

HaRakevet

הרכבת

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and the Middle East
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**Iraq Petroleum Co. (I.P.C.) 2-8-4T (built Hudswell-Clarke 1951) in Kirkuk, Iraq ca. 1954.
(Photo Brian Roberts, courtesy of Rev. Paul C. Roberts)**

From the Editor

News from the line

144:04.

At the time of going to press (20. March), the current crisis (as opposed to all the other crises of the past four thousand years) is still continuing and the world seems often filled with people who know better than the Israelis what the Israelis should do and say so, loudly, yet, remarkably, they seem very quiet when it comes to advising the Palestinians what they too should do. Sadly, since our last issue was published many more lives have been lost and many more people have been injured, there are rumblings of conflict to the north of Israel as well. And yet – the remarkable thing has been the resilience. The country continues to function, open political debate continues. We report in this issue on how IR lines and stations have almost all returned to service, how new stock continues to be ordered and delivered; We report in this issue also on how other countries in the region have continued to develop their various ambitious plans for cross-border lines linking not only different states but even continents. Strategic considerations play a part. Whether the Red Sea will ever become relatively safe again for maritime trade is an open question that affects the ports of Aqaba and Eilat, but also that of Neom and also the Suez Canal (which affects Egypt's income) and thus indirectly many Mediterranean ports. Several countries are directly affected and many more indirectly. Would a railway from Eilat to the Mediterranean therefore lose relevance? New overland (road) routes from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean are a modern echo (in reverse) of the old Bagdadbahn scheme. Moves by China to expand its transport links westwards and cross-border developments in Eurasia continue. The future remains intriguingly unclear - and yet somehow there is much optimism too. In spite of it all...

The Editor.

144:03

Rafah station in 1956 after capture of the Gaza Strip by Israel



(i). THIRD QUARTER 2023 RESULTS

From a press release of 27.11.2023 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"On 27.11.2023 Israel Railways Ltd. published their results for the 3rd Quarter of 2023:

The income was almost \$230 Million (NIS 861M) compared with \$191 Million (NIS 716 M) over the same period of 2022; up by 20%. The EBITDA was \$5.87 (NIS 22) compared with a loss of \$0.8 M (NIS 3 M) over the same period of 2022.

The overall profit over the first 2023 9-months period was almost \$279 M (NIS 1.046 Billion) compared with a loss of \$18.4 M (NIS 69 M) over the same period of 2022; this being a result of reduced values of properties caused by increased interest in the market.)

Passenger Sector:

Daily average number of passengers over the 3rd quarter of 2023 was 285,000 compared with 237,000 over the same period of 2022; up by 20%.

During the first 9 months of 2023, 52.6M passengers used rail compared with 38.8M over the same period of 2022; up by almost 36%!

During the 3rd quarter of 2023, 18.2M passengers used rail compared with 14.9M over the same period of 2022; up by 22%!

Income of the passenger sector during the 3rd quarter of 2023 was \$235.4M (NIS 765M), compared with \$167.5M (NIS 628M) over the same period of 2022; up by almost 22%!

Average punctuality was 93.3%; slightly lower than 94.8% over the same period of 2022.

Freight Sector:

Income from freight haulage during the 3rd quarter of 2023 was \$20M (NIS 75.7M) compared with \$18.5 Million (NIS 69.5 M) over the same period of 2022; up by 8.9%.

During the 3rd quarter of 2023, the railways carried 1.5 Million tons, compared with 1.7M tons over the same period of 2022; down by almost 9%.

The loss of freight haulage during the 3rd quarter of 2023, was \$5.84M (NIS 21.9M) compared with a loss of \$4.8 M (NIS 17.9M) over the same period of 2022; up by 22%!

The explanation for the loss is reducing freight traffic in favour of infrastructure development works."

(ii). IMPROVING WI-FI RECEPTION

From a press release of 06.12.2023 by the Ministries of Transport and Communication: "As an initiative of Transport and Communication ministries, the railways will carry out a test to select improvements of communication reception by passengers: The test will include: WiFi on Board, cellular signal booster, and engraving on windows by electrical burn. On the visit of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev and

Communication Minister Dr. Shlomo Kari, the work teams of the railways and communication ministry introduced them to the three alternatives at the Lod railways complex."

From "Jerusalem Post", cited in "ILI News" 18.12.2023:

"A series of tests to determine the best WiFi connection for Israeli trains: The Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Transportation of the Jewish State are launching a series of tests on Israeli Railways trains to determine how to improve reception for Israeli Railways passengers. The aim is not only to give passengers the opportunity to work online, make phone calls or conduct research as conveniently as possible, but also to ensure that they can be reached in emergencies. A tour of the Israel Railways complex in Lod was therefore held on December 6, during which Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi and Transport Minister Miri Negev were presented with three possible applications to improve mobile phone reception for train passengers. The applications were developed by teams from Israel Railways and the Ministry of Communications. The first experiment will be carried out by installing wireless Internet receivers in the train carriages. Both an antenna on the roof of the carriage and internal antennas in the carriage will be installed. The wireless internet receivers are intended to improve mobile phone reception on the train. In the second trial, amplifiers for the mobile radio signal and two antennas are installed on the roof of each carriage. In the third trial, the technology will be installed near the carriage windows to improve cell phone reception inside the carriages. Improving mobile phone reception during train journeys is a global challenge that is not unique to Israel. Due to the metal of which the train carriages are made, it is generally difficult for mobile signals to reach the inside of the trains."

(iii). FURTHER STATION REOPENINGS

On 19.12.23 Aharon wrote: "The railways are making all available efforts to reopen stations closed due to the war:-

- On 28.11.2023 the railways announced the reopening of the stations of Lod Ganei-Aviv, Bat-Yam Komemiyut and Yavne East.

- On 10.12.2023 the stations of Holon Junction (south of Tel-Aviv) and Kiryat-Hayim (north of Haifa) were opened; Netanya Sapir station reopened on Fridays, and the south exit of Tel-Aviv Hashalom station re-opened each morning between 06:00 and 10:00 only.

- On 13.12.2023 the station of Dimona (south of Be'er-Sheva) reopened and services between Dimona and Be'er-Sheva North/University resumed.

- On 17.12.2023 the station of Ra'anana West (on the Sharon Circle line) reopened."

Hand-in-hand with the planned reopening of Netivot and Ofakim, Sderot and Ashkelon stations (on the Western Negev Line), the railways marked the event by cooperation with the following four painters living in the Gaza Strip surrounding area: Itai Magram, Aviam Zuzot Ziv, Veseli Relini and Roman Kozhokin, commissioning them to decorate the stations in order to raise morale. The painters said: "We have come through hard times in which we were evacuated from our homes; the message for the public is: "We are strong as a nation and together will win"!



• (Provided by courtesy of Mr. Daniel Vogel from the railways' spokesman office)

In fact the system is not yet completely reopened:

TRAIN SERVICES SDEROT - BEER-SHEVA RESTORED

From a press release of 07.03.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Following the instructions of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, the Ministry and the Railways are working hard to resume gradually the services on the Western Negev line almost paralyzed by being adjacent to the Gaza Strip and the war.

The programme includes operational adjustments of the Sderot station infrastructure, including changes to signalling to change the station temporarily to a terminus, thus the services will resume soon between Sderot and Be'er-Sheva.

The first step started today – 07.03.2024 - by extending service times by 2 hours. The last train from Netivot (south of Sderot) departs at 21:59 and reaches Ofakim at 22:09, Be'er-Sheva North at 22:27 and Be'er-Sheva Central at 22:36.

In the opposite direction the last train departs from Be'er-Sheva Central at 21:09 and reaches Be'er-Sheva North at 21:16, Ofakim at 21:34 and Netivot at 21:44."

From "Times of Israel" 14.03.2024:

"The Sderot train station will open again on Monday for the first time since mid-2023, Israel Railways announced on Wednesday. Israel's railway company announced in May of last year that it would not be running trains between Ashkelon and Netivot in Israel's south for security reasons, leaving the Sderot station, which is between the two, out of use. Its opening was then further delayed after it suffered rocket damage during the October 7 Hamas assault on southern Israel.



The announcement on Wednesday said the station would reopen next week after the railway underwent infrastructure works to repair damage from rockets. When the station opens on Monday, trains will reach Sderot once an hour between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., Sunday-Thursday.

The route is not returning fully to normal, however, with trains still not operating northward between Sderot and Ashkelon. Instead, trains will only operate heading south, to Beersheba via Ofakim. "Passengers whose destination or station of departure is further north will have to change trains in Beersheba," the announcement said.

The southern city of Sderot was one of the locations hit by Hamas on October 7 when terrorists launched an unprecedented attack on Israel's south, murdering some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping 253. During their rampage, terrorists attacked the Sderot police station, which became the scene of heavy battles between Hamas and the station's police officers. The building was ultimately completely destroyed. At least 50 civilians and 20 police officers were killed in Sderot on October 7.

Following Hamas's attack, the IDF evacuated towns along the Gaza border, including Sderot. Last month, the army said the city's residents could return after it determined that this would not pose a security risk to civilians. As residents make their way back the city has been taking steps to return to normal, with schools reopening last week. An Education Ministry spokesperson told The Times of Israel that between 55% and 60% of kindergarten to 12th-grade students had returned."

Sderot was built as a through station and work is now necessary to install crossovers and signalling to permit trains to terminate there and start again in the other direction.

(iv). THE RAILWAYS STAFF HELP OTHER CITIZENS

From a press release of 13.12.2023 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "The Railways' employees have donated more than 140,000 blood units during a special operation by the railways and the Red Star of David organization (the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross), for the security forces; This took place on 12.12.2023 at Haifa Kishon works, at the railways' depot at Be'er-Sheva, and at the railways' management centre at Lod. The employees also volunteered to perform agricultural harvesting at abundant farms surrounding Gaza Strip, operating a mobile library for soldiers and children of the evacuated families currently staying in hotels near the Dead Sea, distributing Hanukkah doughnuts, special Hanukkah gifts, etc."

(v). TRACK LAYING ON LINE 431.

From a press release of 12.12.2023 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways have started laying tracks of line No. 431 which runs on most of its length in the median of highway No. 431 (hence the number), to connect Jerusalem and Modi'in with Rishon- LeZion-Moshe Dayan railway station and other stations along the southern coastal plain. The line is being built as part of the strategic plan for the coming decades and as a result of the significant growth of passenger traffic, which was 70 million and is expected to reach 200 million in 2030 and 300 million in 2040.

9 km of double track - comprising 30% of the total length of 30 km - have already been laid on the alignment between Anava rail interchange, where the line to Modi'in leaves the A1 to Jerusalem, and where the station of Ramla South is to be built soon; the station will have a passenger hall, business area, a pedestrian bridge from the station building to the platforms, parking and public transport terminal. The railways continue tracks laying westwards towards Rishon-LeZion-Moshe Dayan; The works of building the main passenger hall at Sorek Rhombus station (south-east of Rishon-LeZion-Moshe Dayan) are completed, and development works around the station including access roads, parking and a public transport terminal are soon to commence.

Additional works on the line are: connecting the Rishon-LeZion-HaRishonim station with line No. 431 which includes extending the length of existing platforms and new platforms including walls and canopies.

The project includes also the railways' longest bridge of 3.5 km near Rishon-LeZion-HaRishonim station and three stations at 20m under Highway No. 20 (near Rishon-LeZion-Moshe Dayan station), the longest of which is 450m.

Finally, the railways recently completed one of the most complex projects: the railway bridge at Anava rail interchange at a height of 30m over the Israel National Trail and only half a metre over the A1 wires."

- *A selection of images courtesy of Mr. Daniel Vogel from the Railways' spokesman office and (for Ramla South and Sorek Rhombus) D.E.L. Engineering and Amar Corial Architects. Showing the construction of Sorek Rhombus station; a computer generated imaging of Sorek Rhombus station; a computer generated imaging of Ramla South station; tracklaying on the No. 431 Line; direction west towards Rishon-LeZion HaRishonim station.*
- *Also a computer generated imaging of futuristic line 431 and an aerial view of the railway bridge at Anava rail interchange.*





(vi). MORE TRAXX LOCO ARRIVALS

From IR: "Last week - and despite the war - four Alstom TRAXX electric locomotives arrived and were unloaded at the port of Haifa. These join the 31 units already in service. It is part of the electrification programme in which 300 double-deck carriages have been converted to be coupled to electric locomotives; according to the purchasing programme until 2024, 63 additional electric locomotives are due to arrive in 2024 in several batches.

The four units were towed and taken to the new electrical operational centre at Lod, where they will pass all the required tests towards service start at the beginning of 2024. The new locomotives are part of a large-scale purchasing of electric locomotives and 96 double-deck cars, both from Alstom, and 81 DDEMU from Siemens, at a total value of EURO 1.7 Billion."

See next page for photos of the unloading provided by courtesy of Mr. Daniel Vogel from the railways spokesman office; credit for pictures: Mr. Andrei Migolenia and Mr. Moshe Ezekiel.

To this can be added:

(vii). NEW ORDERS SIGNED

From a press release of 23.01.2024 by the Transport Ministry:

"With the participation of Mr. Andrew Delon, Alstom aerial president; Mr. Eran Cohen - CEO of Alstom Israel; Mr. Moshe Ben-Zaken - Transport Ministry's General Manager; and Moshe Shimoni - Israel Railways' Chairman of Directorate, a EURO 1.7 Billion contract to supply 96 Alstom double-deck cars was signed on 22.01.2023; it will enable operation of 8-car double-deck trains with capacity of more than 1200 seats. The new Alstom double-deck cars will join the 580 cars currently in service.

The contract includes also 81 DDEMU's from Siemens. The Siemens DDEMU's will join the 24 sets currently in service and 36 additional sets expected during 2024.

The new cars and trains will add 22 million seats per year.

The new Siemens DDEMU's will enable IR to phase out the Siemens Viaggio Light single-deck cars which are diesel push/pulled (the irony being that these cars, which arrived in 2008 and 2011, cannot be considered old!).

Transport Ministry's General Manager Mr. Moshe Ben-Zaken, the Transport Ministry's General Manager, and Moshe Shimoni, Israel Railways' Chairman of Directorate both said that new contract shows the trust of Alstom in Israel economy even in war times.

(viii). MORE SIEMENS MULTIPLE UNIT ARRIVALS

From a press release of 24.12.2023 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"During the past weeks, and despite the war, the railways started an additional process of improving passenger services by receiving the new batch of Siemens Desiro DDEMU trains. The batch is of 36 trains of 6-car configuration, totalling 216 cars.

The new trains are an upgraded version compared with trains arrived three years ago; tables are bigger to enable working with two laptops; additional USB Type A and Type C sockets; much more comfortable seats; and hand grips at each driving trailer. A dedicated Bicycle Car with improved



space has also been added ; this car is equipped with 18 anchoring devices under the folding seats to secure bicycles' stability. The improvements are a result of passengers' responses regarding riding quality.

The new trains' configuration can be increased from 6 or 10 cars to 12 cars giving a total number of 1,300 seats."

- *Attached herewith are pictures of the new trains provided by courtesy of Mr. Daniel Vogel from the railways' spokesman office; credit for pictures: CLOUDVIEW/Shabtai Tal/Israel Railways Ltd.*



(ix). NEW LINE TO TIBERIAS PLANNED

From a press release of 14.12.2023 by the Transport Ministry:

"Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev and Transport Ministry's General Manager Mr. Moshe Ben-Zaken announced on 14.12.2023 that the vision of a railway line to link Tiberias (on the Sea of Galilee) with the planned line from Carmiel to Tzfat and Kiryat-Shmona (both in the Upper Galilee) is being statutorily promoted according to the Ministry's policy to develop a rail network in the Galilee and the Negev (the south: i.e. the line to Eilat on the Red Sea), and based on government's decisions Nos. 1421 & 855; The design is to be performed by the railways' infrastructures of Israel Roads Ltd."

(x). QUADRUPLING AND MORE!

From a press release of 24.12.2023 by the Transport Ministry: "Despite the war, the government approved today – 24.12.2023 - the quadrupling of the coast line between Tel-Aviv and Haifa, the main point being the two fast tracks (in addition to quadrupling) between Shefayim (north of Herzliya) and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel to be built for up to 250 km/h, thus reducing journey time to 30 minutes; it is planned that at rush hours, trains will depart to both directions at intervals of 5 minutes."

The same high speed is planned on the newly-planned double-track line between Pleshet Junction (north of Ashdod), Na'an and Be'er Sheva North/University - 83 km - to give a journey time of just 38 minutes between Be'er Sheva and Tel-Aviv. The grandiose plans speak also about six tracks between Shefayim and Ben-Gurion Airport along 27 km.

The big question some ask is: Is this viable in a war situation, where will the money be found for this work?

Attached herewith are computer imaging of Haifa Hof-HaCarmel station after the completion of the fast track; credit: Israel Railways Ltd. press office.

See photos next page.....

(xi). END OF THE IC3 SETS

Chen Melling writes: "Thursday, November 30th 2023 was the last day of public service by the IC3 DMUs on Israel Railways. Sets 18, 23 and 32 performed the last runs, together, on the Valley Line service. Yours truly was one



state railway (DSB) for use as spare parts and set 07 to a Danish supplier of train interior furnishings (part of the JP Group) where it has been converted into a (static) showroom and meeting room."

(xii). SALE OF IC3 SETS TO HUNGARY?

Chen sent two links to Hungarian publications from October 2023 which, with the help of Google Translate and some judicious tweaking, give the following insight into the dire state of affairs on the Hungarian railways:

NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING PROCUREMENT OF THE RUBBER NOSES ARE ALREADY UNDER WAY.

"The CEO of MÁV, Zoltán Pafféri, and the head of MÁV-START, Dr. László Mosóczy told the VDSZSZ about the change of transport mode introduced on the ten branch lines on August 1: they could not carry out some of the planned vehicle maintenance due to the Russian-Ukrainian war, as a large proportion of the necessary parts came from the region, including from eastern Ukraine. During the siege of the city of Mariupol, the Azovstal iron and steel plant was under fire.

- *Further pictures of the IC3 units.*
- *Approaching Jerusalem in winter*
- *At Haifa*



of only a few of the many passengers on board who was aware of the historic significance of the occasion.

Since the 1st of December the Valley Line links have been almost exclusively in the hands of the Siemens push-pull rakes, with occasional double-decker intrusions. Two of the withdrawn GEC-Alsthom push-pull rakes have been re-commissioned to serve as back-up, though none was needed as of the first week of January. When the short Dimona and HaRishonim services were reinstated, these had two short (PC+TCHC) double-deck rakes assigned. This is the first known public use of 2-coach double-deck trains in public service on Israel Railways (all other variations in the 1-8 range having already been done).

Alstom has been contracted with maintaining the dwindling IC3 fleet since 2023 (diesel engines excepted). This they have done mostly in the space assigned to them in the Haifa Diesel Depot. During December their remaining workforce was busy performing light overhauls (!) to the last serviceable sets, as per their contract with IR.

The maintenance operation was finally shut down by the end of December. By that time the 20 remaining "active" sets were stored thus:

- Haifa Depot - 18, 23, 32, 39
- Dimona Yard - 34, 35, 36, 38 (all out-of-use due to untreated cracking)
- Na'aman Junction sidings - 12, 17, 20, 22, 26, 28, 30, 33, 40, 44, 47, 50

The rest of the surviving sets are stored at the closed Jerusalem Malcha station, in the Haifa depot and at Dimona, with the notable exception of set 01, preserved at the Israel Railway Museum in Haifa.

Israel Railways still hopes to find a buyer for these trainsets, other than scrap dealers, but probably will not let negotiations with interested parties drag on indefinitely. The only ones sold intact so far are sets 03 and 08 to the Danish



László Mosóczy believes that the biggest problem is the introduction of a sufficient number of 418 (ex-M41) series diesel locomotives, and the operation of the 426 series Desiro and 117 series Bz railcar sets is also a problem. On the positive side, the procurement time has been reduced to two to three months, which is expected to improve the supply of spare parts.

Zoltán Pafféri said that the traffic data of the lines will be analyzed by the end of the year, but it can already be established that the number of passengers on the buses is low. (We should add that this is not surprising, since bus routes that touch railway stations and railway stops cover a much longer route than scheduled bus routes that use bus stops, so their duration is also significantly longer.)

The MÁV group sees the temporary solution in the purchase of used diesel vehicles. Although MÁV-START recently missed out on twenty-six Stadler RS1 railcars, the parties are now negotiating the purchase of 46 IC3 multiple unit sets operated by Israel Railways.

Manufactured by ABB Scandia in Denmark between 1990 and 1996, the three-section, 58.8-metre-long, 97-tonne vehicles, ready-assembled in Israel, are capable of speeds of 160 and 180 kilometers per hour. Jacobs bogies without drive run at the articulation of the carriages. The outer bogies of the outer carriages are driven by two Deutz diesel engines with a power of 298 kilowatts each, the total power of 1192 kilowatts is transferred to the axles by a mechanical ZF gearbox. A rubber cushion runs around the two nose parts of the motorcars, which is why they got their nickname "rubber nose". The solution is not a design element: the control panel of the driver's position as well as the leader's chair are mounted on a large door, which can be folded inward when the vehicles are connected, thereby making the entire length of the vehicle's passenger compartment accessible.

In addition to Israel, the IC3s are also known in Europe: the Danish national railway DSB uses them in Denmark and Sweden, and in Spain they are operated by Renfe. Moreover, Amtrak in the United States and Via Rail in Canada also used the motor train type."

Can Israeli motor trains come to the Secondary lines?

In recent years, the lack of vehicles at MÁV has worsened to such an extent that the decision-makers finally gave in, and MÁV finally received permission to buy used vehicles, since the state currently has no money for new ones. Therefore, MÁV-Start is now renting 15 (+10 optional) Siemens ES 64U2 V7 Taurus electric locomotives from the company Akiem, operating at the former MRCE company. These locomotives are now 20-21 years old and have run an average of 3 million kilometres. Although both age and mileage are considered high - even by railway standards - these Taurus locomotives are in every way much more modern and younger than MÁV's Szili and Gigant locomotives, which have covered God-knows how many kilometres in the last 40 - 50 years. The old-new leased locomotives have been painted in MÁV's latest colour scheme and will be seen mainly at the head of international trains.

By now, the management of MÁV sees a future not only in used electric locomotives. The Hungarian State Railway company is in advanced negotiations with the Israeli Railways regarding the purchase of DSB MF series diesel locomotives. Between 1990 and 1996, IR purchased a total of 50 sets manufactured by the Danish ABB Scandia. The three-part trains, nicknamed rubber noses due to their somewhat strange design, will soon be withdrawn from the Israeli rails, as they will be replaced by Alstom's double-decker sets. Since these DSB MFs have become redundant there, IR has offered 46 of them

to Hungary, which looks like it is taking advantage of the purchase opportunity. Although this motor train is not one of the most beautiful design types, it represents a far higher standard in terms of passenger comfort, vehicle dynamics and ride quality than the old Czechoslovak Bz. In short, the acquisition of the IR Danish sets seems like a good deal, but this fleet is still not enough to significantly raise the standard of the branch lines.

As can be seen above, the MÁV was forced reluctant to start extinguishing the fire caused by the lack of vehicles, but they are still far from completely controlling the fire. This raises the question of whether they will stay on the path of acquiring used vehicles, which they have just started, or whether they will wait for the new vehicles that have been promised many times and generally remain only a promise. Knowing the country's financial situation, it would be healthy if new vehicles arrived predictably, but we would also buy used vehicles in good condition and relatively cheap, so that passengers do not disappear completely from MÁV trains."

(xiii). TRACKWORKS BETWEEN REHOVOT AND PELESHET JUNCTION

From a press release of 10.01.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The railways are acting on provision of improved services all over Israel and around Ashdod. Thus the double-tracking works between Rehovot and Pleshet Junction are being performed. Once completed in 2025, service frequencies will be remarkably improved, as will connectivity to Central and North Israel, as well as links to other rail projects currently under way such as the Eastern Line, Line 431, etc. Works will include laying three new turnouts, as well as 300m of new track section.

As a result, the following changes to traffic will take place between Friday 19.01.2024 and Tuesday 23.01.2024 inclusive:

There will be no trains between Rehovot in the north and Ashkelon in the south; Yavne East station will be closed temporarily; alternative bus services will be provided between Rehovot, Yavne East and Ashdod Ad-Halom stations. Passengers with destination north of the mentioned stations will be able to use services from the Western Negev line calling at West, Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan, etc.

Traffic will resume on Wednesday, 24.01.2024 at about 05:00.

(xiv). ISRAEL RAILWAYS NEW CEO

Mr. Matan Berkovich and Mr. Daniel Fogel, both from the railways' spokesman office have provided the attached picture and resume of the CEO:

Name: Moshe (Shiko) Jana.

Born in 1964.

Education:

ME (Master's degree) in systems engineering, Technion, Haifa, 2003.

BSC in Mechanical Engineering, Technion, Haifa, 1995.

Work experience:

2020-2022: CEO of Ashdod Port Company.

2016-2020: Senior Vice President "Zoko Shiluvim".

2011-2015: Head of Equipment Branch at the Navy Headquarters - rank of Brigadier-General.

2008-2011: Commander of the Navy Shipyard – with rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

2007-2009: Head of Logistics and Organization Department - rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

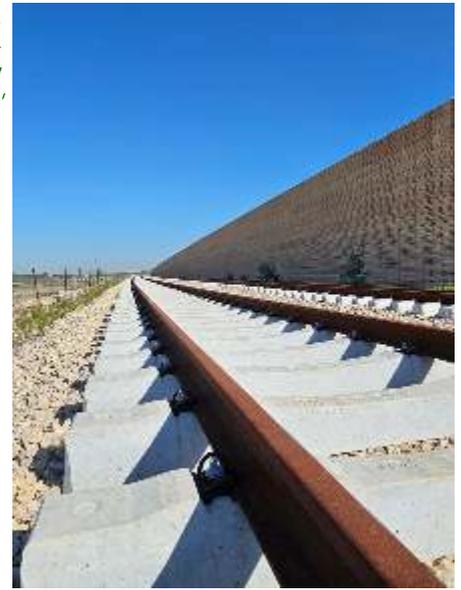
• Credit for picture: Shabtai Tal.



(xv). MORE NEWS ON EXPANSION

The Transport Ministry, headed by Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, announced 15.01.2024 that as part of the so called "Social Reform" and the so called "Linking Israel" concepts, a budget is already allocated for the project of building about 300 km of new lines between Kiryat-Shmona in the Upper Galilee and Eilat, both for passenger and freight traffic.

- (Attached herewith are pictures provided by courtesy of Mr. Daniel Fogel from the railways' spokesman office.)



(xvi). EASTERN LINE WORKS

From a press release of 23.01.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Both the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd. are promoting the last stages of the Eastern Line, and will perform extensive works to link the line with the rest of the network in the Rosh-HaAyin area as well as other vital works along the Sharon Circle line.

As a result, the stations of Ra'anana West, Ra'anana South, Hod-HaSharon/Sokolov, Kfar-Sava Nordau, Rosh-HaAyin North, both Petach-Tikva stations and Bnei-Brak, will be closed between 01.03.2024 and 04.05.2024, inclusive.

Works will include: A new overhead bridge at B'nei-Brak station, replacing electricity infrastructure at Rosh-HaAyin North, etc.

(xvii). MODI'IN CENTRAL STATION NEW ACCESS

From a press release of 21.01.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As part of the preparation for the forecast significant growth of rail usage, and in order to improve the service for passengers, the railways opened on 21.01.2024 a new entrance/exit at Modi'in Central railway station, thus providing a direct link with the adjacent Central Bus Station; there will be no more any need to leave the station in order to reach the buses and vice versa. It will also improve the passengers' flow.

The station will be a pilot for the best use of station space for: business, employment, and apartments."

(xviii). TREE PLANTING

From a press release of 25.01.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "In honour of "Tu-Bishvat" – the New Year for Trees - the railways have planted many trees along the Eastern Line, both for scenery and to create an ecological avenue."



- (Photo of the passage taken by Mr. Daniel Fogel from the railways' spokesman office)

(xix) SADDER TREE PLANTING

From a press release of 25.01.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"In a special ceremony to commemorate the seven railways' employees who have died in the Gaza War, seven orange trees were planted in front of the railways' management complex at Lod, with the participation of the railways' senior managers and some of the families."

(xx). ELECTRIFICATION PROGRESS

From February 3, 2024, services Binyamina - Tel Aviv – Rehovot – Ashkelon were operated by electric trains.

(xxi). TRANSPORTATION HUBS

From a press release of 13.02.2024 by the Transport Ministry:

"The vision of Transportation Hubs of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev is moving forward: today-13.02.2024-an historical agreement, the first of its kind, has been signed between the railways and Israel Land Authority to develop business and residence areas at railway sites all over Israel.

The ceremony took place at Modi'in Central station selected as a pilot of the project, with the participation of: Minister of Housing Mr. Isaac Goldknopf, Transport Ministry's General Manager Mr. Moshe Ben-Zaken, Israel Land Authority General Manager Mr. Jacob Quint, Chairman of Israel Railways Ltd. Directorate Mr. Moshe Shimoni, and Israel Railways Ltd. CEO Mr. Shiko Jana.

After the agreement has been signed, a tender committee common to Israel Railways Ltd. and Israel Land Authority will discuss the creation of the marketing tender; the winners will enjoy a leasing period of 98 years with optional extension of additional 98 years for an area of 27 acres."

Attached here with are the following pictures provided by Mrs. Noy Gado





Tzohar from the ministry's spokesman office; credit for pictures: Israel Railways Ltd.:

- *Modi'in Central exterior above and control room, previous page)*

(xxii). TAMPER PURCHASE

From a press release of 13.02.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways have recently purchased a track tamper Dynamic Unimat 09-4x4/4s from Plasser & Theurer of Austria. The machine will arrive at Israel within few weeks and enter service in the second half of 2024."

Attached herewith are pictures of the machine at Austria prior to shipping, provided by courtesy of Mr. Daniel Fogel from the railways' spokesman office.



(xxiii). MORE TRACKWORKS

From a press release of 15.02.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "Due to essential works on tracks and components replacement at Lod station, and upgrading of the signalling system in the north, there will be temporary changes on traffic between 21.02.2024 and 24.02.2024 including around Lod, and between 23.02.2024 and 24.02.2024 in the north."

As a result, the following stations will be closed: Nahariya, Akko (Acre), Carmiel, Ahihud, Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat-Hayim, Hutzot Ha-Mifratz, Merkazit Hamifratz, Yokneam-Kfar-Yehushua, Migdal Haemek/Kfar-Baruch, Afula/Raphael Eithan, Beit-She'an, Beit-Shemesh, and Rishon Le-Zion Harishonim. Alternative bus services will be provided free of charge between closed stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday, 25.02.2024 at about 05:00."

"Due to the need to replace a line section near Shapirim highway interchange (between Tel-Aviv and Lod), there were no continuous services on the section between 09.02.2024 and 10.02.2024 including and services on the remained sections were split; traffic resumed on Sunday morning at 05:00."



(xxiv). MODI'IN EXPANSION

In a meeting between senior staff of the Transport Ministry and heads of local authorities from northern and southern Israel with Israel Railways Ltd. Mr. Shiko Jana, the latter said that the railway station of Modi'in will be increased, including extension of platforms to enable services by longer trains.

(xxv). A BRIDGE NOT FAR ENOUGH: A TALE OF POLITICS

Railway Bridge 43 I over Highway 1, where work has been stuck for five months / Udi Etzion, Walla: (Thanks to Jeremy Topaz for this).

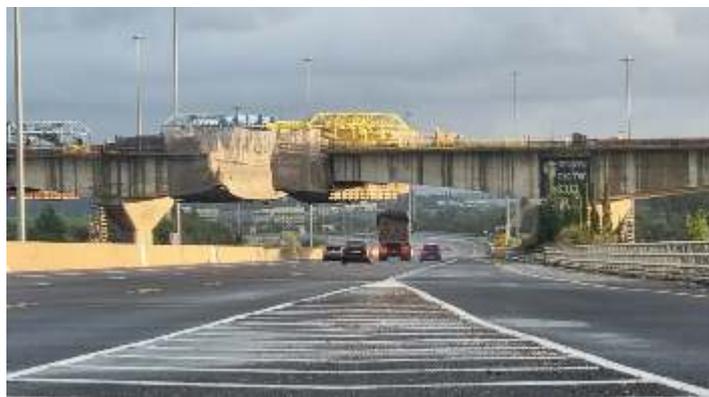
"The Ministry of Transport's executive capability, a snapshot: There has been no progress in fortifying the railway bridge exposed to fire from Gaza since we published the news that the IDF prohibits the operation of direct trains from the Gaza envelope to the centre, thus extending the way for residents trying to return to the area by about an hour in each direction.

And on Highway One stands another monument to this situation, one weighing tens of tons: the 43 I Railway Bridge designed to connect Jerusalem to the Ramle and Rishon-LeZion areas, which has been standing for five months just before completion over one of the busiest roads in the country. NIS 380M was allocated by the state for the section between Modi'in and Nesherim, including the railway interchange intended to transfer the train from the tracks along Highway 1 to the tracks along Highway 43 I.

One Thursday last August the Chairman of the railway, Adv. Moshe Shimoni, called the then Director-General of the railway, Micha Meixner, urgently and demanded that work planned to begin in a few hours on the bridge on Highway 1 be stopped. The aim was to connect the missing section, about 20 metres long, which requires the road to be closed for safety reasons, on a weekend when traffic is sparse. But the matter had been leaked to ultra-Orthodox Knesset members, who pressured Transportation Minister Miri Regev to stop the work. *(because of the desecration of Shabbat – JMT)*

Meixner is one of the senior executives and editors Regev made sure to move because he stopped political appointments on the railways. At the same time, when she entered the Ministry last year, she ousted the esteemed Shai Kedem, who had grown in the business, and appointed in his place Avner Flohr, a veteran manager with no experience in the field of infrastructure, who helped her train the appointment of the ministry's Director-General, Moshe Bo Zaken, its former political advisor and the person whose appointment the Civil Service Commission initially refused to approve because he lacked professional and managerial experience in transportation.

The result: The state of the project only continued to deteriorate. Sole Boneh, which is controlled by the stock exchange-cited firm Shikun & Binui,



claims that the state owes it NIS 100M for its works on the project, and has stopped them altogether, including connecting another part of the long bridge over the interchange, which passes over the descent from Highway 1 towards Highway 43 I.

In 2020, when it began, it was announced that the project would be completed within 28 months, and that the entire track would be opened for

service in 2026, as one of the most important means of easing traffic congestion in the central region and at the entrance to Jerusalem. The Ministry of Transport and the Railways deny that the five-month delay so far in completing the bridge will cause a delay in the project, but in a recent announcement by Israel Railways about the construction of a new station in the Ramla project, 2028 has already been set as a date for opening the track.

"There's no other way to finish the work without doing it on a weekend," says an infrastructure source. "Just putting the engineering tools on the job takes hours, so there's no time to do it on several nights in a row. And closing Highway 1 on this section for a day and a half in the middle of the week will create huge traffic jams for hours on Highways 443 and 43 I."

(Addition: A new date was set, March 1st, to close the road on Friday 4p.m. for 24 hours, but at the last minute was again cancelled. I don't know if a new date has been set.)

(xxvi). 12-CAR TRAINS

From a press release of 06.03.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of the railways' preparation for the expected significant rise in the annual passenger traffic, from 70 Million in 2019 to an estimated 200 Million in 2030, and to 300 Million in 2040, the railways have started

- *The test train on the bridge near Jerusalem over the A1 and the coast line to*



Binyamina, provided by courtesy of Mr. Matan Berkovich from the railways' spokesman office; credit for pictures: Shabtai Tal video productions. operating 315m long trains of 2,000 passengers capacity, by coupling two Siemens Mireo DDEMU's totalling 12 cars; the longest passenger trains ever.

The trains are currently running over the Binyamina - Rehovot suburban line, but are to be operated further on other lines."

ECTS PROGRESS

From a press release of 17.04.2024 by the Transport Ministry:

The railways have recently reached an important milestone with the completion of upgrading the signalling system from electric to electronic. The project started in 2014 and included installation of 22 command and control system at stations, laying 250 km of communication infrastructure and all signalling equipment. This will enable the completion of ECTS LEVEL 2 project.

(xxviii). SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

From a press release of 20.03.2024 by both the Transport Ministry & Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Good news for rail passengers both in the south and north of I srael:

Starting on Saturday night 30.03.2024 night trains will operate along the whole night, every night (except Friday night) between Nahariya, Akko (Acre), Kiryat-Motzkin, Haifa Central the 8, Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, Binyamina, Hadera West, Netanya, Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, and terminating at Ben-Gurion Airport; passengers whose destination is Jerusalem Navon will have to change trains at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central; This refers to both directions.

Additional improvements: the first train from Ashkelon northwards will depart at 04:58 instead of 05:18; the service frequency between Ashkelon and the centre of Israel will be increased to 3 trains/hour at the rush hours between 15:00 and 17:00."

(i). SALE OF PUSH-PULL CARRIAGE SETS.

In Metro Report Intl. 06.12.2023 was: R.F.I. – Sale of Push-Pull sets and Sale of IC3 sets – in both cases a deadline of 31.12.2023.

(ii). Tender No. 223141: Providing Q/A Services for the railways' Development Projects: The railways intend to select up to 5 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 28.12.2023.

I.R. TENDERS

(iii). Tender No. 52310: Providing services for Consulting, Follow-up, Mediation, and Building Projects regarding Retail Trading Spaces: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 04.01.2024.

(iv). Tender No. 122183: Providing services for DEMS (Digital Evidence Management Software) and BWC (Body Worn Camera): The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 72 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 18.01.2024.(v).

v). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 23239: Providing Gardening Maintenance Services at the railways' sites: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 23.01.2024.

(vi). Tender No. 42220 For Provision of Consulting Services for the preparation and implementation of a strategic plan for the Smart/ Digital Ticketing system ("Tender")

Israel Railways Ltd. ("ISR"), in accordance with its obligations under the Israeli Mandatory Tender Laws and its implementing regulations and the International Agreement on Government Procurement, wishes to obtain bids for Tender 42220 - For Provision of Consulting Services for the preparation and implementing a strategic plan for the smart/ digital ticketing system ("Tender")

1. Tender Documents are available for review and download at ISR's website at the following address: <https://tender.rail.co.il/?page=generalauctions>

2. Any Request for Clarifications should be addressed in writing only to Mr. Izik Adar, International Procurement Coordinator, no later than January 15, 2024, by E-mail: izika@rail.co.il. Bidders shall be responsible for verifying receipt by ISR of Requests for Clarification.

3. All proposals must be submitted between February 6th, 2024 to February 8th, 2024 between 8:30 to 13:00 (Israel time) in one main envelope into Tender Box No. 8 at the following address: Israel Railways Ltd., Procurement & Contracting Division, Yoseftal 1, Lod, 7136801, Israel. ISR shall be entitled to postpone the deadline at its sole discretion.

(vii). Tender No. 123213: Providing services of Calibration and Adjustments for Measuring and Testing Equipment all over the network: The railways intend to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 14.02.2024.

(viii). Tender No. 123247: Providing Consulting Services regarding Insurance: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 21.01.2024.

(ix). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 123230: Performing services of Non-Destructive Testing on Welding, Rails, Turnouts, core of Turnout, and Detecting Defects on Rolling Stock: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 05.02.2024.

(x). Tender No. 240101: Permission to operate a site of Vacation and Leisure Culture at the area of Jerusalem Historical Railway Station (Khan station): The railways intend to select one winning bidder only. The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.02.2024.

(xi). Tender No. 22180: Performing works of Double-tracking the Herzliya - Shefayim section of the Coast Line: Works include: Track substructure, platforms and an overhead pedestrian bridge. The railways intend to select one

winning bidder only. Estimated construction time: 54 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.02.2024.

(xii). Request for Information ("RFI") Concerning the Procurement of Electric Trains for Commuter Operation.

Israel Railways Ltd. ("ISR") hereby requests for information from potential manufacturers and suppliers with regards to Electric Commuter Trains in order to examine the variety of types available which meets ISR's technical and operational requirements, all as generally defined in Appendix A attached hereto (the "Technical Attachment") and its Attachments and as further described below.

This RFI, as defined in section No. 14A on the Israeli Mandatory Tenders Regulations 5753- 1993, is a preliminary process initiated by ISR, solely for receiving information and conducting its initial internal evaluation and consideration of the Solutions. This RFI is not, in any manner whatsoever, to be considered as a request for proposals, nor as a tender and the provisions.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid, ISR may, as a result of this RFI, at its sole and absolute consideration, conduct an additional procedure, inter alia, tender procedure, and may use, at its sole consideration, any of the information provided in this RFI.

2. ISR wishes to obtain technical and any other general information with regards to the commuter trains and/or any other applicable solutions that would be suitable and capable to be operated under the ISR's network conditions and/or to get information from the potential Respondents on adaptation requirement to fit existing design solution to the ISR's network and operation conditions. This RFI is merely for the purpose of obtaining any relevant information for consideration purposes only, and ISR shall not be construed as having taken any commitment to procure such service nor to publish any tenders or any other further procedure.

4.3. Participation in this RFI does not and shall not provide a Respondent or any other entity with any advantage, nor shall it confer upon a Respondent any right with respect to the Solution (or any component or part thereof) or any future proceedings conducted with respect thereto (if any), including with respect to any pre-qualification process and/or tender process.

Appendix A- Technical Attachment

1. Conditions for Commuter Train

ISR is undergoing an electrification process of its current and future railway network which includes the electrification of infrastructure to 25 kV, /~ 50Hz acc. EN 50163 standard.

ISR is interested to receive information regarding new build trains for commuter operation.

ISR estimates that until the end of 2029 a total amount of 60 Electric Commuter Trains is required. In 2027 operational demands are for 30 Electric Commuter Trains.

Daily operational distance estimated for each Electric Commuter Train is 1000 km.

Daily operational expectation for each Electric Commuter Train is 40,000 travellers.

It is clarified that one of ISR's main objectives is to procure "off-the-shelf" products as much as possible considering its technical requirements specified in this Appendix A (the "Technical Attachment") and its Attachments, having proven design and been tested and accepted in accordance with TSI, EN and UIC standards.

It is clarified that ISR is considering to acquire maintenance services via the manufacturer for Electric Commuter Train under constellation yet to be determined.

The design and production of the offered Electric Commuter Train must be in compliance with the applicable standards of the following listed standard:

Israeli legislation, ISR homologation demand.

Directives: 2016/797, 2016/798, EU 402/2013.

TSIs: LOC&PAS, SRT, CCS, PRM, NOI.

EN/IEC Norms and Standards including: EN 50126, 50128, 50129.

UIC Leaflets

Other norms and standards.

Passenger areas shall fulfil all dedicated requirements of TSI LOC PAS and TSI

PRM with adaptation to Israel accessibility legislation, see attachment D.

2. Technical Requirements For Electric Commuter Trains:

Definitions:

Trainset - Units coupled together to form unified train ("Electric Commuter Trains")

Unit – Coach or EMU set

Vehicle – The smallest part in EMU, it features an individual body shell lying on its own sets of wheels or sharing them with adjacent vehicle...." (Etc.)

144:06



**Light
Rail**

(xiii). Israel Railways Ltd. Call for Renting Fibre Optics over the following line sections: (23.02.2024)

Carmiel – Na'aman - 2 pairs - 22 km.

Na'aman – Kiryat-Motzkin - 2 pairs - 8 km.

Kiryat-Motzkin - Haifa Central the 8 - 2 pairs - 12 km.

Haifa Central the 8 - Haifa Hof Ha-Carmel - 2 pairs-8 km.

Haifa Hof-HaCarmel – Netanya - 2 pairs - 60 km.

Netanya – Herzliya - 2 pairs - 20 km.

Latest date for submission of proposals: 07.03.2024.

(xiv). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 240201: An Open Area of 19.265 acres at Ramla to be rented for Parking or Storage: The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 21.03.2024.

(xv).Tender No. 223148: Lod Railway Station Site Stage B DP3 (depot 3):

Works include:Extending and enlarging the current site on pillars, track substructure, drainage, supporting walls, wall to wall; Platform No. 307 -preparatory treatment site for electric rolling stock; structure No. 306 - support for platform No. 307; Preparatory work for an underground passage; Preparatory work for a Train Washing Machine No. 303 - to be performed by the railways' concessionaire; transformer structures No. 305 and No.307; new tracks electrification; installing signalling for the site and building an access road. Estimated implementation time: 43 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 11.04.2024.

(xvi). Tender No. 223140: Providing consulting services multidisciplinary control for projects' developing: The railways intend to select up to three winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 04.04.2024.

(xvii). Tender No. 223135: Providing services of Pricing, Maintenance and Control for cataloguing Clauses and Price List Prices: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 04.04.2024.

(xviii).Tender No. 123235: Providing services of Epoxy Coating and Renewal of Pipes and Constructions at the railways' Gas Stations and Sites:

The railways intend to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 14.04.2024.

(xix). Tender No. 122167: Maintenance and Restoration of Bridges and Engineering Structures over the network's Southern Area: The railways intend to select one winning bidder only. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 24.03.2024.

(xx). Call to Receive Information regarding the Installation of Charging Stations for Electric Vehicles at the railways' Stations and Parking Areas: Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.04.2024.

(xxi). Call for Sale of old IC3 Diesel Trains:

The trains consist each of 3 cars, but can be sold as single cars upon request. The trains are at Jerusalem Malcha, Dimona, Na'aman (south of Acre), and Haifa. Latest date for submission of proposals: 31.03.2024.

(xxii). Competitive Tender: Innovation Centre 12/03/2024. "Israel Railways hereby invites the submitting of proposals for solutions and technologies applicable to the challenge: "hysical Fencing for Platforms at Railway Stations" all as per the details in the invitation to offer proposals, including all its appendices.

1. Introduction: As part of Israel Railways Company's vision to lead an ongoing improvement in Israel' transportation infrastructure, a need has arisen to find solutions to protect passengers with respect to platforms at stations. Part of the activity of Israel Railway' Innovation Unit, a project for innovation and entrepreneurship was set up to lead various projects to enable sharing the organization' needs and challenges and advancing physical and technological solutions. This project constitutes a channel that enables Israel Railways to learn and assimilate the most advanced technologies available today, thus providing a response to Israel Railways' needs.

2. The challenge that requires a response: 2.1. Fencing between passenger platforms in railway stations and between the areaof the tracks so as to prevent passage or falling of passengers, objects, or belongings into the track area 2.2. The solution shall enable swift entry and exit of passengers once a train arrives in the station, taking into account operational constraints..."

A. TEL AVIV

(i). GREEN LINE REACHES FINANCIAL CLOSURE

From a press release of 17.12.2023 by the Transport Ministry: "After long discussions and negotiation, and with the support of the Transport & Finance Ministries, and the Finance Ministry's Accountant General and with the presence of Transport Ministry's General Manager Mr. Moshe Ben Zaken, NTA management, TMT who won the tender to design, finance, building, and maintaining, a financial close of the Tel-Aviv LRV Green Line worth EURO 2 Billion (NIS 6.5 Billion) became a reality by signing the agreement today – 17.12.2023 - at NTA offices. TMT consists of Dan Buses Company, Electra, and Alstom. The project is financed by a consortium of EIB (European Investments Bank) and the Israeli financiers; Bank Hapoalim, and Mizrahi Tefachot Bank. The financing agreement will enable TMT to start the second stage of building the LRV Green Line infrastructures, as well as manufacturing the 98 trains and systems until the line will start running.

General data: Length: 39 km; 4 km of this underground; The line runs from Herzliya in the north to Rishon-LeZion in the south. 62 stations, of which four underground, all in the centre of Tel-Aviv: Carlebach, Dizengoff, Rabin Square and Arlozorov. The line runs through four municipalities. Annual traffic anticipated: 70 Million. Expected service start: 2028. Tender system: PPP. The Operator will be selected in a separate tender."

"I.R.J." of 22.12.2023 added "NTA originally selected the TMT consortium of Dan Buses Company, Electra, and Alstom for the project in early 2022."

(ii). NTA RED LINE NEWS

From a press release of 11.12.2023 by the Transport Ministry:

Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev and Transport Ministry's General Manager Mr. Moshe Ben-Zaken, met 11.12.2023 with NTA General Manager Mr. Hayim Glick and NTA Chairman of Directorate Mrs. Maya Likvornik-Geva at the NTA offices. They received positive reports about the rising number of passengers on the LRV Red Line despite the war. Mrs. Regev said that the possibility of stopping bus services running parallel to trains should seriously considered, thus diverting the buses to other lines where they are required. Mr. Glick said that the Red

Line is working well and the aim is to create service with intervals of 3 minutes; NTA are also working on raising speed. He said also that due to the war, the possibility of turning parts of the underground stations into shelters against bombardments should seriously be considered.

(iii). NTA Tender No. 186/2023: Locating Underground Infrastructures without Destruction: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 31.01.2024.

(iv). NTA Tender No.881/2023: Providing Selection Services and Supply of Holiday Gifts and Coupons for NTA employees: The railways intend to select 1 winning bidder. The contract is for 6 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 11.01.2024.

(v). Public Tender No. 112/2023 Invitation to Bid in a Tender for the Operation of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan LRT Green Line and Purple Line (From R.G.I. 05.01.2024)

Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. ("NTA"), is an Israeli government owned company tasked with the development of the mass transit system in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, which includes, inter alia, an LRT network, comprised of three (3) LRT lines (the Red Line, the Green Line and the Purple Line).

2. NTA hereby notifies that certain amendments have been made to the Tender Documents, including updating the schedule for the Tender Process and postponing the Bid Submission Date to April 18th, 2024, by no later than 14:00 (Israel standard time).

3. Full particulars regarding all such amendments and updates are available for review at the following website: www.nta.co.il ("NTA's Website"), under the "Tenders" tab – Addendum No. 5.

4. The potential bidders' attention is drawn to the fact that all submissions required under the Tender Documents are required to be submitted in accordance with the updated schedule for the Tender (as described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above).

5. Without derogating Clause 4 above, all previous submissions already made by Bidders and/or Participating Entities prior to the updates in the Tender Documents (as described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above) shall be considered part of their Bid.

6. NTA hereby clarifies that the potential bidders are required to check NTA's Website on a regular basis for any Addenda, updates, changes or modifications during the Tender process, particularly before the Bid Submission Date. NTA further clarifies that it shall have no responsibility to inform any individual Bidder of any such publication.

(vi). Tender No. 367/2023: Providing services of activating an array of Traffic Inspectors at NTA work sites: NTA intends to select up to 4 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 15.02.2024.

(vii). Tender No. 405/2023: Providing Management Services of NTA activity as a local traffic and signs authority: NTA intends to select one winning bidder only. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 07.02.2024.

(viii). NTA Call No. 961/2023: Providing Offices Space to be rented by NTA: The intention is to rent offices with a maximum area of up to a total of 15 acres. The contract is for 120 months with optional extensions of up to additional 120 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 18.01.2024. [Jeremy notes this amounts to 60,000 sq.m. of new office space!]

(ix). NTA Tender No. 040/2024: Performing small Sub-Contractual works on all NTA projects: NTA intends to select up to 10 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.03.2024.

(x). On 11.02.2024 the Tel-Aviv LRV Red Line was closed for several hours due to a signalling failure.

(xi). OH RATS! In "Times of Israel" 16.03 is an item on increased incidence of flea-transferred disease in Tel Aviv: "Hospitals in the greater Tel Aviv area have reported a significant rise in murine (flea-borne) typhus and leptospirosis cases in the last several years. Both diseases are spread by rats, with patients

reporting seeing more of the rodents in neighborhoods, playgrounds, gardens, and even homes.

Physicians speaking to The Times of Israel have expressed concern about sanitation problems and the likely possibility that the above-ground rat population has surged as a result of the digging and construction of new mass transportation systems in Tel Aviv and surrounding cities.... Prof. Yasmin Maor, head of the infection diseases unit at Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, just south of Tel Aviv, said that her hospital treated 16 cases of murine typhus in 2022 and 2023 as compared to just one in the five years prior. Maor added that although she has no direct proof, she said that it is plausible that the increase in rat sightings is a result of the subway and light rail construction projects that have been going on in the metropolitan Tel Aviv area in recent years. "We saw in our data that patients with the typhus infection lived closer to the train lines compared to patients who didn't have the diagnosis but had similar symptoms. But this is just an association and I'm not sure if this is an explanation, but it's possible," Maor said."



(xii). CARLEBACH TUNNEL

NTA has announced on completion the Carlebach tunnel of the Green Line.

- *A picture of the tunnel by courtesy of NTA)*



B. JERUSALEM

YEFE NOF SHA'AREI TZEDEK LINK

From a press release of 18.1.2024 by the Transport Ministry:

"The ministry, together with the Jerusalem municipality, and in collaboration with the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre, are promoting the construction of a 130m underground pedestrian passage between the LRV Red Line Yefe-Nof station and the new entrance to the Shaare Zedek medical centre, which is located above the underground parking.

The new passage will significantly improve accessibility particularly for the disabled, aged people, and young with baby carriages, who currently need to walk about 300m, most of which is on narrow sidewalks and steep slopes, as well as five crosswalks.

The project is budgeted at a cost of \$19.52M (NIS 73M) by the Transport Ministry and approved by the Municipal Finance Committee.

Works are to start during 2024 and last for three years."

- *Attached herewith are computer generated simulations of the passage provided by courtesy of Mrs. Noy Gado/Zahor from the ministry's spokesman office; credit for simulations: Moriya.*



HAREDI BLOCKADE

From "Times of Israel" 18.03.2024: "Declaring that they would rather die than enlist in the IDF, dozens of ultra-Orthodox men block the tracks of the Jerusalem light rail on Jaffa Street and scuffle with police to protest efforts to end their community's longtime exemption from military service.

"If you go to the army, you and dogs are equal," they chant, riffing off of enlistment advocates' call for "equality of the burden" between Haredi and secular Israelis. Police later said they had opened the road. The demonstrators belong to the Jerusalem Faction, an extremist Haredi group numbering some 60,000 members. Considered among the most conservative of Haredi factions, its members regularly demonstrate against the enlistment of yeshiva students. Last month, members of the group blocked Route 4 near the Haredi city of B'nei Brak while others blocked a light rail route in the nearby city of Petah Tikva. Haredi men of military age have been able to avoid the draft for decades by enrolling for study in yeshivas and obtaining repeated one-year service deferrals until they reach the age of military exemption. A law that authorizes this exemption expired in June 2023, and a temporary regulation to extend it

is set to expire at the end of March, after which the military will not be authorized to exempt Haredi young men from the draft and will need to start enlisting them. According to the IDF's Personnel Directorate, some 66,000 young men from the Haredi community received an exemption from military service over the past year, reportedly an all-time record at a time when the army is facing a significant manpower shortage."

C. HAIFA – NAZARETH

From a press release of 19.02.2024 both by the Transport & Road Safety Ministry and Trans Israel:

"Another phase of the Light Rail project in the north is moving ahead:

Group Three, consisting of Alstom, Electra and Minrav, won the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety and Trans-Israel company tender for the construction of the Light Rail line from Haifa to Nof HaGalil and Nazareth

The Minister of Transport and Road Safety, Miri Regev: "This is an inspiring expression of confidence in the economic and social resilience of the State of Israel in the midst of a war".

The Nofit Light Rail will connect the localities of the northern metropolitan area from Haifa to Nof HaGalil and Nazareth, and will serve as a transportation, economic and social growth engine for the entire northern region, will strengthen the northern periphery of Israel and connect it to the center of the country. This is one of the largest infrastructure projects in Israel in the sphere of public transportation.

The Minister of Transport and Road Safety, Brigadier General (res.) Miri Regev: "The announcement of the winner of the tender for construction of the Nofit Light Rail, an enormous project that will connect Nof HaGalil, Nazareth and the Galilee localities to the Haifa metropolitan area, is great news for residents of the North, signaling renewal and growth, of connecting the periphery to the center, of freedom of movement and choice in employment. Four leading and prestigious groups, each of which represents Israeli and international cooperation, participated in the tender – demonstrating an impressive expression of confidence in the resilience, stability, and future of the Israeli economy. On behalf of the residents of the north and all residents of Israel, I congratulate the winning group and promise to assist in every way so that this important project will be completed as soon as possible and bring significant change to the entire northern region. I wish us all a successful journey!"

The Director General of the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety, Moshe Ben Zaken: "This is a historic day for residents of the North and for all residents of Israel. The early screening and tender procedures were conducted with the utmost professionalism, and I am confident that we have chosen a group that will know how to meet the goals and schedules that have been set. The Ministry of Transport will act with full commitment to ensure the success of the project and will remove any obstacle that may stand in its way, while cooperating closely with the local authorities along the route and with the various government ministries."

CEO of Trans-Israel, Dan Shenbach: "Trans-Israel is proud to lead the national project for construction of the Nofit Light Rail, the implementation of which has already begun. The project is of tremendous importance to the economic resilience of the State of Israel, and it will serve as a significant growth engine for the economy in general, and the North in particular. The groups that participated in the tender, consisting of leading international and Israeli companies, is the result of fruitful cooperation and reflects an expression of confidence in the Israeli economy, which is being reinforced these days."

The LRV will be tram/train type, with Overhead power: 1.5 KV direct current.



- 1. Ha'azmaut station in Kiryat Ata. Credit: Yinon Consultation and research planning.
- 2. The line map; Credit: Yinon Consultation and research planning.



OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS

Note: In some cases involving international schemes it has proven difficult to decide exactly where to place specific news items, under which geographical heading, but we hope all those who seek will find. It is intriguing that despite all the political differences, there are now more schemes involving, say, several Gulf states at the same time or grandiose plans to forge rail links across Central Asia.

A. EGYPT

(i). ALEXANDRIA METRO:

In "Metro Report Intl." 06.12.2023: "Thales has been subcontracted to supply signalling, security and ticketing systems for the first metro line in Alexandria."

(ii). CAIRO METRO LINE 3

In "Metro Report Intl." 10.01.2024: "On January 1 passenger-carrying test operations started on the 6.6 km six-station northwestern branch of Cairo Metro Line 3 from Kit Kat to Rod Al-Farag. Test running on the 7.1 km southwestern branch between Kit Kat and Cairo University is underway and opening is scheduled 'during the coming period', according to Egypt's National Authority for Tunnels."



(iii). CAIRO METRO LINE 4

From "Metro Report Intl." 31.01.2024. "Arab Bank announced on January 17 that it would provide Orascom Construction with a £4.2Bn credit facility to support the construction of Cairo Metro Line 4. 'The fourth phase of the Greater Cairo Metro project constitutes one of the most important sustainable green mass transit projects that will have a positive impact by preserving the environment and reducing pollution, in addition to achieving a qualitative shift in the public transport system', said Amr Azab, Country Head of Corporate & Institutional Banking."

A note in an item in "Metro News Intl." 13.03.2024 about new entry gates for the Paris Metro by "Easier" states: "Easier has also

won a contract to supply ticket gates for the Egyptian electric railway project being undertaken by a consortium of Siemens Mobility, Orascom Construction and The Arab Contractors."

B. TURKEY.

(i). FINANCE FOR HIGH SPEED LINES

From "I.R.J." 09.01.2024: "An agreement that will see a total of €1.2Bn provided to finance the construction of a 140km high-speed line between Kayseri and Yerköy in the Central Anatolia region of Turkey was signed at the British Consulate General in Istanbul on January 5.

The signing took place during an official visit to Turkey by Britain's Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Ms Kemi Badenoch.

The financing package includes a €1Bn loan for which MUFG has been appointed as sole mandated lead arranger, coordinator, structurer and agent bank by the Turkish Ministry of Treasury and Finance. The loan has been guaranteed by UK Export Finance (UKEF) and other European export credit agencies (ECA), which have provided significant reinsurance. Sace of Italy has reinsured €249M, Kuke of Poland €205M and OeKB of Austria €176M.

The financing package also includes a separate €220M commercial loan facility, supported in part by the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC).

The funding will enable Turkey's Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, acting through the General Directorate of Infrastructural Investment (AYGM), to build the new line which is expected to reduce road congestion and cut net CO2 emissions between Yerköy and Kayseri by over 6,500 tonnes a year."

(ii). MORE ON THIS FROM "R.G.I."

"The project involves significant realignment and rebuilding of the existing railway between the two cities. It is being undertaken by a joint venture of Dogus Insaat,



Celikler and Özkar, who were also the main contractors for the Ankara – Sivas high speed line which opened in May last year.

The Dogus-Celikler-Özkar consortium submitted a winning bid of TL17Bn in a tendering process held in December 2021.

The Yerköy - Kayseri route is the southern section of a corridor linking the capital Ankara with Kirikkale and Kayseri. The section between Ankara and Yerköy has already been upgraded to support operations at up to 250 km/h as part of the Ankara – Sivas project. Work on the Yerköy – Kayseri section will involve 139.5 km of double-tracking and electrification, and construction of two stations at Yenifakili and Sefaati.

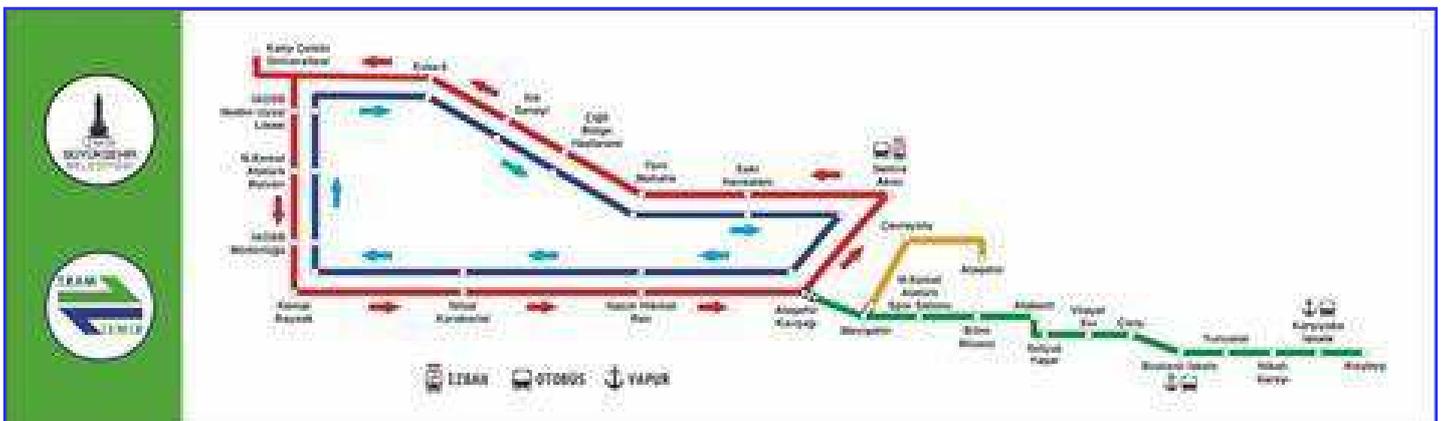
Due for completion in January 2027, the project will include 28 km of new alignment, of which 2.3 km will be on bridges or viaducts, and 13.1 km will be in tunnels. Services on the new line will operate at up to 250 km/h, reducing journey times between Yerköy and Kayseri from 3 h 30 min to under 1 h. Completion of this and related high-speed sections will also see the Ankara – Kayseri travel time fall from around 7 h on the legacy network to approximately 2 h."



(iii). IZMIR TRAM EXTENSION

From "Metro Report Intl." 06.02.2024: "A 12 km long tram extension opened in Izmir's Cigli district on January 27 with a ceremony attended by Mayor Tunc Soyer. Services run in both directions around the ring, meeting at the northern terminus at Katip Celebi Üniversitesi. The Cigli tramway serves 14 stops including the Cigli Devlet Hastanesi hospital. The loop meets the existing Karsiyaka tram line at Atasehir Kavşagi, and interchange with the Izban suburban rail service is provided at Cigli station. Works included the construction of a 750m long tram and bicycle viaduct above the city's main road bypass. It is served by a one-stop extension of the Karsiyaka tramway.

Construction took three years; the project cost was €183M. The Tram Cigli route is operated by the city's existing fleet of 28 Hyundai Rotem trams. However, operator Izmir Metro has called



tenders for another 26 trams. 'During my five-year term, we are investing €1.2Bn the city's urban rail network, which is approximately TL41Bn on today's exchange rate', Izmir Mayor Tunc Soyer said. 'In a few weeks we will open the Narlidere metro extension, an investment of €287M and dedicate it to the 100th anniversary of our republic. On January 9, we lowered the tunnel boring machines for the Buca metro. It is an investment of €765M', he added."

(iv). FORMER MAIN LINE TO ISTANBUL SIRKECI REOPENED AS LIGHT RAIL

From "M.R.I." 29.02.2024: "A 'light rail' line on the alignment of the former railway to the historic Sirkeci station on the European side of Istanbul was opened by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan February 26.

The Halkali – Sirkeci section of line closed in August 2013 as part of the development of the cross-Bosphorus Marmaray suburban rail corridor. Marmaray

trains use the old main line from their western terminus at Halkali as far as Kazilcesme and then a new underground alignment to Sirkeci. Long-distance trains were cut back to start and terminate at Halkali at the same time. The new line uses the 8.3 km Kazilcesme – Sirkeci section of the old railway, with a mix of single and double track.

The reconstruction was undertaken by Kolin Insaat under a TL480M contract awarded in 2021. It involved the rebuilding or renewal of 21 road and pedestrian underpasses and the construction of one new pedestrian underpass and three overpasses. There are running and bicycle routes parallel to the line. The former suburban line stations at Sirkeci, Cankurturan, Kumkapi, Yenikapi, Cerrahpasa, Kocamustafapasa and Yedikule have been modernised, and a new station at built at Kazilcesme. There are various interchanges with Marmaray, tram and ferry routes.

Services are being operated using Marmaray Hyundai Rotem Class E32000 electric multiple-units, running every 10 min at a maximum speed of 80 km/h. Despite the use of EMUs, the line is numbered as tramway T6."

The project was developed by the national Ministry of Transport & Infrastructure rather than Istanbul municipality, and as such uses the U for Ulasim (transport) logo as opposed to the M used for the city's metro.

Speaking at the opening, Erdogan said the route was one of the oldest railways in the country. It had 'completed its service with the opening of Marmaray', but the reopening would 'bring it back with a brand new design' in an 'environmentally friendly project focused on both railways and pedestrians for the benefit of our Istanbulite brothers and sisters'."



- The first section comprises the upgrade of the Jubail Industrial City internal network, which is currently under construction, and will require the construction of 10km of new track.
- The second is the upgrade of the existing Jubail - Dammam line, which is also currently under construction and will require 35km of new track construction.
- The third section will involve an upgrade of the Dammam - Riyadh line, which includes the construction of 87km of new track.
- The fourth section, the Riyadh Bypass, will connect the existing network in the north of the city to the south. It is split into two packages: the first has 67km of track and the second has 35km.
- The fifth section is a new 950km link from Riyadh to Jeddah, which will continue for 146km to King Abdullah Port. The Riyadh - Jeddah section will have three intermediate stations at Jamuma, Moya and Al-Doadmi.
- The sixth section is the new 172km line from King Abdullah Port to Yanbu Industrial City. The project will also include the construction of seven logistics centres at Jubail Industrial City Logistics Centre, Dammam Logistics Dry Port, a relocated Riyadh Dry Port, King Khalid Airport Logistics Centre in Riyadh, Jeddah Logistics Dry Port, King Abdullah Port Logistics Centre and Yanbu Industrial City Logistics Centre.

Plans to develop the Saudi Landbridge project were originally announced in 2004 and were revived in 2011, with progress relatively slow since then. Nevertheless, it is one of Saudi Arabia's most anticipated infrastructure projects, with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud confirming the government's commitment to the scheme in June 2021, when he launched the National Transport and Logistics Strategy."

(v). ANOTHER 95 ELECTRIC LOCOS ORDERED

In "I.R.J." 20.03.2024: TCDD is to order 95 E5000 electric locos from Turkish builder Türasas. No delivery date was quoted nor was a price announced.

C. SAUDI ARABIA

(i) SAUDI LANDBRIDGE: WORK ON THE LONG-PROMISED EAST-WEST LINE LOOKS SET TO FINALLY COMMENCE IN 2024. From "I.R.J." 07.12.2023. (By Kevin Smith): "A consortium of Italy's Italferr, Sener, Spain, and Hill International have been confirmed as the preferred bidders for a project management services contract for the Saudi Landbridge project, IRJ understands. Bids for the contract were received by Saudi Railway Company (SAR) in October 2022 and the consortium has overcome rival proposals from Systra and a consortium of Parsons and Egis. With the project management contract now confirmed, local media reports suggest that SAR is preparing to start work on the public-private partnership (PPP) project, which includes constructing a new 950km railway between Riyadh and Jeddah, early next year as negotiations over the final cost and financing structure for the \$US 7Bn scheme near a conclusion.

The Saudi China Landbridge Consortium (SLCC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to implement the project under a PPP in October 2018. SLCC was formed by SAR and China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC) with Al-Ayuni named as a local partner. The other members are: Systra, Thales, WSP, Aldhabaan & Partners, the local partner of British law firm Eversheds & Sutherland, ALG Infrastructure, and Calx Consultancy. Italferr and local partner Arabian Consulting Engineering Centre (ACEC) completed the design of the project in 2017. Freight trains will operate at up to 160km/h on the new line and passenger trains at up to 250km/h.

The Project

The project itself involves a mixture of upgrades and new line construction and is expected to take seven years to complete. It is split into six sections:

(ii) £795M CONTRACT FOR NEW PORT OF NEOM

From "New Civil Engineer" 13.12.2023, (by Thomas Meneth). (Thanks to Iain Scotchman). "An Archirodon and Deme consortium has been awarded an estimated £795M (US\$ 1 Bn) contract for the second phase of work to expand the Neom port in Saudi Arabia. The port is located along the coast of the Red Sea and is adjacent to the nearby Suez Canal, through which 13% of global trade passes. It will enable the overall build, operations and economic ambitions of the broader Neom mega-development. It will facilitate the import of goods and materials during the development phase and will serve as a new global port in the region. As reported by NCE sister title *Ground Engineering*, under the recently awarded contract, remediation services company Deme will work in consortium with international construction group Archirodon to build the basin that will form the port of Neom. Work is expected to start this month. All materials recovered as part of the dredging for the channel development will be used to support the wider development of Neom's floating port city Oxagon. The second phase follows the award of a contract to deliver the first phase of the port expansion earlier this year. A team of Boskalis, Besix and the local Modern Building Leaders (MBL) was awarded the estimated US\$800M (637M) contract for the first phase. Deme managing director of dredging Christopher Iwens said: "We are proud to be awarded this important project, which focuses on building a next generation sustainable port in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "This contract underscores our technical and engineering expertise, which, alongside the capabilities of our partners at Archirodon, were undoubtedly key factors in Deme securing this landmark contract." Jacobs was appointed lead design consultant for the Port of Neom earlier this year. The port has started functioning, with the first shipment of wind turbines having arrived there in November on the way to the nation's £6.8Bn green hydrogen plant.



Aerial view of harbour of Neom

Earlier this year, a joint venture of Webuild and Shibh Al Jazira Contracting Company (Sajco) was awarded the GBP 1.2 Bn contract to design and build 57km of a high-speed railway in Neom. Known as the Connector, the railway will run north to south along the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia."

(iii) AL ULA BATTERY TRAM SCHEME

From the Alstom website 03.01.2024: "Redefining urban transportation in AlUla, synergising historical legacy with cutting-edge low-carbon technology. The world's longest battery-powered, catenary-free tramway line, links UNESCO World Heritage sites

3 January 2024 – Alstom, global leader in smart and sustainable mobility, signs a more than €500 million contract with The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) for AlUla's pioneering battery-powered tramway – the world's longest catenary-free line.

The fully integrated Alstom tramway system will feature 20 state-of-the-art Citadis B battery-trams. The 22.4km line will encapsulate richness, history, and green mobility like no other, linking 17 strategically located stations, offering unmatched access to AlUla's five core historical districts, including UNESCO World Heritage sites such as AlUla Old Town (District 1), Dadan (District 2), Jabal Ikmah (District 3), Nabataean Horizon (District 4), and Hegra Historical City (District 5).

This ambitious project aims to deliver unique transit options for residents and tourists, with innovative, climate-adapted trams.

"This project is truly unique as it combines sustainability, passenger experience, and immersion into the surroundings, in a region full of history and wonders. It is so much more than a tramway and we are extremely honoured to have been selected by the Royal Commission of AlUla. This project incorporates many key elements of Vision 2030 including Saudi Arabia's focus on environmental stewardship. We very much look forward to unveiling it to



the world," said Mohamed Khalil, Managing Director of Alstom Saudi Arabia.

Alstom plays a pivotal role in this project, from comprehensive system design to integration, installation and testing and commissioning of the catenary-free and battery-powered tramway. Alstom will also deliver power supply, signalling, communication, and depot equipment and provide full maintenance for the trams for 10 years, using HealthHub, Alstom's tool for predictive maintenance and fleet management to deliver the highest availability. The services teams will also use an itinerant workshop for all types of overhauls to be more flexible and reduce capital expenditure, and provide robust training programmes for tram personnel, ensuring operational efficiency. The project will draw on Alstom's global in-house expertise in integrated railway systems. The trams will be manufactured across Alstom's French production sites, including La Rochelle for both design and construction."

(iv). STADLER ORDER FOR INTER-CITY TRAINS

From "R.G.I." 6.2.2024: "Saudi Arabia Railways has signed contracts for Stadler to supply its next generation of passenger trains. The Swiss manufacturer said these would 'elevate train travel in the kingdom to the next level in terms of passenger comfort, travel experience and reliability'.

The contracts signed on February 5 are valued at SFr600M. They include a base order for 10 trainsets and full maintenance support and spare parts for 10 years. There are options for 10 more trainsets and their maintenance. The trainsets will be 175m long with a capacity of about 320 passengers. They will have two independent diesel-electric power cars meeting European Stage V emission standards.

Design will meet the latest European and international standards, with Stadler drawing on its experience of two previous contracts in the MENA region to address the local climate and conditions.

'These modern trains represent an effective tool for improving services provided to the residents and visitors', said SAR Chief Executive Dr Bashar bin Khaled Al Malik.

Increasing demand

Minister of Transport & Logistics and SAR Chairman Saleh bin Nasser Al Jasser said the trains had been ordered in response to increasing demand on the East route from Riyadh to Dammam. They are intended to operate express services, doubling capacity on the route to more than 3.8 million passengers/year.

'The entry of new trains into service in the near future will open new horizons for the economic movement witnessed in the kingdom, by supporting rapid connectivity between cities and main regions', he explained, adding that the King and Crown Prince were providing 'great and unlimited support' for the Kingdom's transportation and logistics system 'to enable the sector to achieve its initiatives in accordance with Saudi Vision 2030'.

Strategic milestone

SAR called tenders for the trainsets in 2022, saying it was making efforts to reduce barriers to entry to the national market to encourage bids from suppliers without a local presence.

Stadler was selected as preferred bidder in 2023, and extensive negotiations took place before the contracts were finalised.

Stadler Executive Chairman Peter Spuhler said the order was a 'strategic milestone' for the company, marking its entry into the railway market in the Gulf Co-operation Council region, 'a market that is expected to be outperforming other railway markets in terms of travel experience and passenger growth'.

The signing was witnessed by Swiss Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, which



Stadler said emphasised the deal's strategic importance for bilateral relations."

D. U.A.E.

(i). PASSENGER SERVICES TO START

"I.R.J." 14.12.2023: "Etihad Rail, the state-owned railway company of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is planning to open the 250km Abu Dhabi - Al Dhannah line to passenger services. This marks the first time passenger trains will operate on the mainline network in the UAE, which was largely completed in February, and has been used exclusively for freight until now. However, the service will not be open to the general public but will serve employees of the national oil company Adnoc, under a strategic agreement signed by Adnoc and Etihad Rail. No details have been confirmed as to when the service will commence, or when the general public will be able to travel by rail, with Etihad Rail stating that it is "continuing to progress the development of its passenger services."

"This partnership underscores Adnoc's commitment to supporting sustainable transport solutions and infrastructure development projects in the UAE," says Adnoc CEO, Dr Sultan bin Ahmed Al Jaber, who is also the UAE's minister of industry and advanced technology, when signing the agreement with Etihad Rail.

2030 Target: Etihad Rail has previously stated that it will transport an estimated 36.5 million people between 11 cities annually by rail by 2030. The railway signed a Dirhams 1.99Bn green loan agreement with First Abu Dhabi Bank to finance passenger services in February 2022. It also reached a Dirhams 1.2Bn agreement with CAF to design, manufacture, supply and maintain 200km/h push-pull diesel trains in June 2022. The trains will have capacity for more than 400 passengers. There is no information, however, on whether these or other trains will be used for the Adnoc service.

Etihad Rail also signed an agreement with CRRC in February for the supply of three 200km/h passenger trains. The contract includes an option for an additional 20 sets and a 15-year maintenance agreement. The trains will consist of a diesel locomotive, five passenger coaches and a driving trailer vehicle. Etihad Rail has also identified the eastern city of Fujairah as the location for the first passenger station. Earlier this year, it was announced that an Orient Express-style luxury train was being planned between Fujairah, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai, in collaboration with Italy's Arsenale Group."

and then:

(ii). FIRST ETIHAD RAILWAY PASSENGER SERVICE

From "I.R.J." 31.01.2024: "Etihad Rail has successfully operated the first mainline passenger service in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), running on the 250km route between Abu Dhabi and Al Dhannah on January 25.

The trains are used by employees of national oil company Adnoc under a strategic agreement signed by Adnoc and Etihad Rail in December.

"The development of passenger rail services between Abu Dhabi City and Al Dhannah City aims to connect the UAE's main centres of trade, industry, manufacturing, production, logistics and population," says Dr Al Jaber, UAE minister of industry and advanced technology and managing director and group chief executive of Adnoc, who was among the first passengers.

"The Etihad Rail project is more than just a rail network, it will serve as a vital artery for economic growth and infrastructure development while driving decarbonisation, for the benefit of the UAE and its people."

Freight operations began on the UAE's \$US 14Bn network in February 2023. The 1,200km network stretches from Ghuweifat on the border with Saudi Arabia in the west to Fujairah in the east, connecting four major ports and seven logistics zones.

No dates have been confirmed for the start of public passenger services, which are expected to connect 11 cities across the UAE. Etihad Rail envisages a 50-minute journey time between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and 1h 40min from Abu Dhabi to Fujairah.

The company ordered a fleet of 200km/h diesel push-pull trains from CAF in June 2022. The trains have capacity for up to 400 passengers and will be equipped with Wi-Fi and air-conditioning.

A luxury train service has also been announced in partnership between Etihad Rail and Italian tour operator Arsenale. The 15-car trains will run from Fujairah to the Liwa desert in Abu Dhabi. No launch date has been confirmed."

(iii). TRANS-ARABIAN RAILWAY TO BE COMPLETED BY 2030.

From "I.R.J." December 2023 p.6: "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has agreed to breathe new life into the stalled project to connect Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman by rail by confirming a new completion date for the GCC Railway of December 2030.

Meeting in Muscat, Oman on November 16, the committee of GCC transport ministers expressed its renewed commitment to the project, as well as agreeing a 2024 budget for the joint GCC Railway Authority, set up in 2022.

The railway would connect the entire east coast of the Arabian Peninsula, running from Kuwait to Oman for over 2,000km, and would cost over \$US 2000 Bn to build. The non-electrified railway would be primarily used by freight trains operating at up to 120km/h and later by passenger services running at up to 220km/h. The GCC predicts that 95 million tonnes of freight and eight million passengers a year will be carried by 2045.

The six countries originally agreed on the project in 2009, when completion was expected in 2018. Saudi Arabia was the only country to have a railway in 2009, and falling oil prices and the resulting strain on government finances during 2014-16 brought the project to a halt. In 2017 Qatar found itself ostracised by its neighbours over its relationship with Iran and alleged support for Islamist extremism. [! Ed.]

However, having resolved their differences, the countries were able to agree in 2021 to resume work. By that time, the UAE had completed most of its section of the GCC Railway, and Oman is now pushing ahead with its new line to Abu Dhabi in the UAE. Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait remain without any operational mainline railways."

(iii). DUBAI SCHEME FOR ELEVATED PODS

From "Metro Report Intl." 23.01.2024: "Dubai's Roads & Transport Authority has signed a memorandum of understanding to work with Urban.MASS on an

operational pilot of its Floc Duo Rail concept for platoons of driverless electric pods running on an elevated track.

Urban.MASS is now seeking funding for development and deployment of its proprietary technology. This is designed to be faster to construct and have a much smaller physical footprint than conventional metro, light rail and tram infrastructure.

'This commitment to the adaptation and deployment of our Floc Duo Rail concept in Dubai is an exciting moment for Urban.MASS', said the UK-based company's co-founder Ricky Sandhu when the MoU was signed on January 18.

'RTA is a leading light in adopting innovative transport solutions, and we are inspired to work with their teams to demonstrate the advantages of the system. This is bigger than us as a company — it is about reducing emissions, providing efficient, low carbon transport that uses state-of-the-art technology, boosting UK business overseas and developing new relationships. We can't wait to get started.'



(iv). DUBAI ADVANCES BLUE LINE METRO

From "I.R.J." Dec. 2023 p.14. "Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) has called for expressions of interest for a design and construction contract for the 30km Blue Line metro, comprising a 15.5km underground section and 14.5km elevated section. The scheme is one of Dubai's largest planned infrastructure projects, and will require international contractors to work in a joint venture with local partners. The contractor will be responsible for all civil and electromechanical works, rolling stock and rail systems, as well as assisting with maintenance and operation for an initial three-year period.

The line will have 14 stations, including seven elevated and five underground, and will interchange with the existing Centrepoint and Creek stations, the termini of the Red and Green lines respectively.

The contract also includes the supply of 28 driverless trains, the construction of a depot to accommodate up to 60 trains, and the construction of all associated roads, facilities and utility diversion works."



(v). MIDDLE EAST RAIL:

This trade fair will be held 30 April – 1 May 2024 in Abu Dhabi.

E. OVERLAND FREIGHT LINK FROM ISRAEL TO EMIRATES

(i). TRADE LINK FROM DUBAI TO HAIFA

From 'I Like Israel News' 18.12.2023: "An innovative project aims to connect the ports of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Haifa in Israel by truck and train, improving trade routes in the Middle East and making them safer. The land bridge agreement

was signed by leading Israeli logistics company Trucknet in cooperation with UAE-based Puretrans FZCO and DP WORLD, a port operator in Dubai. The route avoids the sea route in the Red Sea, where the Iranian-backed Yemeni Houthi militia repeatedly attacks or hijacks merchant ships. The new route will connect the UAE with Haifa via Saudi Arabia and Jordan. It will reduce transit time by around 80% compared to the sea route and follows the Abraham Accords of 2020, which normalized relations between Israel and the UAE, Morocco and Bahrain. Initially, it will be a truck route; the train route is still a long way off. The crucial thing, however, is that the plans would be impossible without Saudi Arabia, over whose land the largest section runs. This means that the kingdom is still undeterred in its intentions to normalize relations with Israel. (nocamels, JNS) VR"

[Ed. adds: The recent troubles in the Red Sea mean that in the longer term trade routes may indeed shift substantially away from the Suez Canal and the routes leading to it (Red Sea, Mediterranean) which could mean severe economic damage to Egypt but also a redundancy of some of the schemes for rail links between Eilat and Ashdod.]

Additional to this, from "R.G.I." 15.03.24: Evidence of how new routes are being created which, even though very roundabout, serve to provide alternatives to the Red Sea: "Rail freight operator Linesas has collaborated with container handler CSP Zeebrugge to launch a service between the Belgian port and Graz in Austria for COSCO Shipping Lines, which has had to divert vessels away from the Red Sea because of attacks by Houthi rebels. The ships would normally go through the Red Sea and Suez Canal to the port of Piraeus in Greece, but have been rerouted to Zeebrugge because of the attacks.

'We are pleased that we were able to respond quickly and effectively to the challenges faced by our COSCO Group partners', said Linesas Executive Chairman Bernard Gustin on February 26. 'This new connection highlights the flexibility of





our network, and we are committed to continuing to provide innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers."

(ii). FREIGHT CONTRACT

From "R.G.I." 18.12.2023: "Etihad Rail has signed a memorandum of understanding to provide Al Dahra Holding Co with rail transport services for agricultural products. Al Dahra CEO Arnoud van den Berg said 'our primary objective at Al Dahra is to sustainably meet the nutritional needs of the developing world. The UAE national railway network enables us to advance our efforts to transition our supply chain activities to low-carbon alternatives.'"

F. DUBAI

From "I.R.J." 18.01.2024. "Dubai's Roads & Transport Authority (RTA) has issued a tender for construction of Dubai metro's 30km Blue Line after confirming that six consortia have prequalified to bid for the contract.

The consortia are:

- Hyundai Rotem; China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation; Nippon, Japan
- CRRC; Limak Holding, Turkey; Mapa Group, Turkey
- Siemens; Samsung, Korea; Larsen & Toubro, India; Wade Adams, UAE
- Alstom; FCC, Spain; China State Construction Engineering Corporation
- CAF; China Tiesiju Civil Engineering Group; Arab Contractors, Egypt, and
- Hitachi; WeBuild.

RTA invited expressions of interest in the project, which is expected to cost Dirhams 18Bn (\$US 4.9Bn), in October.

The Blue Line will comprise a 15.5km underground section reaching a maximum depth of 70m, and a 14.5km elevated section. The line will have 14 stations, including nine elevated and five underground, and will serve the existing Centrepont and Creek stations, the termini of the Red and Green lines, respectively.

The line will have capacity for 56,000 passengers per hour in both directions, with trains operating at intervals of around 90s. The Blue line will serve an area with a population of more than one million people, including notable locations such as Dubai Creek Harbour, Dubai Festival City, International City, Al Rashidiya, Al Warqa, Mirdif, Dubai Silicon Oasis, and Dubai Academic City.

The chosen contractor will be responsible for all civil and electromechanical works, the supply of 28 driverless trains and rail systems, as well as assisting with maintenance and operation for an initial three-year period. The contract

also includes the construction of a depot to accommodate up to 60 trains, and the construction of all associated roads, facilities and utility diversion works.

The detailed scope of work for the project includes:

- civil works, including detailed design and construction of architectural and structural components, including viaducts, tunnels and stations
- design and execution of electromechanical works
- design, procurement and delivery of operation and control systems for rail systems, stations and other facilities, and
- design, manufacturing and supply of rolling stock.

Following contract award later this year, tunnelling is expected to commence in 2025, with trial operation scheduled for 2028, ahead of the line's entry into passenger service in 2029."

G. JORDAN

(i). EXCURSIONS

From "Christian Science Monitor" 30.09.2023 By Taylor Luck. : AMMAN AND AL JIZA, JORDAN

"The luxurious, refurbished wooden train car rattles between the rows of houses in Amman, and Nasser Kawaldeh points outside the window. "You see? We are moving along the Ottomans' track," he tells his grandson. "This is better than the history books." Indeed, just like when it was unveiled by the Ottoman Empire in 1913 as an engineering marvel, the Hejaz Railway today runs on the same tracks winding through Amman and southward into the desert.

Mr. Kawaldeh and his family were among 100 masked passengers who lined up last Friday morning for a ride on the Hejaz, with coffee thermoses, bags of popcorn, soccer balls, and drums in tow. Children screeched with delight at the sight of imposing locomotives and wooden carriages that once carried Emir Abdullah, Jordan's first king.

This fall, many Jordanians are discovering the train for the first time, thanks to a Jordanian Tourism Ministry campaign offering socially-distanced discount trips.

The Hejaz takes eight hours from Amman to the southern desert of Wadi Rum and eight hours north to Damascus, Syria, although the railway mainly runs trips to a station just outside Amman. But the Hejaz is more than just an old train. It's a living link to the past running on wooden and steel tracks that mark the birthplace of a nation.

Ottoman Artery

The Ottomans built the railway with taxes and conscript labor to link their Arab provinces and ferry hajj pilgrims to Mecca. They ran 810 miles of track

from Damascus through the arid deserts of modern-day Jordan and to the holy city of Medina in Saudi Arabia, then known as the Hejaz. The train reduced a 40-day journey to a few days.

The railway was so crucial to Ottoman power and troop movement that it became the main target for the Great Arab Revolt led by Sharif Hussein, the great-great-grandfather of Jordan's current monarch, King Abdullah II.

Sharif Hussein's guerrilla attacks on the line in 1917-18 – as depicted in the movie "Lawrence of Arabia" – helped seal the Ottomans' collapse and the birth of what would be known as Transjordan.

Today, 270 miles of the narrow-gauge track runs through the middle of Jordan like a spine, from its northern border to southernmost tip, preserved and maintained by the Jordan Hejaz Railway company for Jordanians and tourists alike.

Despite growing up just a mile away from the Amman train station and walking over the track each day on his way to school, 28-year-old Mohammed Al Awad rode the train for the first time on Friday. "This makes you realize that the past never died but still lives with us. All these great civilizations – Ottomans, the Romans – all came through Jordan," Mr. Awad says as he sat for lunch with his parents and sisters at the Al Jiza Station, 20 miles from the Amman station.

"Today we are part of that chain of civilizations," Mr. Awad says.

Mr. Kawalkeh says he jumped at the chance to ride the train, coming from his hometown of Jerash 30 miles northwest of Amman with his children and grandchildren. "Our ancestors built this track," Mr. Kawalkeh says. "By learning about our past, we Jordanians are learning about ourselves."

Jordan as Crossroads

When the Hejaz first opened in 1913, Amman was a village of a few thousand; its rail station and line ran alongside deserted hills of wild grass and shrubs. Today, a capital city of 4 million has grown on either side of the track. Closely. Leaving the Amman station, the train navigates houses, makeshift patios, and traffic jams, and cuts through the center of cemeteries, the metal undercarriage skirts within an inch of headstones. Children race uphill and down at the sound of the locomotive, stopping at the tracks' edge to shout and wave and, if they are fortunate, get a train horn blast back from the conductor. Toddlers too small to follow their siblings poke out of nearly every window the train passes, their heads, legs, and arms dangling from window bars as they wave and point. An older couple sitting at a folding table near the tracks for their morning tea raise their glasses as the train rumbles by. In less than two hours, the Hejaz offers a glimpse into Jordan's unique makeup as a crossroads of urban, rural, and nomadic Bedouin life – today and more than a century ago.

South of Amman, the claustrophobic apartment-dotted hills give way to sprawling factories, before melting away into wheat-sweet plains and olive groves; people are replaced by sheep, donkeys, horses, and dogs herding flocks. A few miles later, the train passes through squash and tomato farms whose seasonal workers stop their picking to watch the families rumble by.

As the train nears Al Jiza, the second station outside Amman, the wheat fields become parched and camels graze near the tracks, their camel-mounted Bedouin keeper raising his riding crop in the air in salutation. Al Jiza, built of hand-cut stone, is one of 20 stations that remain intact and in use in Jordan, unchanged from Ottoman times.

Tracking change

But the Hejaz is not just history for Al Jiza stationmaster Ahmed Masri; it's personal history: He was born in the station house 50 years ago. Mr. Masri's father, who hailed from a Bedouin settlement near the station, worked maintenance on the railroad for decades, his family living in the station and adjacent house. Now a 28-year veteran of the railway, Mr. Masri has seen many changes the past three decades. "Before there was no electricity, no houses, no

highway; the airport hadn't expanded near the tracks," Mr. Masri says as he motions to houses poking out from the desert.

Once-regular trips from Amman to Damascus are now impossible due to ongoing war. Government plans to revive the Hejaz as a regional rail hub connecting the Gulf, Syria, and beyond are on hold amid a lack of funds and willing partners, and the need to overhaul the track for the modern, wider gauge used by its neighbors.

While Jordan's Hejaz Railway still has nine British and German steam engines in service, some dating back to the 19th century, it now mostly runs Belgian diesel locomotives from the 1950s to keep down costs. The telegraph line that once ran alongside the track is long gone. The rail line practically disappears once it leaves southern Jordan and enters Saudi Arabia; there, much of the track has been uprooted by tribesmen or reclaimed by desert.

But one thing has stayed the same. "The train still runs on time," Mr. Masri says with a smile. "And everyone is welcome aboard."

(ii). JORDAN CONSIDERS HEDJAZ RAILWAY AIRPORT EXTENSION

From "I.R.J." 20.01.2024. By Syed Rashid Ali: "The company is looking at plans for a 65km new rail link between Zarqa and the country's international airport."

"Jordan-Hedjaz Railway (JHR) has revealed plans for a potential new rail link. The line would extend from Zarqa City, northeast of the capital Amman, to Queen Alia International Airport, 30km south of Amman. JHR estimates the new railway would carry between 40,000 and 50,000 passengers each day.





(iii). HEDJAZ RAILWAY TOUR.

Ffestiniog Travel is arranging another 10-Day tour from 4 November 2024 – "a wonderful opportunity to explore Jordan's long history by visiting its ancient cities and landmarks and enjoy journeys on the last remaining sections of the Hedjaz Railway. See the wonders of Petra, Jerash and Madaba. Includes: Two private charters on the Hejaz Railway; Hejaz Railway station tour; visit 4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites; Extra day in Petra and discover 'Petra by Night'; 4x4 Jeep tour in Wadi Rum; Experience the buoyant waters of the Dead Sea; visit Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo; Visit Bethany Beyond the Jordan; Amman City Tour." From GBP 3,295 per person for ten days. Details from www.ffestiniogtravel.com

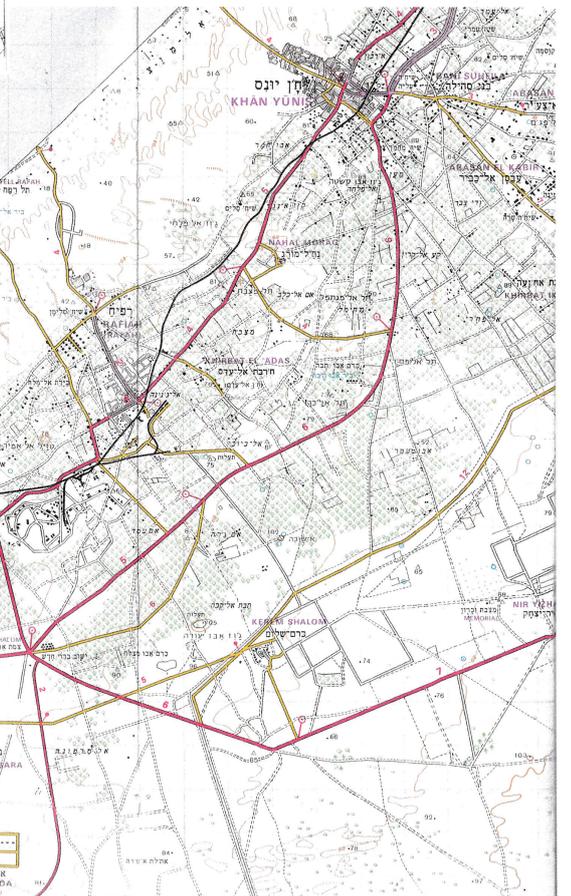
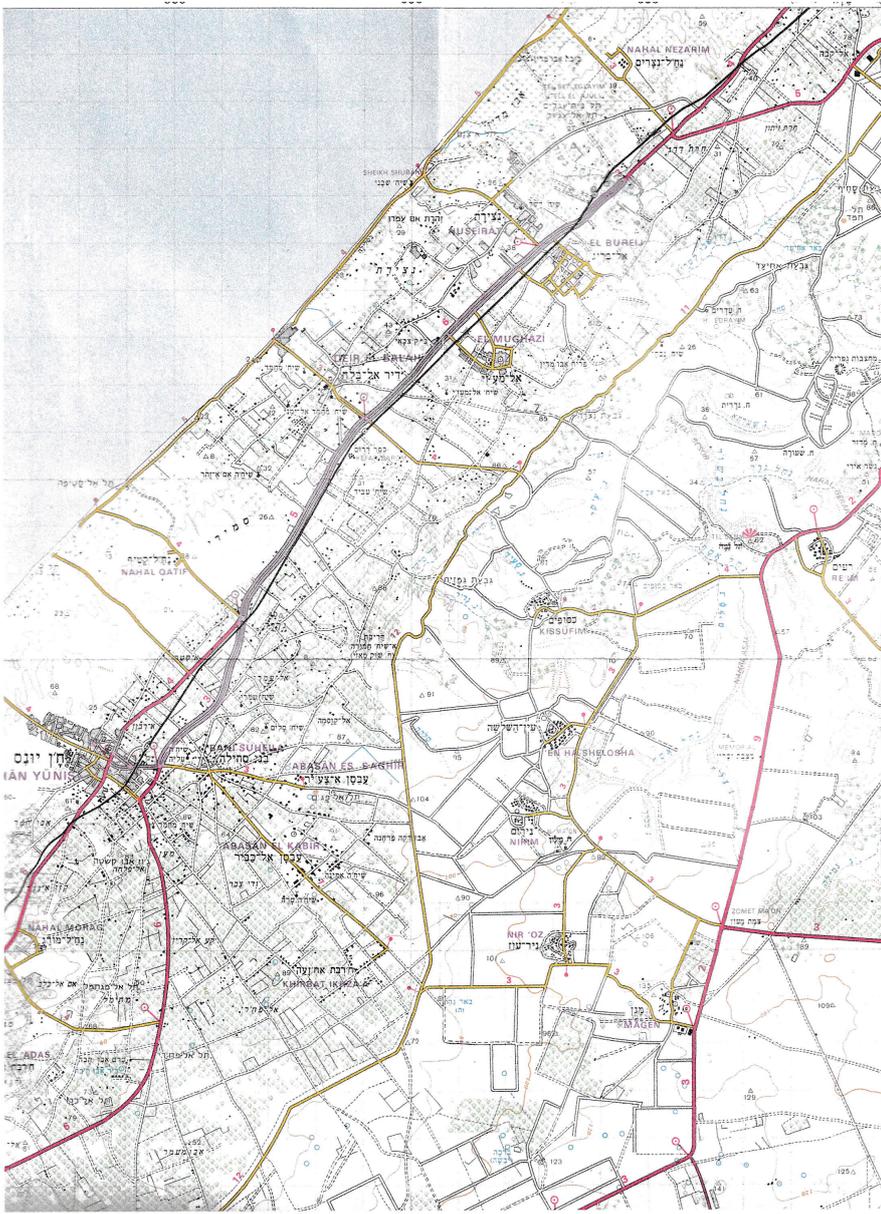
G. PALESTINE

No timescale or costings have been revealed. Speaking to Jordan's Public Services and Transportation Committee on January 17, the Director-General of JHR, Mr Zahi Khalil, noted that the railway company is financially self-sufficient, generating its own income from investments and completed projects.

JHR runs passenger and freight trains on the 1300km line [sic] between Amman in Jordan and Damascus in Syria. The line is one of the remaining parts of a much larger 1050mm-gauge Hedjaz Railway network that contracted after the Second World War."

We must stress: At present there is no entity known as "Palestine Railways"; But the Editor purchased in Israel in ca. 1982 a boxed set of "Survey of Israel" maps, 1:100,000 and dated 1976. From these it is considered relevant to the current situation to reproduce sections from Sheet 13 "Yammit" and Sheet 10 "Ashkelon". Of historical value only, representing a former political situation, they show the course of the main railway line originally built in 1917-18 and which until 1948 formed the main link between then-Palestine and Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula. From 1948 (at which point Rafah became a border which cut through the large British military base there) until 1967 it was operated by the Egyptian National Railways, for a brief period following 1967 by Israel Railways which absorbed several items of motive power and rolling stock then in use.





H.ABU DHABI

From "I.R.J." "Kazakhstan's national railway KTZ and Abu Dhabi Ports Group have signed an agreement to develop freight services on the north-south corridor from Russia to the Indian Ocean, including the expansion of port infrastructure on the Caspian Sea and the creation of trade hubs. Abu Dhabi Ports Group also plans to build a grain and multipurpose terminal at the port of Kuryk in Kazakhstan."

I. KAZAKHSTAN

THIRD CONNECTION TO CHINA

Not quite part of the Middle East and yet part of the expanding East-West regional rail network and so included here: From "I.R.J." 05.01.2024:

"Kazakhstan has officially begun construction of its third railway connection with China, a line the country's government promised when beginning work on the new Kazakhstan - Uzbekistan railway on November 27.

This new 272km line will run in a south-easterly direction from Ayagoz in eastern Kazakhstan to Bakhty on the Chinese border before continuing to Chuguchak in Tacheng prefecture. The double-track railway is expected to boost freight capacity between Kazakhstan and China by more than two thirds, from 28 to about 48 million tonnes per year when completed in 2027, as well as relieving congestion at the two existing border crossings. It is part of the major investment in a total of 1300km of new railway lines that the Kazakh government is currently undertaking.

"Over the past five years, the volume of transit container traffic has increased 3.2 times," said Kazakhstan's prime minister Mr Alikhan Smailov when launching construction of the Ayagoz - Bakhty line on December 21. "Existing transit corridors are expanding, and new transit corridors are being opened. The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, North-South and the Southern Corridors have become particularly relevant."

The increase is, naturally, due to soaring demand for goods from China and the latter country's Belt and Road Initiative, but Kazakhstan hopes that the new line will also facilitate exports in the other direction.

"All this will have a positive impact on the economy not only of the Abai region, but also of the whole country," Smailov said. "The implementation of the Bakhty-Ayagoz project will also accelerate the integration of Kazakhstan's railway network into the world transport system.

No financial details have been disclosed, other than that an unnamed private investor is involved."

Linked to this item:

DUBAI BACKS KARACHI DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR PLAN

From "R.G.I." 6.2.2024:

"PAKISTAN: Plans to establish a dedicated rail freight corridor and economic zone near Karachi are included in two inter-governmental framework agreements signed by the governments of Pakistan and Dubai on January 17.

The agreements cover plans for US\$3Bn+ of investment in railways, economic zones and infrastructure. DP World will act on behalf of Dubai, while Pakistan Railways and Port Qasim Authority will act on behalf of Pakistan.

The proposed Dedicated Freight Corridor would run 50 km from Karachi Port, through Karachi, Pakistan's most populous city, to the Pipri marshalling yard. The aim is to decongest Karachi, improve road safety, significantly increase efficiency and reduce transport times and costs.

A second framework agreement covers dredging of the navigation channel and the development of an economic zone at Port Qasim. 'The signing of investment framework agreements highlights the importance of Pakistan as gateway to Asia and commercial dividends associated with its strategic location', said Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Federal Minister of Communication, Railways & Maritime Affairs."

J. IRAN

(i). INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS TAKING SHAPE

From "R.G.I." 19.02.2024. By Tomas Bacic:

"Work is progressing on various cross-border rail links as Iranian Railways seeks to strengthen its role as a Eurasian rail hub.

For the past two decades, Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been pursuing a strategy of international expansion, developing cross-border connections with neighbouring countries in a bid to position itself as a railway crossroads for the region. While some projects are on hold for economic and political reasons, RAI has been able to report significant progress on others.

Pressure to develop rail connections between the Gulf ports and southern Europe has increased significantly since the accidental blockage of the Suez Canal in March 2021.

One current focus is the development of a rail corridor linking Iran and Europe via Syria. This was the subject of discussions at a meeting on December 6 between Iran's Ministry of Roads & Urban Development and the head of Syria's Ministry of Economy & Foreign Trade, which covered a range of topics in the field of trade, energy, tourism and transport.

The ministers underlined the importance of completing a rail link connecting the capitals of Iran and Syria, in order encourage the growth of freight transport between the two countries. The longer-term aim is to develop a transport corridor from the Iranian port of Bandar Emam Khomeyni on the Gulf coast to the ports of the Mediterranean Sea through Iraq, Syria and eventually Lebanon.

As part of this strategy, the Iranian delegation expressed its readiness to undertake a feasibility study to support the restoration of Syrian railways destroyed during that country's civil war.

Meanwhile, construction of a long-planned cross-border rail link between Khorramshahr and Basra is getting underway, following a formal launch at Shalamcheh in southern Iraq last September. This 32 km line is expected to be operational in late 2024 or early 2025, facilitating the movement of millions of Iranian pilgrims heading to holy sites in Iraq. Tehran and Baghdad first signed an agreement to develop the route in 2014, but were forced to suspend the project a short time later as a result of unrest in parts of Iraq.

Meanwhile, the government has allocated 6Tr Riyals to fund work on the 260 km extension of the Tehran – Kermanshah line to an intermodal terminal at Khosravi, near the border with Iraq. The long-term aim is to close the 20 km cross-border gap to the Iraqi railhead at Khanaqin in order to provide a more direct route to Baghdad.

Reconnecting Naxcivan

Another potential northern outlet is offered by the revival of the ex-Soviet rail link with Turkey through the Azeri exclave of Naxcivan, from the border crossing at Jolfa. During discussions between the transport ministries of Azerbaijan and Iran on December 23, it was announced that more than 700,000 tonnes of freight had been transported between the two countries by rail in 2023, a 47% increase on the previous year. Meanwhile, transit freight traffic had increased by 57%.

Azerbaijan has already started restoration of its Zangezur corridor railway from Horadiz to the town of Aghbend. In October, Azeri and Iranian representatives signed an intergovernmental 'Protocol of intent' to build a new line from Aghbend to Salamalik, passing through Iran to bypass a section of the former alignment which runs through the southern part of Armenia.

Signing of the Protocol was rapidly followed by the start of construction of a bridge over the Aras River near Aghbend, along with the appropriate border customs infrastructure. This is expected to be completed within a year, although the rest of the project has become the subject of a heated international debate.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Turkey's President Recep Erdogan signed a letter of intent in September 2023 to revitalise the 224 km Naxcivan – Kars railway providing a northern outlet from the region. And on December 21 Turkish Deputy Trade Minister Ozgur Volkan told a transport

and logistics conference at the Azerbaijan-Turkey Investment Forum that work on the line would be completed within five years.

North-South Corridor

Iran is continuing to press ahead with development of the International North-South Transport Corridor, which is intended to connect India and Russia via rail connections both east and west of the Caspian Sea. Trade between Russia and India has grown steadily from US\$12Bn in 2012 to US\$39Bn a decade later, and according to Russian estimates, it could reach US\$90Bn per year by 2030.

On January 15 representatives of the Iranian and Indian governments reached an agreement in Tehran covering long-term co-operation to modernise the port of Chabahar. The agreement will be valid for 10 years, with renewal by default. Chabahar is the only port in Iran with direct access to the Indian Ocean, and it has an annual throughput of more than 2 million tonnes. Completion of the proposed rail link to Chabahar is included under the partnership.

Meanwhile, container trains have been operating along the North-South corridor since July 2021, although the route remains far from complete. A first through consignment of 39 containers was dispatched from Chekhov near Moscow in July 2022, reaching India via Bandar Abbas. After operating a series of pilot trains, RZD announced in October 2022 that it had launched a regular monthly container service via this corridor. However, the route is far from fully operational, due to a variety of technical problems, and a lack of modern cargo ships and port facilities on the Caspian Sea.

Work is progressing to complete the missing link between Astara and Rasht on the western branch of the North-South corridor, which runs through the Lisar nature reserve on the western shores of the Caspian. At the northern end, a short cross-border connection from Astara in southern Azerbaijan to an intermodal transshipment terminal in Iran was completed in 2016 and inaugurated the following year; this is currently being operated by ADY as part of the Azeri network.

In March 2023 RZD's First Deputy General Director Sergei Pavlov announced that it had been decided to provide both Iran's 1,435mm gauge and Russia's 1,520mm gauge on the 162 km Rasht – Astara line, although the European gauge would be laid first. This was followed by the signing of another intergovernmental agreement between Iran and Russia in Tehran on May 17, under which Russia has reportedly agreed to invest €1.3Bn in the project, covering a significant proportion of the estimated €1.6M total cost.

At a further meeting of representatives from Russia, Iran and India on July 4, Iran and Russia signed a formal contract for construction of the Rasht – Astara line. Detailed engineering design was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023, with construction expected to begin in 2024.

Meanwhile, another expansion of the corridor became operational on August 27, with the running of the first through freight service from Russia to Saudi Arabia. The inaugural train was routed via the eastern branch, reaching Iran through the Turkmenistan border station at Incheh Borun. This train conveyed 36 TEUs, which were then transported by RAI to Bandar Abbas for shipping around the Arabian peninsula to the Red Sea port of Jeddah.

Speaking at a conference on the International Transport Corridor at Astrakhan on October 25-26, governor Igor Babushkin announced that a 'special port economic zone' had been created in Russia's Astrakhan oblast. Construction work was under way on 'modern terminals for the transshipment of grain and vegetable oil, as well as a large container terminal', which would be inaugurated during 2024. Together, these would increase transshipment capacity by an estimated 3.3 Million tonnes per year.

Chinese support

With the admission of Iran to the Brics grouping from January 1 2024, Chinese businesses have become increasingly interested in the Iranian market. Chinese companies have long been involved in construction of Tehran's metro network, while metro trains have been supplied by the Tehran Rail Vehicle Manufacturing Co, a joint venture between China's rolling stock group CRRC and local firms.

Last year, local media reported that Chinese companies had been selected to supply rolling stock for the Tehran – Qom – Isfahan high speed line, which is being partially financed by China.

According to project director Alireza Salvati, 70% of the infrastructure for the 245 km direct route from Qom to Isfahan had been completed by the third quarter of 2023, and last year the government indicated that it was aiming to extend the line from Isfahan to Shiraz.

In the longer term, the government is looking to develop a second high speed corridor between Tehran and Mashhad, relieving RAI's existing 926 km main line, which has been extensively upgraded in recent years. Although an agreement was signed in 2017 for China to provide funding and technical assistance for electrification of the Mashhad line, RAI announced in 2021 that the Chinese had pulled out, leaving the project in the hands of local partner Mapna Group."



(ii). OLD NEWS: "GERMAN CARRIAGES SOLD SECOND-HAND TO IRAN."

From "Eisenbahn Magazin" (thanks to Marc Stegeman). March 1977: "DB verkaufte an Iran: Die DB hat den Iranischen Staatsbahnen 140 Reisezugwagen verkauft, die auf dem Landweg über die Türkei nach Persien gelangen. Es handelt sich um ältere und neuere Reisezugwagen verschiedener Bauarten, die bei der DB durch Rationalisierungsmassnahmen überflüssig sind."

i.e. "DB has sold 140 passenger coaches to the Iranian state railways, which will be transported overland to Persia via Turkey. These are older and newer passenger coaches of various types that are no longer required by DB due to rationalisation measures."

K. IRAQ

NEW BAGHDAD METRO PLANNED

From "I.R.J." 15. 02.2024: "The National Investment Commission (NIC) of Iraq has started tendering for a programme to build a seven-line driverless metro network in Baghdad totalling 148km. Potential bidders have been invited to purchase official tendering documentation from NIC, priced at Dinars 100M (\$US 76.37M), within a 30-day period ending on March 12.

The project is being taken forward on a design, build, operate, maintain, finance and transfer (DBOMFT) basis and bids must be submitted by April 11.

Bidders must provide an economic feasibility study, a funding plan, a timetable for completing the metro network and details of similar projects executed by the bidder or its partners.

According to NIC, the driverless Baghdad metro would serve a total of 64 stations, involving the construction of underground, surface and elevated sections.

The seven proposed lines are as follows:

- Green Line: Al Alawi - Doura (19km)
- Red Line: Al Alawi - Maisaloun Square (27.7km)
- Blue Line: Al Shaab - Al Zuafaraniya (22km)
- Purple Line: Al Tayaran Square - Al Shaab (14.5km)
- Yellow Line: Al Baladiyat - Adan Square (30km)
- White Line: Al Kadhimiya - Al Bayaa (23km), and
- Airport Line: Baghdad Airport - Al Qadisiya (12km).

The project also involves the construction of four train maintenance workshops and depots, two control centres and power stations.

On rolling stock, NIC says that each train must include a "gold class" car, as well as one for the exclusive use of women and children, and one for tourists. All cars must be accessible to passengers with reduced mobility.

Speaking at a ceremony held to mark the start of tendering, Iraq's prime minister, Mr Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, said that the project represents a major shift in transport policy for Baghdad, where the population is currently over 8 million.

The planned Baghdad metro would serve newly-built communities and play an important role in reducing traffic congestion, according to Al-Sudani.

New pilgrim line

NIC chairman, Dr Haider Makiya, also announced the start of tendering on February 12 for a 90km electrified line between Najaf International Airport and Karbala, with intermediate stations in the centre of Najaf and at Karbala International Airport.

According to NIC, the new line is intended to provide safe and fast mass transport for the large number of pilgrims travelling to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

The project is also being taken forward on a DBOMFT basis and tendering will be conducted to the same timetable as that for the Baghdad metro.

Makiya said that other major investment projects will be announced by NIC later this year."

Intriguingly, "R.G.I." reports this as one of TWO major projects, thus:

"IRAQ: The National Investment Commission has begun procurement for two contracts to design, finance, build, operate, maintain and transfer a seven-line metro network in Baghdad and a Najaf – Karbala railway.

The US\$2.5Bn Baghdad metro plan envisages a seven-line network totalling 150 km and 64 stations to serve most of the city, including the suburbs. It would have four depots, two control and management centres and power generation stations.....The second project is for a 90 km line, described as a metro, which would provide 'safe, large-scale and fast' electric transport for the millions of pilgrims who visit the cities of Najaf and Karbala, which contain important Shia religious sites.

The line would start at Najaf International Airport and run to Najaf city centre, Karbala International Airport and then to Karbala city centre.

The two projects would make significant contributions to reducing traffic congestion, NIC President Dr Haider Mohamed Makiya said when the plans were announced on February 12.

Tender documents are available to purchase until March 12, with responses to be submitted by April 11. Interested parties are invited to provide an economic feasibility study, project details, a funding plan, a timetable for completion and details of previous similar projects they have undertaken. The proposals should take into consideration the previous studies for the two projects.

The government has appointed international consultants to examine the bids and advise on the best offers, focusing on experience in the rail sector."

L. LEBANON

For anyone interested, the German magazine "Eisenbahn Geschichte" No. 121 for Dec. 2023/Jan. 2024 pp. 66-76 has an excellent series of pictures of the Beirut – Damascus line taken by the late Harald Navé of normal traffic in June 1966 and on a railtour in May 1998, some in colour

M. INTERNATIONAL: CZECH

INTEREST

From "R.G.I." 30.01.2024: "Rail and urban transport manufacturers sought to identify opportunities in Middle Eastern markets during a trade mission organised by national rail industry association ACRI as part of Czech President Petr Pavel's state visit to Qatar and Israel.

ACRI Chief Executive Marie Vopálenká said there the potential to sell Czech trams, metro trains, signalling and information systems in the Middle East market, where its members have already won significant contracts.

During the trade mission ACRI met representatives of Israel Railways, and Israeli's Ministry of Transport expressed interest in bilateral co-operation with its Czech counterpart.

'Israel is already a very promising market for the Czech railway industry', said Vopalenska after the state visit in mid-January. 'AZD Praha has implemented a pilot project for the supply of technologies for the diagnostics of turnouts at several stations. The involvement of Czech companies and the interest of Škoda Group in participating in tenders for trams were key points in the mutual negotiations.'

Czech companies are interested in Israel's cybersecurity expertise, and meetings were held with Cyber7, IONSec and Ben Gurion University.

ACRI sees 'significant potential' for the Czech rail supply sector in Qatar, which offers an open and welcoming market, 'first-class' infrastructure and suitable legislation.

Meetings were held with the Chamber of Commerce, the Czech-Qatar Committee of the Czech Chamber of Commerce and Invest Qatar.

'Qatar is transitioning to a public transport system powered by electricity', said Vopalenska. 'There is a strong focus on testing autonomous vehicles and the use of artificial intelligence. This area is also of interest to our members and has been the subject of discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Transport.'

ACRI said its members export 60% of their production, and have offices and subsidiaries in more than 20 countries."

N. (i). UIC LAUNCHES MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL COMPETENCE HUB. UAE:

From "Railway Gazette International" 17.12.2023: "The International Union of Railways' Middle East Regional Competence Hub was officially launched at the University of Birmingham's Dubai campus during the COP28 climate change conference."

(ii). From " R.G.I." 16.02.2024: VISIONS OF A CONTINENTAL CORRIDOR

Proposals for the development of an India – Middle East – Europe 'economic corridor' were announced at the G20 summit in September 2023, but many questions remain about how the project might be implemented.

Over the past few issues we have taken and reproduced published information on various railway schemes in the Middle East but the March 2024 issue of 'International Railway Journal' has a good précis of the situation, by Kevin Smith, and we take the liberty of reproducing a section of it here:

"Saudi Arabia's ambitious Landbridge project, an east-west, port-to-port railway from Jubail and Damman on the Persian Gulf to Jeddah on the Red Sea via Riyadh, has finally taken a key step forward. A consortium of Italferr, Sener and Hill International were confirmed as the preferred bidder for a project management consultancy contract last month. 20 years after the project was conceived, construction could finally get underway later this year.

The Saudi Landbridge is one of the projects to watch..... Progress here is another sign that the Middle East rail market has sparked back into life. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) added further fuel to the fire by announcing December 2030 as the completion date for the trans-Arabian GCC Railway to connect Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. The landmark project hit the buffers in 2014 when the oil crisis prompted the GCC governments to pull back their respective plans to build new cross-border railway infrastructure. Interregional disputes, particularly between Qatar and the rest of the Gulf region, also dampened enthusiasm for the GCC project. Yet.... the situation has largely been resolved ... Hill International is also eyeing opportunities in Oman and rail schemes in Qatar and the UAE....

Growing confidence among Gulf governments to build new railway infrastructure reflects the long-term desire to diversify their economies away from oil and gas. There is also increasing recognition of the need to invest in more sustainable modes of transport, reflecting policies in other regions.

The UAE Consensus, the output document of COP28, which was held in Dubai in December, included commitments to transition away from fossil fuels for the first time. While not committing to a total phase-out,....this is still an encouraging step. Sustainable transport, including rail, can also take heart from the document's acknowledgement of the need to "accelerate the reduction of emissions from road transport on a range of pathways" and the commitment to triple renewables and double energy efficiency."

The issue includes several "Projects to Watch in 2024". On p.38: "Saudi Land Bridge. Construction start 2024, Completion 2031, 1330km, cost \$US7Bn. A consortium of Italferr, Sener and Hill International were confirmed in December 2023 as the preferred bidders for the project management services contract for the Saudi Landbridge project. ... Bids were received by Saudi Railway Company (SAR) in October 2022 and the consortium has overcome rival proposals from Sysstra and a consortium of Parsons and Egis. With the project management contract now confirmed, local media reports suggest that SAR is preparing to start work early this year on the public-private partnership (PPP) project, which includes constructing a new 950km railway between Riyadh and Jeddah, as negotiations over the final cost and financing structure for the \$US7Bn scheme near conclusion. The project itself involves a mixture of upgrades and new line construction and is expected to take seven years to complete."

Also (p.35): AIN SOKHNA – MARSATA MATROUH HIGH-SPEED LINE.

"Construction start 2022, completion 2027, length 685km, cost \$US 4.5Bn. The 675km Ain Sokhna – Marsa Matruh high-speed line will run from Ain Sokhna on the Red Sea to October Gardens, Alexandria, El Alamein and Mersa Matruh on the Mediterranean, plus a branch from October Gardens to Al-Ayat, with 321 stations. In January 2021 the National Authority for Tunnels (NAT) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Siemens Mobility, Orascom Construction and Arab Contractors to design, build, equip and commission the new line. Phase 1 will be 460km long and connect the developing city of El Alamein to Ain Sokhna via the New Administrative Capital to the east of Cairo, which is under construction with completion set for 2027. Phase 2 will be 200km long and extend the line from El Alamein to Mersa Matrouh. The line, which will have a design speed of 250km/h, will carry freight and passenger services, with express services operating at 200km/h, regional trains running at 160km/h and freight at 120km/h. Once completed, the line is forecast to carry 30 million passengers annually, cutting journey times by 50%."

144:08

NOTES & COMMENTS

From "Tagesspiegel" 19.12.2023: (Translated), "Around 300 demonstrators gathered at Berlin Central Station early on Tuesday evening for a pro-Palestinian flash mob. The participants shouted slogans such as "Germany, shame on you" and "Ceasefire now". They also waved Palestinian flags. The action, which lasted around an hour, remained peaceful, according to the Berlin police. The flash mob had already been mobilized days before. An Instagram post by the left-wing organization "Global South United" called for people to gather at the main train station at 5 pm with a flag and kufiya - the Palestinian scarf. However, the utensils should be kept hidden until the so-called "sit-in" starts. The call was signed with the slogan "Palestine will never die".

When asked, the federal police confirmed the action, which is said to have taken place on Level Zero of the main station. The Berlin police were also present with forces because the flash mob was apparently considered a gathering. No incidents were reported."

(Separate but related – Lorenz Degen found on 20.03.20234 at the entrance to Basel SBB station,



chalked on the floor, the friendly message THE COWARDLY BIRTHPLACE OF GENOCIDAL ZIONISM. This is really taking history further back – even beyond Lord Balfour, whose large portrait at Trinity College, Cambridge was sprayed, cut and destroyed by a rather stupid young woman in March.)

(ii). FILMS ON IRAN 1942

Thanks to Leonardo Micheletti for these links to an Italian history site:

https://www.criticalpast.com/it/video/65675037218_350-rifugiati-polacchi_Tehran-Railroad-Station_1-rifugiati-laddio_Esercito-cameramen

at 1'52" shows USATC S200 2-8-2- as ISR 42.427 departing Teheran station with a well-filled train comprising five bogie carriages (the fifth with end balconies and clerestory roof), then three USATC bogie vans, then a final clerestory-type carriage. The train departs with several carriage doors still open and people embarking and disembarking with the train in motion!

https://www.criticalpast.com/it/video/65675037217_350-rifugiati-polacchi_Tehran-Railroad-Station_I-rifugiati-un-addio_Soldati-colloqui-con-le-donne leads to 4 minutes of platform scenes at Teheran as a train of refugee children for Palestine is being prepared for departure. Both films exist in other archives too and are worth watching for a feel of the period.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwunKb5eIys> links to a film of steam trains and newly-erected Dodge trucks conveying military supplies across Persia to the Soviet Union. [Note: Some may have difficulty opening these links but the films are clearly also available elsewhere online. Ed.]

(iii). IRAN 1941

From Marc Stegemann: "I am reading a 1961 book "The Road Past Mandalay" by John Masters, which for a minor bit deals with M.E. railways. Masters also was the author of "Bhowani Junction", well known from the 1954 movie with the same title, which has a large railways content, but is situated much farther to the east.

The author wrote about the British Gurkha forces on their way from the Persian Gulf through Iraq to fight the Vichy-French out of Syria.

From Chapter 6: "With a Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread but no Thou - being the narrative of a brief and unarmed digression into Persia."

"Basra, on longer and closer acquaintance, proved to be all that Mr. Hopkins had said about it. At the beginning of December, weary of the everlasting flatness, the great muddy river, the unvarying heat and the diverse smells, I took ten days' leave. Persia was by far the most beautiful and most interesting country within reach; and there I went. The first stage was Ahwaz, in south Persia. To reach it I crossed the Shatt al-Arab on the bridge of boats (which was removed before every flood season, and replaced after), and then motored ninety miles across a flat desert. Ahwaz lies on the Karun River, "which is there tidal, and contains some of the world's hungriest sharks. During the August invasion three Indian sepoy, washing clothes in the river; standing in water only up to their knees, were taken by sharks which their comrades on the bank could see wriggling toward them across the mud flats, dorsal fins and most of their backs out of the water.

At Ahwaz I caught the "Trans-Persian Express". For three hours we chugged northward across a stony plain, the mountains invisible. We passed Susa, where the Persian King Shapur II held the Roman Emperor Valerian prisoner for many years (from A.D. 260). At Andimishk the locomotives were doubled and we began to climb. From the kitchen car the attendants brought me a magnificent meal of saffron rice, chicken and Persian red wine. I ate and drank, alone in the big compartment, while twilight fell on the crags and the locomotives ahead laboured upward, their exhausts thundering in the canyon. We wound round and round and in and out and up and up. We crossed and recrossed ourselves, and tied corkscrew knots with our own tail light. We ground along ledges two thousand feet above narrow torrents, clanked over high steel bridges, bellowed through long tunnels. At last, long after it was totally dark, the train stopped and I got out to stretch my legs.

An icy wind blew down the platform and I rushed back for my greatcoat. The heat and the flies of the low country had vanished, and reality. A genie from The Thousand and One Nights had projected me into a spy movie and I had a part to play. The long train, its lights gleaming, stood in a high, narrow valley. The moon glittered on snow peaks to east and west. Half a dozen Persian officers strolled up and down in their long German-pattern greatcoats and high-fronted Nazi hats, their boots crunching in the snow. A heavily veiled woman, wearing a mink coat, stood outside a sleeping car talking to a small fat man who was smoking a cigarette in a long holder. Two sentries stood against the bulk of the locomotives, their bayonets faintly gleaming. I joined the walkers, my collar turned high. In a dark corner outside the station building I lit a cigarette, the small yellow glow illuminating my face. I looked at my watch, and then scanned the sky. The Persian officers looked at me and then nervously at the sky. It began to snow, a locomotive gave a low, mournful scream. I walked back to my compartment slowly, giving the veiled lady a long, level stare.

Early next morning we rolled into Teheran station, and I remembered that someone had told me to look at the ceiling of the concourse. Swedish contractors had built the railroad itself, but a German firm had built this station. As I stared up, the decoration on the ceiling appeared at first to be purely geometrical, in imitation of the old Persian manner. As I looked, the fine pattern leaped to my eye: it was all swastikas.

I found a cheap hotel and began to explore the city. I did not find it very interesting. Parts of it resemble Paris, parts Basra. As in the rest of the country, a few immensely rich people, in immensely shiny cars, moved about among a multitude in rags. In the bar of one of the more ornate hotels I saw a group of American officers and tried to make friends, but they were as aloof as the traditional Englishman in a railway carriage. Nothing personal, I was given to feel, just that their position here was semi-secret, and as officers of a neutral country they couldn't afford to get too pally with the British."

(iv). NEW HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL WAGON IN AMERICA

(Thanks to the team at "Lok Report") January 19, 2024 – "The American Heritage Museum unveiled the restoration of a WWII-era German Deutsche Reichsbahn Rail Car during a memorial and remembrance ceremony on Friday, January 19th, 2024 as the first phase of a comprehensive permanent exhibit on the Holocaust within the museum. Acquired by the museum in the Summer of 2023, the rail car underwent a full restoration by museum volunteers and staff before installation for the ceremony in advance of Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27th.

Over 100 guests were in attendance for the ceremony, including distinguished guests: Ambassador Meron Reuben, Consul General of Israel in Boston; Christopher Mauriello, Ph.D., Director, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Salem State University; Cantor Vera Broekhuysen of the Congregation Beth El of Sudbury; and Cantor Wendy Siegel of the Temple Emanuel of Marlborough.

At the American Heritage Museum, this original rail car acts as a powerful symbol, connecting visitors to the reality of the Holocaust as inflicted by Nazi Germany and other Axis collaborators. Standing in front of this relic, visitors can imagine the unimaginable: the inhuman conditions endured for days, the fear, the uncertainty, and the sheer terror that innocent men, women, and children endured as they were transported to the death camps. It is a tangible representation of the suffering and dehumanization inflicted upon millions, allowing visitors to establish a personal and emotional connection with the victims.

"This museum adheres to an unyielding principle: we are morally obligated to remember the past" said Rob Collings, President of the American Heritage Museum. "To ensure the memory of those lost and those who suffered, we enshrine this inanimate object, a witness that will stand long after the survivors have all left us."

The rail car installation is the first phase of a two-phase exhibit plan to gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, its origins, and its lasting impact on humanity. Phase Two, to be completed within the year for the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp on January 27, 2025, will include survivor testimonies, historical documents, and personal artifacts that provides a comprehensive and immersive experience that pays homage to the victims and preserves their legacy.

"Through education, remembrance, and introspection, we can ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are learned and that future generations are equipped to build a more compassionate and tolerant world" explains Hunter Chaney, Director of Communications and Education for the museum.

The rail car is currently on display in the World War II Gallery of the American Heritage Museum, open Wednesday through Sunday each week from 10:00am to 5:00pm.

The American Heritage Museum encourages members of the community to support our efforts to complete Phase Two of the exhibit in the coming year – please visit:

<https://www.AmericanHeritageMuseum.org/Holocaust-Exhibit> to learn more."



The rail car as it arrived before restoration.

After restoration and installation in the museum.

(v). THE GAZA BANK

From the National Library of Israel, an article on the Jewish community in Gaza: They came from various places, mainly from Jaffa, but also from Aleppo, Hebron and even from Europe. The majority of them worked in trade, especially of barley and colocynth, a bitter fruit with medicinal properties that grows around Gaza and is also known as “vine of Sodom” or “wild gourd”. Due to their extensive trade relations with the local Bedouin tribes, some of the city’s Jews lived for several months of the year near the tribes, outside the city, and even adopted some of their habits. For example, Jewish men used to ride horses and wear a sash with a dagger and a gun. The Jews of Gaza were also involved in banking, and a branch of the Anglo-Palestine Bank opened in the city. In his memoir, the bank’s manager, Abraham Elmaliyah, describes how the bank’s management traveled by train from Jaffa to Gaza to be there on the day it opened, and along the way they were greeted with songs and blessings by farmers from the Jewish colonies (*moshavot*) as well as the Jews of Gaza themselves. The bank was highly respected in the city, its manager Elmaliyah was always accompanied by two Kavass guards, a symbol of honored status.”

(vi). Paul Salvesson publishes an irregular but interesting blog called the "Salvo" and this appeared in No. 317 in late February:

RAILWAYMEN (AND WOMEN!) REMEMBERED

"The following personal account of one railwayman's life came out of an oral history class I taught, called 'Railwaymen Remember', for the University of Leeds in 1994. The class members were mostly retired drivers, a few former guards and signalmen and one remarkable lady.

RALPH BURNELL, Driver, Stourton Depot.

Ralph started on the footplate at Stourton (Leeds) at the age of 14 in 1942. He was made a fireman in 1948, and passed out for driving in 1964. He retired in 1987 after nearly 45 years' service.

"When I started at Stourton I worked as a caller-up and messenger boy. I had to advise men of altered turns of duty. There were a lot of specials then: troop trains, petrol trains, and other wartime special workings. On the afternoon turn I would advise twenty to thirty men: drivers, firemen, guards. I would then take the letters to Leeds City Station. One night, during the blackout, there was a thick fog and an air-raid warning. I ended up staying the night at the Queens Hotel!

When I was 16 I got passed for firing duties, but was put on nights as a knocker-up, since I new the knocking-up area. I used my bike, but we only had paraffin lamps. If you held up the lamp to see the street name, the oil would run down your arm. Men were usually given an hour or so to get to the shed, but sometimes a driver and fireman might live a mile or so apart. If the bike had a puncture – a frequent event since inner tubes were in short supply – it was a mad dash from one to the other. You've got to remember the black-out was on, and there were no street lights. Everything was pitch black. One night, I had an experience which made my hair stand on end. A dog came up and licked my hand – but I couldn't see it, it was so dark!

I was in the Leeds Home Guard. I had a problem with boots – I couldn't get any. I was then called up into the regular army in 1943, and it was expected you'd present yourself in your Home Guard uniform, boots included. All I had was a disgusting pair of second-hand ones. When I turned out on parade, the sergeant-major took one look at them and had me arrested! So twenty minutes after joining the army, I was in prison! Fortunately they rang Leeds and they

confirmed my story, and I was let out to pursue a distinguished military career!

Footplate Food

I've had a few fry-ups on the firing shovel, when we could get some bacon. We'd also roast onions on the engine. I had a driver who would bring his kippers and warm them up, then put them in a bread cake and eat the lot – including head and bones! I once took 2lb of kippers for me and my second-man, when we were on station pilot duty. He was taken for another job, so I was single-manned and had to eat the lot myself.

I was stationed in Palestine during the war, working as a driver. We used to do bacon fry-ups on the firing shovel – but if you had a Moslem fireman you'd be in trouble!

We'd often cook onions in the cab. We'd stick one behind the injector handle and it would cook a treat. It was quite a common delicacy. It would roast slowly, and be a delicious treat after an hour or so. My mate used to take his false teeth out first, wash them out in a firing bucket, then eat his onion."

(vii). AMSTERDAM TRAMS USED IN HOLOCAUST TRANSPORTS

From "Times of Israel" 09.03.2024:

"A new archival discovery is shedding light on an oft-disregarded accomplice in the murder of Anne Frank and tens of thousands of other Dutch Jews: The GVB Amsterdam Public Transport company.

The find, unearthed recently by filmmakers Willy Lindwer and Guus Luijters, includes an invoice for 80 guildens (the equivalent of about \$4,500 today) that GVB had issued to the German occupation forces — and later to authorities in West Germany — to obtain payment for the tram ride that took Frank, her family and dozens of other Jews to train stations en route to being murdered in death camps.

GVB's involvement in the deportation of some 48,000 Jews in Amsterdam has been known for decades. However, the discoveries added information about the scale and characteristics of this collaboration. GVB earned at least \$66,000 for transporting Jews to dispatch or internment locations, according to the new discoveries. After World War II, GVB accounting workers tried to obtain payment from Bonn for the final transports in a move that reflects "an inconceivable degree of indifference" to the tragedy, filmmaker Lindwer told The Times of Israel.

The discovery concerning Anne Frank, a Jewish teenager whose diary about hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam became an international bestseller after she died in 1945, "makes the active and already poignant collaboration of the GVB in the deportation of the Jews more palpable for large audiences because Anne Frank is an icon of the Holocaust," wrote Lindwer and Luijters in a new Dutch-language book they published on their findings, titled "Lost City."

The publication of their book and the imminent release of a documentary film bearing the same title have indeed attracted considerable attention in the media in the Netherlands, including an in-depth treatment this month on Nieuwsuur, the flagship current affairs show of the high-brow NOS public broadcaster, and coverage in other Dutch media.

Occurring shortly ahead of the reopening of the National Holocaust Museum, the works by Lindwer and Luijters have put GVB on the spot. The Central Jewish Organization of the Netherlands and CIDI, the local Jewish community's watchdog on antisemitism, have called on GVB to offer Dutch Jews restitution and investigate for the first time its complicity in the murder of at least 75 percent of the Netherlands' Jewish population – the highest death toll of any country in Nazi-occupied Western Europe.

GVB in a Dutch-language statement said that the matter should be investigated "quickly but carefully" by the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, in whose archives Lindwer and Luijters had found the invoices, with help from the renowned Holocaust researcher Johannes Houwink ten Cate. But the investigation should be part of a comprehensive research that began in 2020 into the role of the Amsterdam Municipality — to which GVB belongs — as a whole, the GVB said.

GVB did "not operate as an independent organization but belongs to the municipal apparatus that was used in additional ways to exclude the Jews," the

statement reads. "It is impossible to overstate how terrible we find the fact that it happened, and it's a good thing that a book and a documentary were made about this," GVB said about the transport of Jews during the Holocaust. The documents found show that the firm had leased about 900 trams to the German occupation forces for the deportation of some 48,000 Amsterdam Jews.

After their arrest on August 4, 1944, in the secret annex on Prinsengracht 263, the Franks were jailed and later taken from the internment facility to Central Station on the infamous number 8 tram – a line that the Nazis used to transport Jews because it connected the station to Amsterdam's heavily-Jewish areas. After World War II, GVB scrapped line 8 from its list of lines in recognition of its Holocaust role. The list of lines to this day jumps from 7 to 9.

From Central Station, the Franks were taken by train – those were operated by the NS railway company and not GVB – to the Westerbork internment camp. Otto and Edith Frank, Anne's parents, were taken to Auschwitz, where only Otto survived. Anne and her sister Margot were sent to Bergen-Belsen, where both sisters died of typhus mere weeks before Nazi Germany's defeat.

The story of the Franks — refugees from neighboring Germany who came to the Netherlands to escape Nazism — encapsulates the multifaceted story of the Holocaust in the Netherlands, which features much betrayal and estrangement from Jews by their compatriots, but also robust and heroic efforts on their behalf.

The new discoveries about the GVB's complicity are especially poignant because the company for decades has served as a symbol and model of solidarity with the Jews. It was GVB that in 1941 kicked off the February Strike: The first and largest act of civilian insurrection over the treatment of Jews during the Holocaust. On February 25, 1941, word of the strike spread like wildfire when GVB staff failed to show up for work. The strike soon ballooned into a national paralysis, bringing the economy to a halt for days.

The strike was soon broken under the violence of German authorities, but it galvanized the Dutch resistance — one of the most effective networks in occupied Europe — and became a lasting symbol, despite the fact that GVB fired all of its Jewish employees days later. GVB marks the anniversary annually with a motionless minute of silence aboard all its vehicles, which include trams,



buses and ferries.

But the new discoveries paint a different picture of the GVB, and, more broadly, of Dutch society's level of collaboration with the Nazi-led murder of the vast majority of the country's Jews.

Despite the defiant GVB strike of 1941, "This is a tale of total collaboration," Lindwer said."

(viii) Book Review *Railways of the Holy Land* by Alon Siton ISBN 978-1-913797-25-6. A4 card-bound. 88 pages.

Published by Mainline and Maritime Ltd., www.mainlineandmaritime.co.uk, e-mail: orders@mainlineandmaritime.co.uk

Alon has been researching and collecting on this theme for several decades and the simplest thing is to say simply "Get this book!" There are a few aspects that deserve closer comment but in principle it serves as a good overview of the major developments of railway history in what is now Israel, with less focus on the links to Egypt or (later) Lebanon or the Hedjaz line in what is now Syria and Jordan, although in the Mandate period either Palestine Railways or the British Army were responsible for operations here. Of course it cannot go into as much depth as Paul Cotterell's classic 'The Railways of Palestine and Israel' (Tourret Publishing – Rick Tourret later added a companion volume 'The Hedjaz Railway' on the narrow gauge lines, not only those east of the Jordan); instead the initial pages give brief but relatively complete overviews of different periods of history and the bulk of the book comprises photos from Alon's collection. The photographs are large and clear and well reproduced and later ones in colour.

The frontispiece is a 1946 Palestine Railways route map, the time the system had reached its greatest extent, followed by a 'Timeline' from the Ottoman Conquest in 1517 to 2016 and the inauguration of the new line to Bet Shean. Following an Introduction there is a 'Brief Description of Israel' concentrating on the geography and climate and some modern history. There follows some 19th century history on various schemes for railways, Zimpel's map of lines planned in 1864, then a chapter on the Jaffa & Jerusalem Railway, its origins, construction and operation – with some fabulous illustrations. The chapter on 'World War One' starts of course with the J&J but is rather short at only one page; ironically many relevant illustrations come later. Coverage of the Hedjaz Railway branch from Tzemakh to Haifa is then given two pages (though there is nothing on the Acre branch – just one brief sentence) but the Samaria branch extensions really belong in the 'World War One' chapter and their story is brought up to 1948 and even to the present day! An amazing find here is a tourist ticket voucher issued by the Hamburg-Amerika Line for a journey from Samakh to Damascus! Old postcards and manufacturer's catalogues provide the majority of illustrations.

Then comes the Palestine Railways chapter – the Mandate period – but as well as four illustrations of the WWI period with narrow-gauge locos (and two of the same incident when a loco fell into the turntable pit at Jerusalem!) there are also pictures of standard-gauge trains that belong either to the wartime or immediate post-war period, one of a Sinai Military Railway train, two separate pictures of an LSWR 0-6-0 on an ambulance train on the way to Jerusalem, one of (possibly) the arrival of General Allenby in Jerusalem. The pictures themselves are excellent, it is just their location in relation to the text or each other (the images are not chronological) that jars slightly and of course PR was founded in October 1920, so anything from before this is actually of a military railway operation – the PMR.

World War 2 (and the HBT) is covered in one page of text but four of photos; The period thereafter till 1948 is given two pages and extensive citations from Arthur Kirby's proud attempt to restore the railways and their

reputation. Then comes 'Israel Railways' – two pages which cover from 1948 through dieselisation and construction of new lines to the Western Negev line through Sderot in 2015. Photos of the early SAFB Bo-Bos, the German Esslingen railcars both self-propelled and hauled, even a P-class 4-6-0 and an 8F, then the GM-EMD G12 Bo-Bos fill several pages. Rather poignant in view of the current (March 2024) situation is a picture on p.71. It shows two Israeli military policemen in a deserted landscape inspecting a section of track. There is not a building in sight. The caption reads: "At an Israeli checkpoint near the Gaza border, Israeli military policemen look at the railway tracks leading from

the Gaza Strip into Israel. A portion of the tracks was destroyed in a raid by a band of Arabs on 3rd. December 1957. Israel maintained that UN authority in the Strip was on the verge of complete collapse, and continued to press the US to live up to its 'moral commitments' in the area."

Two photos show the wreckage following the Bet Yehoshua head-on smash of 26 December 1963 and one a captured Egyptian G16 Co-Co about to depart El Arish for Haifa in 1967..... Coloured illustrations show some of the various liveries which IR has used including the grey and dark red described here as 'Burlington Railroad' livery. Locomotives are seen being delivered in 1955 or having been captured from ESR in 1967

A final unexpected detour shows two captured Wehrmacht diesel shunters. (But there are no shots of the Deutz or Esslingen shunters, a surprising omission.)

Finally a couple of pages are devoted to 'Railway Heritage Sites' in Israel – the Museum at Haifa, the collection at Beersheba station and relics of the former line into Sinai, Samakh and Geshar stations, Kfar Yehoshua, the tunnels at Rosh Hanikra and the restored stations at Jaffa and Jerusalem. At the very end come two pages with a list of the J&J locos, PR standard-gauge steam locos, the WD '8F' locos of World War 2 (but not the ROD' 2-8-0's or the USATC 2-8-2's), and IR Diesel locos. The book is published as the first Traxx electric loco had just arrived and the list of IR rolling stock is also mainly valid up to 2010 – but as we know, at present the situation with dmu's, emu's, double-deck carriages etc. is changing by the month.

So – this is a collection of snapshots, with a few strange sequences and a few gaps but essentially a very good and attractive introduction to a complex theme. (Ed.)

(ix). MEGIDDO EXCAVATIONS

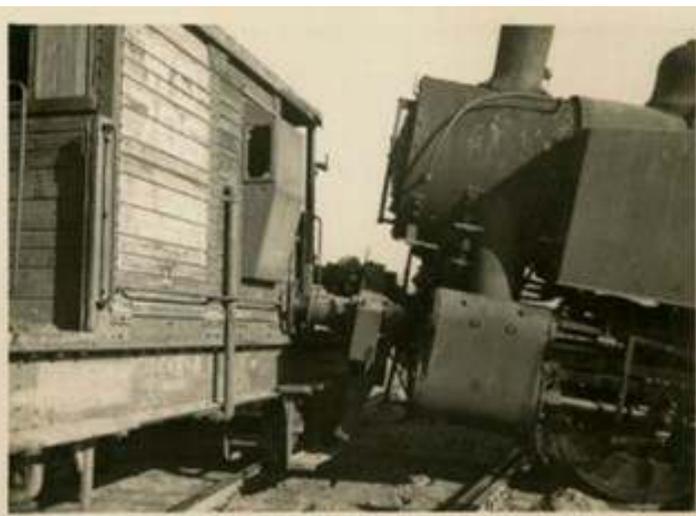
In the PEF Quarterly Vol. 155 No. 4 Dec. 2023 pp.316-339 is an article by Eric H. Cline on 'Invisible Excavators: The Quftis of Megiddo 1925-1939' which discusses the identities of Egyptian workmen who were brought in by the University of Chicago team excavating Tel Megiddo in Mandate Palestine – some of these were quite skilled and trustworthy supervisors and came for several years. Of interest to us is that these came mainly from the Quft district of Egypt and had worked previously on excavation sites there, hence the leaders of the expedition now turned to them to employ them again. This meant a certain degree of paperwork for travel and immigration issues. On p.326: "Guy told Breasted in 12 March 1931 that he was sending for "my Egyptians" so that he might "take advantage of such good weather as the Gods may send." He had already sent a request to the Director of Antiquities nine days earlier to issue vouchers to twelve Egyptian workmen so that they could 'travel at one half of the ordinary third-class fare from Qantara to Haifa' in order to arrive in time for the Spring 1931 season at Megiddo." Footnote 30 refers to a letter of March 1938 with: "There is also some question about four other workmen for whom Guy requested railway vouchers from Jerusalem to Kantara but who may or may not have been at Megiddo."

At the dig itself it is clear a 'Decauville' was in use, for (p.322) "Fisher described: The actual superintendence of the work of the gangs is in the hands of the chief foreman who keeps the people moving, watches that the limits of neither area nor stratum are exceeded, and sees that the railway works smoothly. Each gang is under a skilled foreman (*reis*), who has three or more equally trained Egyptian labourers under him, distributed among the local workpeople..."

I cannot resist adding that the name of the second of the three Field Directors, serving at the site in the excavation seasons 1927-1934, was "P.L.O. Guy". One could not make it up!

144:09

A former USATC S100 0-6-0T operated by the Royal Engineers and with War Department markings has derailed (or has been derailed?) "somewhere in Egypt" in 1948. (The loco has ended at some distance and angle from the line and there seems to be a gap in the rail just behind the Southern-Railway type WD goods brake van.



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Hamas footage recovered by IDF intelligence