

HIGH-SPEED RAIL TRANSPORT IN UZBEKISTAN: CURRENT STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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Abstract: This article analyzes ongoing projects in the high-speed railway sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the existing infrastructure, and future development prospects. The study addresses current challenges and their potential solutions, with a comparative analysis of international experience.

Keywords: high-speed train, railway transport, infrastructure, integration, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken extensive reforms to modernize its transport and logistics system. In particular, the development of high-speed rail infrastructure plays a key role in enhancing domestic mobility, integrating economic regions, and boosting tourism potential.

Current Status

Currently, Uzbekistan operates high-speed “Afrosiyob” trains serving cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Karshi. This project was implemented in cooperation with the Spanish company Talgo, with trains capable of speeds up to 250 km/h. Since its launch in 2011, millions of passengers have benefited from this service.

Development Prospects

The Uzbek government has planned the following prospective projects:

Samarkand–Urganch–Khiva route: to develop tourism and provide fast access to historical cities.

Tashkent–Andijan route: to integrate the Fergana Valley with the capital.

Transnational corridors: opportunities are being explored for high-speed infrastructure within the China–Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan rail corridor.

Challenges and Recommendations

Financial Constraints: Constructing high-speed lines requires significant investment. Cooperation with international financial institutions is essential.

Geographic Complexity: Mountainous terrains in some regions complicate construction. Modern technologies and geoenvironmental solutions should be employed.

Human Resource Capacity: Training highly qualified engineers and technical staff through international partnerships is necessary.

Socioeconomic Importance of High-Speed Rail Transport

High-speed rail infrastructure significantly influences the country's socioeconomic development. Firstly, it saves passenger time, offers high service quality, and is environmentally friendly. For instance, the Tashkent–Samarkand journey, which takes 4 hours by car, is reduced to 2 hours by “Afrosiyob.” This boosts business ties, domestic tourism, and labor mobility.

Secondly, regions along the high-speed rail lines experience increased economic activity, with small and medium businesses thriving. New stations stimulate the growth of service industries such as hotels, restaurants, and transport, thereby increasing local budget revenues.

International Experience and Lessons for Uzbekistan

Global practice shows that high-speed rail systems should be a strategic priority for national policy. For example:

China: Since 2008, China has built the world's largest high-speed rail network (over 40,000 km), reducing regional economic disparities.

Japan: The “Shinkansen” project (since 1964) was not only a technological revolution but also promoted regional stability and growth.

France and Germany: The TGV and ICE systems created integrated urban transport networks while reducing environmental impact.

Uzbekistan should focus on:

Creating new economic clusters around high-speed routes;

Developing domestic technological solutions (e.g., local train part manufacturing);

Strict adherence to environmental standards;

Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for people with disabilities in transport.

Furthermore, Uzbekistan's plans for high-speed travel are outlined in the “Strategy for the Development of Railway Transport in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2035.” In February 2025, the Ministry of Transport announced the start of technical and economic feasibility studies for the Tashkent–Samarkand high-speed railway.

It is planned that main routes will run along Tashkent–Samarkand and Samarkand–Navoi–Bukhara.

In November 2023, the First Deputy Head of "Uzbekistan Railways" spoke about plans to construct a separate network for high-speed transport, as the current infrastructure cannot

handle the increasing volume of passenger and freight traffic. The strategy for developing Uzbekistan's high-speed railways by 2030 envisions increasing train speeds to over 300 km/h.

To integrate Uzbekistan's railways into the global transport market, several critical tasks must be addressed, including the development of high-speed passenger services to improve the quality of transport services. Currently, the development of rapid transit is a pressing issue, and a number of programs have been designed to increase train speeds. The "Strategy for the Development of Railway Transport in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2035" pays particular attention to this goal.

To implement these programs, optimal technical and economic designs must be scientifically substantiated, especially considering Uzbekistan's unique operational and natural-climatic conditions.

Conclusion

The development of a high-speed railway system in Uzbekistan will not only transform the transport sector but also positively affect tourism, the economy, and the environment. With the consistent implementation of strategic plans, the country has the potential to become a regional transport hub.

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