry passengers,” she said.

Sen. Esperance Nyirasafari highlighted the problem of old school buses that are merely repainted and returned to the roads, while Sen. Evode Uwizeyimana expressed concern over vehicles operating without insurance, including government-owned ambulances. “How can vehicles belonging to the state, including ambulances, operate without insurance?” he asked.

RURA Director General Evariste Rugigana reassured senators that vehicles failing inspection or deemed too old are no longer issued permits. “I want to assure you that vehicles found unfit are not licensed to carry passengers or goods,” Rugigana said.

Motorcycles, which account for the majority of road accidents, were another focus of the discussion. Senators cited data showing that nearly 82 percent of traffic crashes involve motorcycles. Many incidents are linked to reckless riding and unsafe practices, such as mothers carrying infants on motorcycles a violation of RURA regulations, which limit insurance coverage to two riders per motorbike.

Rugigana said the accidents are largely due to riders’ behavior but pledged that RURA, together with the Rwanda National Police, will identify and penalize repeat offenders.

To address safety and congestion issues, the government is phasing out commercial motorcycles in Kigali and promoting a modern public bus network. Unlike previous private operators, the new system will be state-managed, with

buses circulating along scheduled routes and picking up commuters directly instead of waiting for terminals to fill.

“Sometimes you see 50 vehicles stuck in traffic, each with just one person,” Rugigana said. “We must strengthen public transport, reduce motorcycles and private cars, and ensure safer roads.”

The state-run buses are expected to launch in November 2025, starting in Kigali before expanding to other cities. Authorities have already piloted scheduled departures on key routes, including the Kabuga–Nyabugogo corridor and major stations in Downtown and Nyanza, which has reduced congestion and waiting times.

Senators welcomed the reforms but urged RURA to accelerate implementation, noting that Kigali’s current transport system remains overstretched with too few buses. Officials say the initiative will improve commuting, reduce accidents, and support Kigali’s long-term goal of a safer, more sustainable city.