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WAYS TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF TOURISM LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE SAMARKAND REGION

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Abstract

This article analyzes current developments in the transport sector of the Samarkand Region and evaluates their role in improving the efficiency of tourism logistics. Using official statistical and programmatic data, the study examines public transport, aviation, and railway infrastructure reforms and their impact on tourist mobility, accessibility of destinations, and regional economic outcomes. The findings demonstrate that integrated transport planning, fleet modernization, and multimodal connectivity have significantly contributed to the growth of tourist flows, longer stays, and higher tourism service exports. Policy-oriented recommendations are proposed to further enhance transport efficiency and sustainability in support of tourism development.

Keywords

tourism logistics, transport infrastructure, regional development, public transport, aviation, railway transport, Samarkand Region.

Introduction

Efficient transport infrastructure is a critical determinant of tourism competitiveness and regional economic growth. In regions with high tourism potential, well-coordinated public transport, aviation, and railway systems improve accessibility, reduce travel time and costs, and enhance visitor experience. In recent years, Uzbekistan has prioritized transport modernization as a key policy area, with the Samarkand Region emerging as a focal point due to its historical, cultural, and economic significance. This article assesses how recent transport-sector initiatives in the region have improved tourism logistics and identifies pathways for further efficiency gains.

Public Transport Sector Development. At present, the Samarkand Region operates 3,365 vehicles across 314 public transport routes. In addition, self-employed drivers operate more than 27,000 vehicles as route-less taxis, reflecting both high demand and structural challenges in service organization. Of the vehicles serving regular routes, buses account for 17.2%, minibuses for 5.2%, and “Damas”-type vehicles for about 60%, indicating a historically fragmented fleet structure.

To address these issues, a comprehensive **Transport Infrastructure Development Master Plan for Samarkand City until 2030** was разработан in cooperation with international engineering and consulting companies. The plan, approved at the presidential level, introduced a route network optimization strategy based on passenger flow analysis. As a result, 43 new routes were designed, including 10 main trunk lines and 33 feeder routes. Thirteen of these

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routes are already operational, with several managed under gross contracts financed according to service output, improving transparency and service quality.

Fleet modernization constitutes another major reform direction. During 2024–2025, 129 new buses—including conventional and electric models manufactured in China—are being introduced. Furthermore, under a presidential decree, a large-scale project supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development предусматривает the procurement of 100 electric buses and 50 charging stations. These measures contribute to higher capacity, reduced emissions, and improved reliability of urban transport services. The near-completion of a new central bus station in the "Chupon-Ota" area further strengthens intercity and tourist transport connectivity.

Aviation Infrastructure and Tourist Connectivity. The region's aviation sector is centered on Samarkand International Airport, which features a modern runway, a terminal capacity of 1,000 passengers per hour, and 24 aircraft parking stands. The airport currently serves one domestic and 24 international routes, with approximately 70 weekly flights. In response to growing demand, new international routes connecting Samarkand with major cities in Russia, Kazakhstan, and China have been launched.

The airport's performance has been internationally recognized, ranking among Europe's fastest-growing airports in passenger traffic according to ACI Europe. In the first half of the year alone, more than 647,000 passengers were served, representing a 47% year-on-year increase. Expanded route networks and partnerships with foreign airlines have significantly improved Samarkand's accessibility for international tourists, reinforcing the role of air transport in tourism logistics.

Railway Transport and Multimodal Integration. Railway infrastructure plays a strategic role in connecting Samarkand with other regions and tourist destinations. The total railway length in the region exceeds 760 km and is fully electrified. Several stations handle freight and passenger operations, with Samarkand station functioning as the primary hub.

High-speed rail services, including the Afrosiyob trains linking Tashkent and Samarkand, operate multiple times daily and are supplemented during peak travel periods. The launch of daily intercity services on the Urgut–Samarkand–Urgut route has further improved regional mobility. A landmark project—the construction of a new 55.4 km Samarkand–Urgut railway line—has enhanced access to economically and touristically significant areas. This project included new stations, bridges, artificial structures, and modern communication lines, facilitating tourist flows to natural and recreational destinations such as mountainous and eco-tourism zones.

Impact on Tourism Development. The cumulative effect of transport-sector reforms has been substantial. By November 2025, the Samarkand Region hosted over 3 million foreign and 5.3 million domestic tourists. The average length of stay increased from 2.5 to 3 days, while exports of tourism services reached USD 606 million. Accommodation capacity expanded rapidly, with hundreds of new hotels, hostels, and family guesthouses entering operation.

International hotel brands, tour companies, trained guides, and dedicated tourist transport fleets have been attracted, reinforcing service quality. Large-scale projects, including eco-tourism clusters and modern bus stations, have improved last-mile connectivity and visitor convenience. These developments demonstrate a strong correlation between transport efficiency and tourism sector performance.

Policy Implications and Recommendations. To further improve tourism logistics efficiency, several policy directions are recommended:

- continued integration of public transport planning with tourism demand forecasting;

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- expansion of electric and low-emission transport to support sustainability goals;
- strengthening multimodal hubs that connect air, rail, and road transport;
- enhancing digital ticketing, information systems, and real-time passenger data for tourists;
- ongoing investment in human capital and service standards across transport modes.

Conclusion: The experience of the Samarkand Region illustrates that coordinated investments in public transport, aviation, and railway infrastructure significantly enhance tourism logistics efficiency. Transport modernization has improved accessibility, increased tourist flows, extended visitor stays, and generated higher economic returns from tourism services. Sustaining these gains will require integrated planning, technological innovation, and continued alignment between transport policy and tourism development strategies.

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