

# HaRakevet

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הרכבת

A Quarterly Journal on the Railways of Israel and the Middle East  
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151.01 Train of protective containers being removed from Sderot.



# Editorial

151:02

I think all will agree it has been a roller-coaster three months, not just but especially in the Middle East. Our cover shows the removal of a train which had been stationed on one track near Sderot to protect trains on the other from being hit by rockets fired from Gaza... Our Autumn 2023 issue featured on the cover a jolly sun-bathing double-decker driving carriage, and this came out almost on October 7 that year. Subsequent issues showed banners urging solidarity and victory...

Throughout these tragic and traumatic and painful years, construction and planning in Israel have continued despite the strains. Whether however a rail link with Gaza will ever be re-established, or whether convoys of several hundred lorries per day will continue to convey goods to the Strip (nothing much seems to come out, they return empty) remains to be seen.

Elsewhere in the wider region national governments are busily encouraging international rail links and, in Jordan, focussing also on heritage issues as a means for encouraging national identification. Beyond the "Middle East" itself and stretching into Eurasia there are numerous developments and plans for construction or rehabilitation of strategic railways, which will then link to the Middle East, so it seems there will be news to report for many years to come.

As 2025 draws to an end one looks aghast at so much of foreign policy. Harakevet does try to avoid politics where possible but there are times when this is not really possible. Railways especially have a function to link different places and communities and this assumes that the places and people actually want to be linked, have an interest in trade routes across their own domestic or national boundaries.

Many of these countries – in Europe too, let us not forget - exist only on paper and have existed only for a few decades, they are regions dominated by various tribes, clans and interest groups. Which is no bad thing so long as one can be realistic and take these into account and not pretend that everywhere is a truly democratic Republic – which is a recipe for disappointment. Naiveté will be punished by History. Iran is facing climatic catastrophe and potential political upheaval, Syria has just undergone such an upheaval and is marked by tensions and

conflicts between ethnic groups, Turkey is an autocratic regime trying to restore the old Ottoman dream with influence over Syria and Jordan and Gaza, there are several Lebanons – Christian, mild Moslem, Jihadi Moslem.... Those interested in Money wish to build infrastructure and trade to mutual benefit, those interested in Religion often want to destroy and to impose their own view of this world and the next on everyone.... Europe is busily looking at its own navel and not even sure whether to defend itself, let alone how, or where its boundaries in the East are or who can be classed as truly 'European' and appears obsessively concerned with just one small group of Palestinians (and "punishing" Israel for daring to resist them) whilst ignoring those in Jordan, Lebanon, North Africa, Gulf States.... And many other bitter ethnic conflicts. Speaking of which Qatar seems to be setting out to acquire and influence academic and commercial institutions world wide though nobody knows why.. Saudi Arabia is looking forward to a world less dependent on oil and less able to pour money in its direction....Africa is developing as are the Caucasus countries and of course China is sending out its railway surveyors and engineers, buying the ports and exporting its locomotives.

In spite of everything - Enjoy! And - Please note : a new Series begins with a new Subscription, we hope you will stay with us, in any case the subscription income covers barely half the outgoings but it is considered important to keep this source of information available to all those interested.

The Editor

## News from the line

151:04

### (i). LINE TO UPPER GALILEE AND OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS

On 18.08.2025 Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev and many VIPs held a press conference in a remote hotel near the Lebanese border, at which she spoke about beginning implementation of constructing the rail link from Carmiel in the Lower Galilee to Kiryat Shemona near the Lebanese border. The cost is estimated at \$4.74 Billion (NIS 18 Bn) and includes 54km of line of which 24km will be in tunnels, railway bridges of 2km and many interchanges with roads.

Another project is the of the Menashe line to link the Eastern Line (currently in progress) with the Valley Line; it will be 50 km long, with Tunnels totalling 14 km and railway bridges totaling 10 km; the cost is estimated at \$4.5 Billion (NIS 17 Bn).

Also promoted are works of upgrading the Haifa - Tel-Aviv coast line and building a 70km double-track high-speed line for 250 km/h between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Shefajim (north of Herzliya) to cut the travelling time between the two main cities to just 30 minutes.

### (ii). NEW LINK

On 02.09.2025, it was announced that the project of the new 13 km rail link from Be'er-Sheva to the IDF Intelligence City has been forwarded to the Finance Ministry for approval.

### (iii). MAN KILLED BY TRAIN

From "Times of Israel", on 25 September: "A pedestrian was struck and killed by a train passing through the Holon train station this morning, paramedics say. Paramedics found the



151:03 Preserved HR train at Medina)



• **New projects**

deceased, a man in his 50s who had apparently gone out onto the tracks, with no vital signs and pronounced him dead at the scene.

Police have ordered the closure of several tracks running through the station. Trains in the Holon and Bat Yam area, as well as on the Ashkelon - Herzliya line, are experiencing changes and delays as a result of the incident, Hebrew outlets report."

**(iv). CELLPHONE CONTRACT**

After a pilot test undertaken by Israel Railways Ltd. to solve the problems of communication interruption for passengers using cellular phones, the railways announced that the winner is Pele Phone, one of Israeli important cellular services suppliers.

A ceremony was held at the Railways' facilities of Ashkelon on 21.09.2025 to mark the award.

**(v). ELECTRIFICATION EXTENDED TO OFAKIM**

On 26.09.2025 IR introduced the winter timetable in which electric trains reached for the first time the three stations of Sderot, Netivot and Ofakim on the Western Negev Line. Electrification of the section between Ofakim and Be'er Sheva will be completed in the next few months. Electrification will cut between 10 and 20 minutes of travel time between the three stations and Tel Aviv....

**(vi). LONG SETS**



The railways have put into service on the main lines Siemens Desiro DDEMU trains of up to 12 cars with 2,000 passengers/train and a total length of 315m.

• **First electric train on the Western Negev line.**

**(vii). LINE TO SDEROT CLEARED**



See the Cover. From "Times of Israel" 08.10.2025: "Following a fresh assessment, the IDF says it has approved the removal of "protective railcars" that had been positioned along the Ashkelon - Sderot railway line to protect against anti-tank fire from the Gaza Strip.

"The removal of these protective railcars, which are stationed on one of the tracks, will enable the full reopening of the train line," the military says. The military says the move, in coordination with Israel Railways, was made possible

"following significant operational activity carried out by IDF troops" in the northern Gaza Strip area, and "after a comprehensive operational review conducted in recent weeks."

The IDF regards the railway as a vital national and strategic infrastructure for the State of Israel and a key component in the rehabilitation of the western Negev. Therefore, every effort was made in order to enable its reopening in the safest and most efficient manner possible," the army adds.

The Ashkelon - Sderot train line reopened on February 1, nearly two years after the vital route was scrapped amid persistent rocket fire from Gaza.

The Sderot train station was shuttered in May 2023 due to security concerns, and its reopening was delayed after it sustained rocket damage during Hamas's October 7, 2023, onslaught. When the station reopened in March 2024, amid the gradual return of evacuated residents, northbound lines were not renewed, due to their proximity to Gaza."

The same basic news, from Arutz Sheva: "The IDF has cleared Israel Rail to remove armoured carriages that had been placed on one of the tracks on the Ashkelon - Sderot line. The decision follows an operational assessment and aims to allow the line to reopen in full. The removal became possible after significant fighting in northern Gaza and the enactment of new protocols in the last few weeks.

The IDF noted, "Considerable efforts were invested to ensure the return of the line to full operation in the safest and most optimal way, while preserving passenger lives and operational security."

It should be recalled that at the outbreak of the war the Ashkelon - Sderot railway line was closed, due to concern of direct fire at the train in sections where the tracks are exposed to the Gaza Strip. Concrete protective walls and armoured carriages were placed on the railway line last January to allow the line to open, based on the understanding that the railway is a national infrastructure and a central factor in rehabilitating the western Negev.

The IDF Southern Command forces have fought extensively in the northern Gaza Strip, particularly in the Beit Hanoun area overlooking the railway line. This destroyed terrorist infrastructure above and below ground, killed the terrorists and prevented their attempts to establish positions near the fence. As a result, the area is no longer exposed to direct fire and the armoured wagons are no longer necessary.

Removing the armoured wagons allows the full opening of both tracks rather than having one closed for defensive measures."

(viii) IR itself issued a press release on 17.10.2025:

"Further to the recent re-opening of the Western Negev Line, the railways have pulled out the container trains used as anti-rocket protection from the Gaza strip."



• The train departing from Sderot station. credit: Tal Video Productions.



From a press release of 13.10.2025 by the Transport Ministry:

"On this date, during the visit of USA President Mr. Donald Trump to Jerusalem which involved closure of the main highway, the only way to move between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv and between Modi'in and Tel-Aviv was by rail and about 50,000 passengers moved that way in 80 trains until 17:00."

#### (ix). TRACKWORKS

(a). BEN GURION AIRPORT. Israel Railways Ltd. announced on 16.10.2025 the following temporary traffic changes:

"Due to electrification works to be performed between Sunday 19.10.2025 and 24.10.2025, every night between 23:00 and 05:00 the

following morning, there will be no services between Jerusalem Navon and Ben-Gurion Airport stations, and between Modi'in and Ben-Gurion Airport stations; the stations of Jerusalem Navon and Modi'in will be closed; The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services between the closed stations free of charge."

(b) Binyamina. "Due to vital infrastructure works to be performed at the Binyamina station area the following temporary traffic changes will take place on Friday, 24.10.2025 only:

There will be no traffic between Hadera West and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel stations; the stations of Caesarea/Pardes-Hanna and Binyamina will be closed. Traffic will resume on Saturday night at about 20:00."

(c). Rehovot. From a press release of 24.10.25 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of upgrading the Rehovot railway station, which includes the erecting of an overhead pedestrian bridge over the platforms in order to improve passenger flow, the following changes to train traffic will take place between Thursday 30.10.2025 at about 22:30 and Sunday morning 02.11.2025 at 05:00. Trains on the Ashkelon - Binyamina line will start/terminate at Lod station and will not call at Yavne-East, Rehovot and Be'er-Ya'akov stations which will be closed at these times. The railways will provide free bus shuttle services between the closed stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday morning, 02.11.2025 at 05:00."

(d). Ben-Gurion. From a press release of 03.11.2025 By Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Due to works to be performed by the Israeli Electrical Company Ltd., the following temporary changes to train traffic will take place:

On Friday 07.11.2025, the whole day, there will be no traffic between Ben-Gurion Airport to Jerusalem and to Modi'in.

Between 09.11.2025 and 28.11.2025 between 23:00 and 05:00 each following morning only, there will be no traffic between Ben-Gurion Airport to Jerusalem and to Modi'in.

The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle services between the closed stations."

(e). Binyamina.

Israel Railways Ltd. announced that on Friday 14.11.2025 only, vital infrastructure works had been performed around Binyamina; as a result, the service between Haifa and southwards was split; traffic resumed on Saturday night 15.11.2025.

(f) Netanya. From a press release of 18.11.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.: The railways have upgraded infrastructures around Netanya. It was planned originally to close Tel-Aviv and Haifa until 28.11.2025, but thanks to success in cutting electrification times, traffic will resume on Sunday morning 23.11.2025.

(g). Beer Sheva etc. Israel Railways Ltd. announced that on 21.11.2025 only, vital infrastructure works were performed around Be'er-Sheva, Lehavim/Rahat and Kiryat-Gat; there were services only through the Western Negev line. Traffic resumed on Saturday night, 22.11.2025.

(h). Kiryat Gat. From a press release of 08.12.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Due to vital track works and as an integral part of annual maintenance programme, works will be carried out in the Kiryat-Gat area on 19.12.2025 only. As a result, there will be trains calling at Lehavim/Rahat and Be'er-Sheva; alternative services will be provided through the Western Negev line. Traffic will return on Saturday night at 20:00."

(x). INCREASED SUBURBAN FREQUENCY

Israel Railways Ltd. announced on 21.11.2025 that due to rise in demand for passenger services, that from 23.11.2025 the frequencies on all HaSharon Circle line stations, as well as at stations of Yavne West, Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan, Yavne East, Ashdod and Ashkelon, there will be additional trains at rush hours. The railways are thanking the public for a significant rise on traffic; in October 2019 before the Corona, the daily average passenger traffic was 262,000 while in November 2025 it reached the figure of 312,000.

(xi). JERUSALEM TUNNELLING PLANS

The railways intend to continue boring the A1 line to the Jerusalem city centre and to the historical station now used as an entertainment area; it will run 80m below Jaffa Street level; the first station is to be built under the intersection of Jaffa and Strauss Streets, and as a result people living in a 12-storey building have been advised to leave it for 4 months due to the works; they are appealing to court.

(xii). BEER SHEVA OUTLINE PLANS

The Transport Ministry has announced a giant project regarding the transportation around Be'er-Sheva - to include acceleration of the fast rail link and an LRV system, possibly even a monorail.

(xiii). NEW RAILS DELIVERY

From a press release of 22.10.2025 by the Transport Ministry:

"Today, 1,700 UIC 60 rails from Trinecke Zelezarny were unloaded at the port of Haifa; they will be used on the 431 line to Rishon-LeZion, on the fourth Agalon track, The Eastern Line, etc."

- 2 pictures of the unloaded rails provided by courtesy of Mrs. Orli Barami from the Transport Ministry; credit: Israel Railways Ltd.



(xiv). WINTER TIME

Israel Railways Ltd. announced on 24.10.2025 that winter time will start on 26.10.2025. On each Friday, trains will end services between 15:00 and 16:00; on Saturday night services will resume between 20:00 and 21:00.

(xv). NEW GRADE SEPARATION AT ATAR YASAF

From a press release of 27.10.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd:

"The Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd. inaugurated a grade separation at Yasaf Yards (in the past a site for temporary caravans for emigrants from Ethiopia and the Eastern Bloc) on the Akko (Acre) - Nahariya line, replacing an old level crossing. The project at a cost of \$15.3M (NIS 50M) includes a 50m overhead road bridge and environmental treatments." [Ed. adds: There was once a tiny halt platform at this level crossing too.]

- Aerial pictures of the grade separation. Credit: Israel Railways Ltd.)



(xvi). HAREDI DEMOS AGAINST CONSCRIPTION

To the context - During the last difficult years the Haredim (the term literally means 'Shakers, Tremblers' and refers to a part of the extreme Orthodox community in Israel, which was originally a small minority and is now an enormous minority receiving vast amounts of state funding and wielding much political influence), have steadfastly refused to aid the country and the rest of the population, claiming that by studying holy texts they are assuring God's favour on the land. Not unsurprisingly, not all Israelis agree with this complacent self-assessment, nor with the refusal to allow even those who are not in full-time study to perform tasks to relieve the Army's manpower shortage.....

From "Times of Israel" Tues. 28.10.2025: "A planned massive "million man" Haredi prayer rally against IDF conscription slated for Thursday is expected to block the main entrance to Jerusalem for hours and cause major congestion in the capital, police say.

Only buses carrying rally participants will be allowed to enter Jerusalem via Route 1 starting at 12 noon on the day of the 2:30 p.m. demonstration, until it concludes. During that time, Route 1 – the main Jerusalem - Tel Aviv artery – will be closed to private vehicles in both directions between the entrance to Jerusalem and Latrun Interchange.

Drivers will be able to exit the city via Route 443, according to a police statement. Public buses running between Jerusalem and other cities will leave the capital via Route 16, which joins Route 1.

Police say hundreds of officers will deploy at Jerusalem's northern entrance and the city centre to secure the event, which was announced by ultra-Orthodox leaders earlier this week as the IDF ramps up its arrests of Haredi draft evaders.

Transportation Minister Miri Regev told Radio Kol Hai last night that public transportation will be increased in order to allow demonstrators to arrive. "We will act as we do at all major events. As soon as we identify congestion at specific points, we will increase public transportation there. Israel Railways will increase train service to Jerusalem, and so will the bus operators," said the Likud minister. She also expressed support for conscripting Haredim who do not study in yeshiva.

Regev's statement is at odds with what she told Ynet in 2023, when she said that her ministry was "not a transportation company for demonstrations," referring to anti-government protests."

There is of course an additional political dimension: "In a statement, former communications minister Yoaz Hendel's brand-new 'The Reservists' party slams Regev and schedules a counter-demonstration in Jerusalem on Thursday.

"A government that encourages evasion and now shamelessly cooperates with the evasion rally on Thursday is a government that acts against the State of Israel," the party says. "Miri Regev, who did not concern herself with a solution for reservists to reach their bases, is worried about increasing transportation for the evasion rally."

Yesh Atid MK Karine Elharrar writes to Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, accusing Regev of "abusing her authority" and acting in a discriminatory fashion by increasing transportation for some protests but not for others. Elharrar calls on Baharav-Miara to "urgently examine the legality of the decision."

Later there were claims the station would be closed on this day, then this on "Times of Israel" 30.10.2025:

First at 11.28: "Haredi MKs blast Israel Railways for stopping service ahead of Anti-Conscription Rally. By Sam Sokol: "Ultra-Orthodox lawmakers slam Israel Railways for shutting down the Jerusalem Navon train station during this afternoon's mass anti-conscription prayer rally in the nation's capital, turning to National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Transportation Minister Miri Regev in an effort to reverse the decision.

In a statement, the ultra-Orthodox Shas party says that chairman Aryeh Deri contacted the railroad company regarding its "scandalous" decision, only to be told that it had been a directive from the Israel Police, leading him to appeal directly to Ben Gvir, whose ministry oversees law enforcement. "Such a decision will cause tens of thousands to be stuck across the country and block intersections. It is an illegitimate decision that will prevent a huge public from coming and praying. Ben Gvir has pledged to act immediately to find a solution," Deri says.

In a separate statement on Wednesday evening, United Torah Judaism MK Yisrael Eichler says he appealed to both Ben Gvir and Regev, asking them "not to cooperate with the persecutors of the Haredi public who seek to prevent the right to demonstrate tomorrow."

"It should be remembered that during the mass demonstrations near the Knesset, the trains operated as usual and did not prevent any protester from coming and going whenever they wanted," Eichler's office says."

This is of course ironic, since the whole aim of the demonstration was to block intersections and hinder free movement of traffic!

Then this timed at 13.03, by Charlie Summers: "Trains in and out of Jerusalem will operate at least until 1:30p.m in light of a massive Haredi prayer rally set to take place in the capital, police say.

Israel Railways previously announced that it would shut down Jerusalem's only train station for the afternoon, infuriating ultra-Orthodox lawmakers, who argued such a decision would prevent participants from reaching the event.

Police reached the decision to keep trains operating for another hour, after a situational assessment was held by National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Chief Commissioner Dany Levy. The Israel Railways website still currently says that trains will only run until 12:30 p.m. United Torah Judaism MK Israel Eichler says he has been holding talks with Ben Gvir in an attempt to convince him to allow the trains to keep running.

If Israel Railways and the rally organizers place stewards in the station to manage congestion and overcrowding, police may allow trains to continue to operate even after 1:30 p.m., law enforcement adds."

The next day, when most of the dust had settled (for the record, one teenage boy died during the demo) came the official version:

From a press release of 30.10.2025 by both the Transport Ministry & Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways have successfully carried more than 40,000 passengers yesterday between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv to an assembly of so-called "1 Million people" in 26 trains in several hours." The release was accompanied by images of a grossly overcrowded train and station.

#### (xvii). CORRUPTION SCANDAL

On 03.11.2025 the Lahav Serious Crimes Unit made many arrests around Israel following two years of investigating a complex web of corruption and favours within the Histadrut Trades Union organisation and involving many municipalities and companies - including: "Among the suspects in the corruption probe are senior officials at KKL-JNF, the Wingate Institute, and Israel Railways, as well as local authorities in Rishon-LeZion, Ashdod, Kiryat Bialik, Harish, Rosh-HaAgin and Kiryat Gat."

#### (xviii). ELECTRIFICATION ISSUES

From "Ha'aretz" 06.11.2025: "Israel Railways Has Not Properly Maintained Its Electrification Infrastructure, Putting Passengers at Risk. Part of Israel Railways' electrification infrastructure has not undergone maintenance since it was set up – including the Jerusalem line, which has not been maintained for seven years, potentially risking passengers' lives."

A malfunction about a month ago at Israel Railways, which resulted in a brief shutdown on the Herzliya-Shefayim line, initially seemed to be just an isolated incident. But a report of the probe into the malfunction obtained by 'TheMarker' and testimonies from transportation workers reveal that it took place against a backdrop of ongoing systemic neglect."

Included here - although not directly linked - is a Correction by Jeremy Topaz to Steve Sattler's report that we published as 150:04:(xxi):

"An unusual accident happened on August 14th: As a result of a moving train causing damage to the wires and support masts, repairs will take at least a week and the damage is in the millions

A cover plate on a special wagon got loose and tilted upwards, near the Ganot interchange - some 4.5 kms. This caught some overhead live cables, which were so strong that they, in turn, pulled the relevant support poles off their bolted foundations, for several hundred metres. The driver was initially unaware of what happened. The train was

eventually stopped and later reached Tel Aviv, but it was allowed to continue to Haifa, and the same thing happened again near Kfar Vitkin, causing more damage...."

Jeremy writes: "Here is a picture of this special wagon, with loading bodies for shipping. The ends can be tilted up as seen on the right of the picture, and this is what occurred, but this tilted fully, to a height above the overhead cables."



(xix). RESTORED G12 LOCO.

From Aharon Gazit: "There was a special celebration at Israel Railways Ltd. in mid-November: Diesel electric locomotive No. 122 of EMD/GM type G12, 29337/1964, i.e. 60 years old, has been entirely refurbished and overhauled, after covering 4 million km. It has been repainted according to the 1965 livery when it entered service. The locomotive has returned to freight services.

- Here a picture of the locomotive with a passenger train at the opening of the line between Dimona and Oron (phosphate ores). And see rear cover. Credit: Israel Railways Ltd."



(xx). LATEST THIRD QUARTER RESULTS

From a press release of 26.11.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Today - 26.11.2025 - the railways have published the results for the 3rd Quarter of 2025:

During 2025 the Israeli Credit Rating Agencies Ma-alot and Midrug raised the credit rating of Israel Railways Ltd. and its debentures from AA+ to AAA.

The railways' total income in the 3rd quarter of 2025 were \$0.83Bn (NIS 2.7Bn) compared with \$0.80Bn (NIS 2.6Bn) over the same period of 2024.

During the 3rd quarter of 2025 IR had an Adjusted EBITDA of \$8.9M (NIS 32M) compared with \$0.6M (NIS 2M) over the same period of 2024.

The total profit for the 3rd quarter of 2025 was \$7M (NIS 23M) compared with \$25.5M (NIS 83M) over the same period of 2024.

The total loss during the 3rd quarter of 2025 was \$10.43M (NIS 34M) compared with \$5.83M (NIS 19M) over the same period of 2024.

The main reason for the loss was the war with many employees recruited and line sections partially closed.

#### Passenger Sector:

Passenger averaged daily traffic during the 3rd Quarter of 2025 was 276,000 compared with 265,000 over the same period of 2024; averaged daily traffic during the first 3 quarters of 2025 was 268,000 compared with 256,000 over the same period of 2024.

- During the 3 quarters of 2025 the railways carried 52.4M passengers compared with 49.4M over the same period of 2024.

- During the 3rd quarter of 2025 the railways carried 18.1M passengers compared with 18M over the same period of 2024.

- Income from passenger services during the 3 quarters of 2025 were \$0.74Bn (NIS 2.4Bn) compared with \$0.7Bn (NIS 0.705Bn) over the same period of 2024.

The income during the 3rd quarter of 2025 was \$250M (NIS 815M) compared with \$251M (NIS 818M) over the same period of 2024.

Average punctuality during the 3 quarters of 2025 was 94.46% compared with 96.93% over the same period of 2024.

#### Cargo Sector:

During the first 3 quarters of 2025 the railways carried 5M tons compared with 4.6M tons over the same period of 2024.

During the 3rd quarter of 2025 the railways carried 1.7M tons compared with 1.5M tons over the same period of 2024.

Income during the 3rd quarter of 2025 was \$74.2M (NIS 242M) compared with almost \$75M (NIS 244M) over the same period of 2024.

Income for the 3rd quarter of 2025 was \$25M (NIS 82M) compared with \$24.85M (NIS 81M) over the same period of 2024.

Loss during the 3 quarters of 2025 was \$26M (NIS 85M) compared with \$15.64M (NIS 51M) over the same period of 2024.

Loss in the 3rd quarter of 2025 was \$10M (NIS 33M) compared with \$6.44M (NIS 21M) over the same period of 2024."

In addition, the railways reported also a record of 78,000 passengers with limited capabilities carried by rail between November 2024 to November 2025; 18% higher than in the period of November 2022 to November 2023.

#### (xxi). MAN FALLS ON TRACKS.....

From 'Times of Israel' 30.11.2025: "A man was killed when he was hit by a train Sunday morning on the tracks south of Tel Aviv's HaHagana Station, emergency services said, forcing the suspension of rail services for several hours throughout central Israel during the morning rush-hour commute.

According to Israel Railways, the man fell off an overpass onto the tracks around 7:30 and was struck by an oncoming train.

The Magen David Adom emergency services were called to the scene, where they pronounced him dead. Police said they were investigating the circumstances of the fall.

The incident, which took place as hundreds of thousands of people began their morning commute, completely halted train traffic for around two hours, causing severe crowding at rail stations across the country and major traffic on buses and highways as commuters looked to find other ways to get to work. Sunday mornings are particularly busy as tens of thousands of soldiers return to their bases after the weekend. Train service was halted between Tel Aviv's HaHagana station and Ben Gurion Airport, causing widespread disruption and backing up train lines across the country.

Pictures and videos posted to social media showed thousands crowded on train platforms as they waited for service to resume. Other footage showed train passengers disembarking to transfer to other trains that were not disrupted by the incident. After some two hours, Israel Railways announced that, after police approval, partial train service in the affected stations and routes had resumed, and that it was gradually returning to full service."

151:06



**A. THE JERUSALEM LRV PROJECT**

(i). The Jerusalem LRV Red Line services resumed at last on 31.08.2025; one exception is the Haturim halt where upgrading works still take place and trains slow down and do not call there. The Jerusalem Municipality has awarded the concessionaire a bonus of \$1.05M (NIS 4 M) for resuming services on the Red Line one month ahead of the planned date.



- Various sections of the Red Line. Credit for pictures: Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan Team.



**(xxii) PRIVATISATION?**

This could become a big issue and we just add a brief item here before press date, there will surely be more to follow. From "YNet News" 30.11.2025: "Finance Ministry pushes to privatize Israel Railways operations despite concerns. Recurring breakdowns, delays and crowding have made Israel Railways a frustrating ride; a draft economic plan from the Finance Ministry proposes opening rail operations to private competition, a move the Transport Ministry and the Histadrut warn could harm safety, reliability and thousands of workers. Malfunctions and disruptions on Israel Railways have become routine. Passengers report weekly delays, low frequency, poor reception in train cars, dissatisfaction with station cleanliness and heavy crowding during peak hours. The railway is also far from meeting its target of 90 million annual passengers by 2024, and its workforce has grown by 1,000 in five years, even though ridership has not risen significantly. The Finance Ministry is proposing to privatize railway operations, a move strongly opposed by the Transport Ministry and the Histadrut. Passenger advocacy groups stress that the state should first improve service before focusing on cutting costs."

**(ii). BLUE LINE PROGRESS**

On 18.09.25 Steve Sattler wrote: "A few days ago, the Blue Line contractor with the full cooperation of the City closed off King George St. and parts of Keren HaYesod St. to all through traffic to allow the workers to start installing the basic power, drainage and water lines that will run under the tracks.



This BLUE Line will be the future Light-Rail line from the Ramot complex of suburbs in the North, to Gilo in the South. The tracks will run through the main part of commercial Jerusalem. This main Blue Line will be the third of the three main interlocking Light-Rail lines ( Red, Green and Blue ). The Red line already exists and serves the public from December 2011.

**(xxiii). AYALON QUADRUPLING**

From a press release of 01.12.2025 by the Transport Ministry: The Ministry has announced that work on the 4th track on the Ayalon railway is being accelerated to release the rail bottlenecks on the line.

The Blue line will be 31 kms long (with a future option to extend into Beit-Lechem ); it will have 53 stations. Three of the stations in downtown Jerusalem will be underground. At least one of these underground stations will also be a 'connection' to the main Jerusalem [ Navon, A1 ] railway line down to Tel Aviv.

The City planners expect this Blue line to carry over 250,000 passengers every working day. Two-car Trams will run every 3-4 mins during busy times. A new feature - to be installed - for this Blue line comprises eight automatic cross-over tracks - that will allow trams to automatically - under supervision, - cross over to the parallel track if an obstruction or damage blocks the direct track.

**(xxiv). DELAYS FOR BUDGET REASONS**

In early December the news networks reported that three major projects: the Eastern Line, the No. 431 transversal line, the network electrification, and in addition some smaller projects planned for opening in 2027 will be delayed by up to two years due to budget shortage,

A set of 132 carriages - that make up 66 two-car units - will service this Blue line. The plan - at this time - is that from 2028 these trams will be running on sections of the tracks, and that by 2030 the full line of 31 kms will be fully functional. The last three stations into Gilo will run in a tunnel.

The contractor is 'Jtrain Ltd' with the Israeli Moriah construction company as a major partner.

The tram cars are from China, built by the CRRC company. The city has already decided that these cars (or very similar ones ) will also be used on the PURPLE and DARK BLUE lines.

A total of 9 interlocking Light-Rail lines are planned for Greater Jerusalem, to serve a population of 2.5 million residents.

This Blue line is essentially a North-South line looking like a modern Olympic Bow and facing to the East. Two side tracks will run from the main-line to the Malcha shopping complex and sports zone; and the other into Ramat Eshkol."



•Computer image of Jerusalem tram crossing Jaffa / King George

(iii). MORE ON THE BELGIUM / CAF SCANDAL

We reported in the last issue how pro-Palestinian activists had aggressively demanded that SNCB not purchase any of its much-needed e.m.u.s from CAF in Spain, since this company had provided trams for the Jerusalem Red Line and therefore, according to their view, cooperated with racist genocidal colonialism or similar. The Belgian Government (who own SNCB) and CAF were compelled to issue statements to justify their activities. Nobody seems to have noticed that Egypt cheerfully buys metro trains from CAF for the Cairo Metro.....

*This from "LRJ":*

"As pressure grows on foreign companies active in Israel amidst criticism of its conduct during the ongoing conflict in Gaza, Spanish manufacturer CAF has issued an extensive statement in support of its role in light rail projects in Jerusalem, highlighting the due diligence activities it has conducted prior to and during its work.

CAF confirms in the statement that it expects to be included in the upcoming list of companies that are deemed to participate, directly or indirectly, in some of the activities listed in the annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Inclusion in the list, due to be published shortly, is expected to increase scrutiny of CAF and pressure to cease its activities in Israel.

CAF holds a 50% stake alongside Israeli construction firm Shapir Civil & Marine Engineering in CFIR Light Rail (previously TransJerusalem J-Net), which was awarded a contract worth €1.8bn in September 2019 to construct the 22km Green Line as well as a 6.8km extension of the Red Line in Jerusalem. Work on both projects is on course for completion in 2027.

The companies also have a separate contract that commenced in 2021 to operate both lines for 15 years, with the possibility for an extension to 25 years, and to provide maintenance for 25 years. CAF is supplying 114 Urbos LRVs for the Green Line along with signalling, communications and power supply systems. It will also refurbish the 46 Alstom Citadis LRVs operating on the existing 13.8km Red Line.

CAF has been criticised in Spain for its work in Israel, specifically for helping to construct the light rail lines, which are allegedly facilitating what has been termed as the Israeli government's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem by connecting Israeli settlements within the territory to West Jerusalem. This mirrors broader international criticism of the Jerusalem light rail project, the first phase of which opened in 2011.

However, in the statement issued on September 25, CAF highlights the due diligence procedures it says it has followed in the projects it has worked on in the city, which it says do not violate human rights but offer a positive contribution to the entire population, including the Arab minority.

#### Ethical implications

CAF says it is "firmly aware" of the complex legal and ethical implications of the Jerusalem light rail project, specifically relating to international humanitarian law and corporate accountability. It goes on to outline how it has followed various protocols. This includes, prior to the signing of the contract for the project, a detailed legal analysis that was conducted with the assistance of independent experts who confirmed the absence of any breach arising from CAF's participation in the project. In addition, CAF's own initial risk assessment of the project found no violations of human rights. Instead, the project was found in these assessments to have a positive, non-discriminatory impact, providing access to basic social services and providing sustainable and eco-friendly infrastructure.

"Beyond compliance with the applicable regulatory framework, CAF is firmly committed to business ethics and the respect for human rights across all its operations, including its value chain, based on the highest standards of accountability and transparency," the statement says.

"To this end, CAF has established a set of rules, procedures, and systems, adopted at the highest level, which together constitute a comprehensive compliance system applicable to the entire group, as well as to third parties contracting with CAF, with the purpose of preventing and addressing any conduct that could be unethical or contrary to the law, or CAF's internal regulatory system."

"Accordingly, throughout the execution of the project, CAF has implemented specific due diligence measures with three levels of intensity (general, enhanced, and intensified), in accordance with the Guide on Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence for Business in Conflict-Affected Contexts, published by the United Nations, in order to identify, prevent and mitigate, where appropriate, any adverse impact on human rights.

"CAF remains committed to acting in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency, and to continuing to prioritise the monitoring of any material issue relating to ethics and human rights, as well as of the regulatory framework under which it operates."

Thanks to the chaps at 'Lok Report' in Berlin we have the text of the CAF formal response. It is full of legalese verbiage but we think it important to preserve this for the historical record....

"The following English translation is provided by the Company for information purposes only, based on the original and official document in Spanish available on the Company's website. In the event of any discrepancy between the English version and the Spanish original document, the latter will prevail.

In compliance with article 227 of Law 6/2023, of 17 March, on the Securities Markets and Investment Services, and complementary regulation, the company Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles, S.A. ("CAF" or the "Company") hereby communicates the following relevant information in relation to the Jerusalem light rail project:

In the coming days, the report of the United Nations High Commissioner is scheduled to be published and submitted before the Human Rights Council within the framework of its 60th session, in which the database of companies that are directly or indirectly involved in any

of the activities listed in the annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights dated 2 August 2024 (A/HRC/57/21) will be reviewed, and in which the inclusion of CAF is foreseen.

As stated in report A/HRC/57/21, as well as in previous reports of the same Body (A/HRC/43/71 of 28 February 2020 and OHCHR Office report of 30 June 2023), "OHCHR is mandated to make factual determinations of whether business enterprises are involved in one or more of the listed activities for the purposes of adding or removing business enterprises from the database. This work does not and does not purport to constitute a judicial or quasi-judicial process of any kind, nor does it provide any legal characterization of the listed activities or business enterprises' involvement therein."

The Jerusalem Project (or "the Project") was awarded in 2019 to TransJerusalem J-Net Ltd., a company 50% owned by the Israeli construction company, Shapir Civil & Marine Engineering Ltd (Shapir) and CAF, with an estimated total value of €1,800 million. It includes the construction of the Green Line as well as the extension of the existing Red Line, which partially runs through East Jerusalem. This construction phase is expected to conclude in 2027. The Project also includes the operation of both Lines for 15 years (with the possibility of extending the term to 25 years) and their maintenance for 25 years, through another company equally owned 50% by Shapir and CAF, which began operations in 2021.

Beyond compliance with the applicable regulatory framework, CAF is firmly committed to business ethics and the respect for Human Rights across all its operations, including its value chain, based on the highest standards of accountability and transparency. To this end, CAF has established a set of rules, procedures, and systems, adopted at the highest level, which together constitute a comprehensive Compliance System applicable to the entire Group, as well as to third parties contracting with CAF, with the purpose of preventing and addressing any conduct that could be unethical or contrary to the law, or CAF's Internal Regulatory System. Particularly in the area of Human Rights, CAF has adopted a specific Due Diligence Policy, further developed through several detailed procedures, which reinforces at the highest level its ethical commitment across all its activities and business relationships.

CAF is fully aware of the complex legal and ethical implications linked to the Jerusalem Project, specifically in relation to International Humanitarian Law and corporate accountability, and of the importance of carefully balancing the protection of Human Rights with the need to provide the population with essential infrastructure for all communities without discrimination.

Accordingly, throughout the execution of the Project, CAF has implemented specific due diligence measures with three levels of intensity (general, enhanced, and intensified), in accordance with the Guide on Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence for Business in Conflict-Affected Contexts, published by the United Nations, in order to identify, prevent and mitigate, where appropriate, any adverse impact on Human Rights.

As a preliminary measure prior to the signing of the contract related to this Project, CAF conducted a legal analysis through consultations with independent and highly regarded experts, including professors of International Law and United Nations specialists, who confirmed the absence of any breach arising from CAF's participation in the Project. This conclusion is further supported by the resolution of the Versailles Court of Appeal issued in relation to the Red Line, during the pre-expansion phase, which dismissed any violation of International Law by the companies involved in the Project. Additionally, the legal services of the competent Authority in Spain confirmed that the Project was in compliance with international law and identified no legal objection for the signing of the contract and the subsequent execution of the Project. Following these verifications, the company TransJerusalem J-Net Ltd. (now named CFIR Light Rail Ltd.) signed the concession contract on 26 September 2019.

In 2020, proceedings were initiated before the Spanish National Point of Contact, a collegiate interministerial body of the Government of Spain

established to promote the effectiveness of the OECD Guidelines, whose final report was issued in 2022 without identifying any legal noncompliance by CAF nor the violation of any rights.

Furthermore, throughout the execution of the Project and to date, CAF has closely monitored the resolutions issued by various international bodies, always cross-checking them with external advisors and independent experts, who have consistently upheld their initial favourable conclusions.

On the other hand, CAF has conducted an initial risk assessment of the Project, followed by subsequent reassessments, without identifying any Human Rights violations or the materialization of any adverse impact to date. On the contrary, the Jerusalem Project generates positive impacts on the population, as confirmed by independent expert reports issued in 2023 and again in July 2025.

These reports, drawn up following on-site visits and interviews with users and representatives of various communities, highlight the social utility of the Jerusalem tramway, which constitutes an essential public service infrastructure and acts as a catalyst for the fulfilment of Human Rights such as freedom of movement, access to employment, healthcare, education, and places of worship for the entire population, without distinction, with particular benefit to the most vulnerable communities. Accordingly, the reports conclude that the Project has a positive, nondiscriminatory impact, providing access to basic social services and a sustainable and ecofriendly infrastructure.

Available mobility data confirm that members of the Arab community, who constitute a significant proportion of tram users, are those who use it most frequently (more than half of them use it three or more times per week), the large majority of whom report the highest level of satisfaction with the service, according to quality surveys periodically conducted by a specialized agency.

The company responsible for the operation and maintenance of the system follows a strict inclusive and non-discriminatory policy –about 25% of the employees are Arab. It also takes specific measures to prevent any discrimination on ethnic, national, religious or other grounds, ensuring that the transport system is accessible to everyone and that signposts and signals are multilingual, including both Arabic and Hebrew.

The aforementioned independent reports also underscore CAF's high level of compliance with key international standards on corporate social responsibility and sustainability, as well as its adherence to Human Rights Due Diligence in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles and the OECD Guidelines.

The evidenced positive impacts, together with the absence of materialized negative impacts, support the effectiveness of the Due Diligence carried out to date, which is in any case subject to ongoing monitoring.

CAF reports annually, through its Non-Financial Information Statements – Sustainability Reports, on the due diligence measures applied to its projects, with specific reference, in a dedicated section, to those related to the Jerusalem Project, subject to independent external verification, with satisfactory results to date.

CAF remains committed to acting in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency, and to continuing to prioritize the monitoring of any material issue relating to ethics and Human Rights, as well as of the regulatory framework under which it operates.

#### In Beasain on 25 September 2025"

*[Essentially CAF points out that the tramway in Jerusalem links rather than divides peoples and is used by all sectors of the population..... something that would be obvious to anyone who had ever used it. Nevertheless, as noted above, Israel will be buying in the future from China which will at least reduce the chances of any vehicles being held at the docks by inflamed dock workers in Belgium or Italy or the deal being subject to a Spanish Prime Minister having another bile attack. Ed.]*

#### (iv). HIGH HOLY DAY TIMETABLE

Due to the holidays of the new Jewish year the Jerusalem LRV hours of activity were extended as following:

On Thursday 18.09.2025, until 03:00.

On Saturday night 20.09.2025, until 02:00.

On Sunday 21.09.2025, until 03:00.

On Thursday 25.09.2025, until 03:00.

On Tuesday 30.09.2025, until 03:00.

#### v). HaTURIM REOPENED

Several weeks after resuming services on most of the Red Line, on 26.09.2025 the trains resumed the stops at the upgraded HaTurim station, located on Jaffa street east of the Central Bus Station and LRV station of the same name. The station will be the linking point with the Green Line.



- Pictures show HaTurim station during upgrading works and after opening. (Credit for pictures: Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan Team.)



### B. THE TEL AVIV LRV PROJECT

#### (i). GREEN LINE PROGRESS

From 03.09.2025: "Real progress has been achieved recently on the Green Line with the completion of the line's last tunnel between Ibn Gvirol and Carlebach Streets."

(ii) NTA Tender No. 281/2025: Providing services of Temporary Work Forces:

NTA intends to select up to 4 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.11.2025.

(iii) NTA Tender No. 147/2025: Providing services of Management and Design and/or Implementation of Occasional Subcontractor Works: NTA intends to select up to 3 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 06.11.2025.

(iv) NTA Tender No. 374/2025: Providing services of External Legal Advice regarding Design, Building and Regulation: NTA intends to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.10.2025.

(v) NTA Tender No. 482/2025: Design, Building, Operating and maintaining a Substation at Mesubim Depot (an intersection of Road 4 running north/south and road 461 running east/west) for the M3 metro line: NTA intends to select one winning bidder only. Time of construction is estimated at 56 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.12.2025.

(vi) NTA Tender No. 161/2025: Management and Operation of a multi-channel service centre and Public Inquiries: NTA intends to select one winning bidder only. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 24.11.2025.

#### (vii) METRO STATUTORY APPROVAL HELD UP

From "Globes" Sept. 2025: "Construction and urban renewal around planned Metro stations cannot proceed until all the lines receive statutory approval.

1... More than five years after work on it began, National Outline Plan 70, which regulates construction around the planned Metro stations, was due to receive government approval yesterday. However, Minister of Transport Miri Regev's objected to the plan for the northern section of the north-south M1 line of the Metro and the siting of the Metro depot in Kfar Sava. She wants this Metro line to connect into the Samaria region. Thus, approval of National Outline Plan 70 was deferred, putting the construction of some 300,000 housing units on hold. The plan cannot be approved until statutory approval is obtained for all the Metro lines.

2... National Outline Plan 70 is designed to guide urban planning and density of development and urban renewal around the Metro stations in such a way as to 'force' the use of public transport and to capture the rise in value of real estate as a result of proximity to the stations for the purposes of special taxation that is an important component of the financing of the Metro project.

3... Among the projects that will be stuck because of the failure to approve National Outline Plan 70 are plans for 18,500 housing units around the Giliot South station, 17,500 housing units at Holon South, urban renewal plans for 4,000 units around the Petah Tikva Municipality station, 3,400 units at the Haroeh Ramat Gan station, 3,800 at the Givatayim Katzenelson station, 1,500 units at the Bat Yam Komemiyut site, 1,300 units at the Holon Yoseftal site, and many other projects. Until National Outline Plan 70 is approved, these projects cannot proceed to the building permit stage.

4... The MOT stated in response: "These are tendentious and groundless claims with no factual basis. Following an approach by the heads of the regional councils of South Sharon and Samaria and the mayors of Kfar Sava and Tira, the minister of transport requested a further discussion of the location of the depot and extension of the Metro line to the Eyal Intersection. The existing plan provides a transport solution to just one neighbourhood in Kfar Sava, while the proposed alternative will provide a solution for hundreds of thousands of residents. In the light of all this, the MOT requested a further discussion in the National Infrastructures Committee to reexamine extension of the line to the Eyal Intersection and the location of the depot."

## (viii). YOSEFTAL HUB PLANNED

From a press release by the Transport Ministry, NTA and Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The National Council for Design and Construction has passed the project of Israel Railways Yoseftal station of Bat-Yam/Holon, to turn it into a hub and now awaits the public responses."



- Computer generated image of the hub. credit: NTA

## (ix). STORM SUSPENSION

On 14.11.25 Tel Aviv was hit by a coastal storm which led to problems with power supply. At 07.15 "Times of Israel" reported: "The Tel Aviv light rail will run on a limited service due to power outages as a storm lashes Israel. The R1 route will only run from Bat Yam Kommemiyut to Tel Aviv's Elifelet station, while the R3 route is cancelled until further notice." By 08.25 normal service had been resumed."

## (x). INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR METRO WORKS

### I. Introduction and General Description of the Programme

NTA – Metropolitan Mass Transit Systems Ltd. is a government company tasked with the development of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Mass Transit System, which includes, inter alia, a metro network, comprising three (3) mostly underground metro lines of approximately 150 kilometres in length and 109 stations (the "Programme" or "Network").

The Tender Committee is issuing this Invitation in order to identify Eligible Participants, which will be invited to participate in future Tenders for the design and execution the first stage of the Programme ("Stage 1"), which is comprised of a total of 76 kilometres of tunnels and 59 stations, divided into eleven (11) Infra #1 Work Packages.

General, indicative information with respect to the Programme and the Infra #1

Work Packages is detailed in Annex "B". It is evident from the general description of the Programme, it is challenging and complex, with unique characteristics, technical features, restrictions and execution restraints. It involves complex interfaces, including, inter alia, with relevant authorities (governmental as well as municipal), other means of public transportation and other transportation projects. The implementation of the Programme and each of the Infra #1 Work Package will require, inter alia, coordination and management of different professional disciplines, with different Entities, project managers, designers, service providers, taking into account the dynamic nature of the Programme. Bearing this complexity in mind, the Tender Committee places great importance on the process of identifying Entities which possess the required professional experience and capabilities.

### I.2. Invitation for Pre-Qualification

The Tender Committee hereby invites Entities to participate in the Pre-Qualification Process, according to the terms and conditions of this Invitation.

### 1.3. The Selection Process

At present and in very general terms, the Tender Committee intends to conduct this Pre-Qualification Process, following which Eligible Participants will be invited to participate (if they so choose, and subject to the expected requirements specified herein), in (various) individual Tenders with respect to the aforementioned Infra #1 Work Packages, in each of which a prospective Eligible Participant will be declared as a Successful Bidder and selected to perform one or more designated Infra #1 Work Package(s).

For avoidance of doubt, an Eligible Participant may be announced as a Successful Bidder in more than one (1) Tender, subject to conditions which will be specified in the Tender Documents.

### 1.4. The Pre-Qualification Process and the Tender Stage

1.4.1. The purpose of this Pre-Qualification Process is to identify Eligible Participants who have the required professional experience and capabilities in the following disciplines:

1.4.1.1. Construction of TBM Tunnels (see Section 4.2 (Experience in the Construction of TBM Tunnels) below) ("Tunnelling Experience");

1.4.1.2. Design and Construction of underground structures using Cut & Cover method

1.4.1.3. Design and Construction of underground structures using traditional tunnelling methods (see Section 4.4 (Underground Structure: Mined Experience) below) ("Mining Experience").

1.4.2. Two Types of Infra #1 Work Packages. It is currently anticipated that "Stage 1" will include eleven Infra #1 Work Packages, all of which will include design and construction of: (i) TBM tunnels using TBM; and (ii) underground stations using Cut & Cover. Out of the expected eleven (11) Infra #1 Work Packages, four (4) Infra #1 Work Packages are expected to also include the design and construction of underground stations and/or crossovers using traditional sequential tunnelling methods, all as specified in Annex "B" hereto...."

*[It is not clear whether Hamas and/or Hizbollah will be permitted to tender. Ed.]*

- TA Tracklaying Ben Yehuda - Bograshov facing south (Photos Jacob Rothschild)



### C. BEERSHEBA

From "Times of Israel" 9.11.2025: "Turning to economic matters at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announces that the government will vote on an NIS 1.2 Billion (\$368 Million) plan for Beersheba, which will include a light rail, cyber and R&D investment, and a new building for Soroka hospital...."



## Other Middle East Railways

### A. U.A.E. AND TRANSPORTATION PROGRESS IN THE GULF REGION

From 'Al-Monitor' August 2025: "Commuters in Saudi Arabia are taking to public transport: On Aug. 26, the Riyadh Metro welcomed its 100 millionth passenger since the transit system launched in the kingdom's capital last December, per the country's official Saudi Press Agency.

More mass transit is inbound. A Saudi official confirmed this month that construction will begin later in 2025 on a new monorail in Riyadh's financial district designed to carry 3,500 passengers an hour.

The rail transportation boom isn't limited to Saudi Arabia. On Aug. 2, Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum rode a test train on a new high-speed link between Dubai and Fujairah. The line, scheduled to open commercially in 2026, will connect 11 cities in the United Arab Emirates with a capacity of over 36 million passengers annually by 2030.

These projects follow a familiar pattern in the Gulf's transportation story. Despite decades of rhetoric about cross-border rail, most projects remain national in scope – meant to ease traffic and connect domestic hubs, rather than integrate the Gulf Cooperation Council's six economies. Visions of a regional rail corridor, however, have existed for decades.

The Gulf Railway, planned as far back as 2003, has aimed to connect all GCC members with a unified freight and passenger system. But progress was repeatedly derailed amid the 2008 financial crisis, the 2015 oil price collapse and political disputes that saw Gulf neighbors cut ties with Qatar beginning in 2017.

But as of 2025, the project is finally gathering steam. Work on a UAE-Oman line, backed by \$1.5 Billion in financing secured last October, is now advancing as part of the Gulf Railway network. There's little time for further delays, as the GCC has set an ambitious 2030 deadline to start operations, creating urgency for member states to deliver.

#### Gulf Rail Gaps

According to Abhishek Chatterjee, a senior consultant with Frost & Sullivan's supply chain and logistics practice in Dubai, 2025 represents an operational turning point for the Gulf Railway, underpinned by tangible progress across multiple countries.

Driving this push is the GCC Railway Authority, established in 2021 to standardize progress and hit the 2030 target. "This is key to shifting the region's 80% road-reliant trade toward rail, aiming to slash shipping costs by 40% and transit times by half – especially in UAE-Oman routes – and reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz," Chatterjee told Al-Monitor.

The UAE has become a pace-setter. State-owned Etihad Rail now connects all seven emirates, stretching from the Saudi border at Ghufeifat to Fujairah's port. Crucially, a joint venture with Oman to build a 190-mile (300-kilometer) link from Abu Dhabi to the port of Sohar on the Indian Ocean is underway. Once complete, said Chatterjee, the UAE will be positioned for seamless connectivity with the GCC Railway.

The pieces are coming together in Saudi Arabia, too. Chatterjee points to a new 125-mile (200-kilometer) segment connecting Ras Al Khair and Dammam along the country's eastern coast that was completed in 2024 and now feeds into the kingdom's larger domestic network. In April, news also surfaced that Saudi Arabia was issuing a tender for design work on a freight line connecting the capital directly to the Red Sea.

Other states are also taking steps. In April, Kuwait awarded an \$8.1 Million design contract for its Gulf Railway section, while Bahrain and

Qatar revived discussions in 2023 on the long-shelved Friendship Bridge, a proposed 25-mile long causeway (40-kilometre) connecting the two countries, among other developments.

#### What it Means

Beyond the prestige factor inherent in national mega projects, Gulf rail ambitions could reshape logistics across the region. By 2045, the GCC envisions moving 100 million tons of goods and 8 million passengers annually along the new rail corridor.

Of course, rail development also ties into regional economic diversification plans as Gulf states pivot toward becoming logistics hubs, rather than just oil exporters. Intra-GCC trade has topped \$100 Billion in recent years, but growing ports in Jebel Ali, Dammam and Sohar require inland links to move containers efficiently. Alongside trade integration and economic growth potential, rail can also serve as a hedge against maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

#### Beyond the Gulf

The Gulf Railway is part of a broader regional train transportation push. Governments across the Middle East and North Africa are pouring billions into new lines to tie their economies more closely to global supply chains.

Iraq has launched early work on the \$17 Billion Development Road, linking its new Grand Faw Port to Turkey via train and highway. If completed, it could handle 3.5 million containers annually and provide a land-based alternative to the Red Sea. Jordan, meanwhile, signed a \$2.5 Billion deal with the UAE in 2024 to connect the Port of Aqaba to its mining belt.

North Africa is also in the midst of a rail surge. Egypt is betting heavily on high-speed trains to remain a vital Asia-Europe trade corridor. Backed by Siemens and local partners, Cairo is building an \$8.7 billion, 1,250-mile (2,000-kilometer) network connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. The main line, branded the "Suez Canal on rails," could begin carrying passengers and freight by 2027.

#### Bottom line

The Gulf's rail ambitions are finally showing signs of moving beyond blueprints. The question is whether fragmented national projects will knit into a true regional system. Without integration, Gulf states risk ending up with impressive but isolated networks. With it, the GCC could cement itself as a logistics route between Asia, Europe and Africa.

"Despite challenges like funding and geopolitical risks, strong political commitment and binding agreements are transforming the Gulf Railway from an aspirational plan into a key element of regional connectivity by 2030," said Chatterjee."

#### (ii). CUSTOMS CORRIDOR

From 'RailFreight.com' 07.10.2025: "UAE launches cross-country "Customs Corridor" with Indian manufacturing in mind. Various Emirati stakeholders have signed a preliminary agreement for the "Bonded Rail Corridor" project across the country. The railway would link the Fujairah terminals in...

*From "Abu Dhabi Ports" website 01.10.2025:*

"His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Member of the Executive Council, Chairman of Etihad Rail, has witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Etihad Rail, Abu Dhabi Customs, Fujairah Customs, AD Ports Group, Fujairah

Terminals, and Noatum Logistics to launch a new “Bonded Rail Corridor”, linking Khalifa Port in Abu Dhabi with Fujairah Terminals. Announced during the second edition of Global Rail 2025, the landmark initiative represents a strategic advancement in strengthening the efficiency, safety, and integration of rail transport operations across the UAE.

Through this collaboration, the project will facilitate the seamless, safe, and sustainable movement of goods by establishing a secure customs corridor that links Khalifa Port and Fujairah Terminals, along with their adjacent free zones, via the UAE’s national railway network. It will also deliver advanced, end-to-end logistics services, ensuring efficiency from origin to destination.

On this occasion, His Highness commended the initiative as a vital step in strengthening the UAE’s logistics and trade infrastructure. He highlighted the pivotal role of the national railway in boosting economic competitiveness, providing safer and more efficient transport solutions, and advancing the nation’s vision for sustainable development.

The Customs Corridor will offer multiple advantages to the railway’s customers, enabling the seamless movement of goods between Khalifa Port, Fujairah Terminals, and their adjacent free zones. The corridor will reduce customs clearance times and facilitate efficient entry and exit through coordinated pre-inquiry procedures, with final customs formalities completed at both locations.

In addition, goods transported via Etihad Rail trains will enjoy a competitive advantage with priority clearance within customs systems. The corridor will be implemented across free zones, transit shipments, exports, and the domestic movement of goods between the Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Fujairah.

Pilot operations for the Customs Corridor are scheduled to begin in the fourth quarter of 2025. Ahead of the launch, Etihad Rail is working closely with relevant authorities and customers to formalise cooperation frameworks, activate the full range of services and benefits for users, and establish performance monitoring mechanisms to ensure the highest standards of efficiency and quality.

Looking ahead, project partners are set to expand the Customs Corridor network to additional train stations, introducing innovative services and competitive advantages through cutting-edge technologies. This initiative aligns with the UAE’s vision to implement pioneering customs procedures, enhance transport safety, and advance the national sustainability agenda. By meeting global standards and supporting international trade routes, the corridor will further cement the UAE’s position as a leading hub for regional and global trade and logistics.”

**(iii). 27.10.2025: Hafeet Rail inks agreements to transition to ‘Operational Readiness’**

Hafeet Rail, the company in charge of the future railway between the United Arab Emirates and Oman, signed two important agreements signalling a transition .....

“Guided by the visionary leadership of the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, the UAE-Oman railway network project marks a new era of progress and prosperity strengthening the historic relationship between the two countries.

By connecting Sohar in Oman to the UAE’s national rail network as Phase I of the project, this unified transport and logistics chain will span the region, delivering mutually beneficial socioeconomic and competitive advantages. Length 238km. 2,500 Metres Long Tunnels, 36 Viaducts, 21 Over-Bridges, 39 Under-Passes, 881 Culverts. European Signalling System (ETCS Level 2), Fibre Optics Connection. Connectivity: Connecting more than twelve passenger stations and cities across the two countries, Linking five major ports and more than fifteen integrated freight facilities. Freights will run at up to 120km/h.”

**(iv). CONSULTANCY IN A RAILWAY DESERT**

From “I.R.J.” 07.11.2025: “Paraguay is seeking potential collaboration with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to revive its long-delayed Suburban

Train project, following the visit of a technical delegation from Etihad Rail to the capital Asunción on November 4.

The delegation met with the president of Paraguay, Santiago Peña, to discuss cooperation in the development of urban rail as well as freight, with the proposed 44km commuter and tourist line between Asunción and Ypacaraí among the main topics on the agenda.

The meeting marks renewed momentum for the project after the Paraguayan government cancelled a \$US 500M concession agreement with Korea in September 2024 to finance, build and operate a light rail line with a fleet of tram-trains. The government subsequently announced it would take the project forward under a new framework, opening discussions with several foreign partners, including the UAE.

According to a report published by La Política Online, citing officials from the Ministry of Public Works and Communications (MOPC), the government could contribute around \$US 150M, with private investors providing up to \$US 450M under a 30-year concession model.

The commuter line is expected to carry up to 60,000 passengers per day. While initial plans envisaged the Asunción - Ypacaraí section as the first phase, the government now intends to start with Asunción - Luque before extending to Ypacaraí in a second phase.

If completed, the project would provide Paraguay’s first passenger service in decades. There have been no passenger services since regular operations between Asunción and Luque ceased in the early 2000s, with only occasional tourist trains continuing. Reopening the line would reduce road congestion in Asunción, promoting sustainable urban mobility alongside new tourism and regional development initiatives.”

**B. SAUDI ARABIA**

**(i). MONORAIL PROJECT IN RIYADH**

From ‘R.G.I.’ 03.09.3035: “Egis has been appointed as Site Supervision Consultant for the construction of a monorail in Riyadh’s King Abdullah Financial District.

Egis will supervise rolling stock, railway systems, civil and structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing, architecture, utilities and landscaping works. It will also review and approve shop drawings, method statements and material submissions, while overseeing compliance and quality control processes throughout the project’s construction phase.

In October 2024 King Abdullah Financial District Development & Management Co. awarded a consortium of CRRC (Hong Kong) Co, CRRC Nanjing Puzhen and Hassan Allam Construction a contract to build the 3.6 km elevated circular line, which will have six stations embedded in public buildings to serve office, retail and leisure facilities in the ‘city within a city’.

It will be operated using six two-car automated trainsets, and is expected to handle up to 3 500 passengers/h at peak times. Trial operations are planned for early 2027.”

**(ii). PLANS FOR NETWORK EXTENSION**

Steve Sattler writes: “It is still a political paradox, but we can begin to seriously consider a real r a i l



connection between Israel and KSA. China also wants to see a rail connection to Africa, either from KSA into Egypt (by tunnel or ferry), or from Jordan/Syria into Israel and then to Egypt.

Nearly everybody now agrees that trains (and very fast trains) will be the main form of transport on our planet over the next 50 years. Planes are falling behind trains."

### (iii). RIYADH RAIL LINK PROJECT

From 'R.G.I.' 16.09.2025: "Saudi Railway Co has begun the pre-qualification process for two major contracts to be awarded for the Riyadh Rail Link project.

RRL is a planned north-south double-track line which would run 35 km across the capital to connect SAR's existing north-south railway network with the eastern railway from Riyadh to Dammam.

The first contract covers the appointment of a Design Review & Construction Supervision Consultant. The second contract is for the Design & Build Contractor, which would provide full design and construction services in line with international standards."

### (iv). QIDDIYA HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

From "R.G.I." 23.09.2025: "The Royal Commission for Riyadh City has invited expressions of interest in bidding for a public-private partnership contract to build the Qiddiya High Speed Rail Project.

The proposed 250 km/h line would link Riyadh's King Salman International Airport and King Abdullah Financial District with Qiddiya City, which is being developed by Qiddiya Investment Co as a 'futuristic city comprising a mix of high-energy entertainment attractions, sports complexes, cultural landmarks and residential neighbourhoods' with an envisaged population of 500 000 people.

Qiddiya City is 70 km from the airport and 45 km from central Riyadh; the railway is expected to offer a journey time of 30 min from the capital.

RCRC said the rail project announced on September 22 was intended to form a core element of Riyadh's transport system. It would provide 'an integrated urban mobility experience', with seamless connections to the rest of the public transport network including the metro. The overall goal is to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors and to enhance sustainable urban growth, in alignment with the objectives of the Saudi Vision 2030 strategy.

Specialised companies and investors are invited to express interest in participating in the Qiddiya High Speed Rail project by contacting RCRC no later than October 12."

"I.R.J." added: "The Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC), in cooperation with the National Centre for Privatisation and PPP (NCP) and Qiddiya Investment Company (QIC), has announced the launch of the expression of interest (EOI) phase for the first stage of the Qiddiya high-speed rail project in Saudi Arabia.

Developed under a public-private partnership (PPP) model, the new 250km/h line will connect King Salman International Airport, the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD) and Qiddiya City. It is expected to offer an end-to-end journey time of less than 30 minutes.

Qiddiya City is a planned new city and entertainment district that is expected to house 500,000 people. Located in the Tuwaiq mountains, it is around 70km from the airport and 45km from the centre of Riyadh.

Under a second phase, a new line will be built to connect a development known as North Pole, where a new 2000m-high skyscraper is expected to be built, with the New Murabba development, King Salman Park, central Riyadh and Industrial City in the south of Riyadh.

According to officials, the rail project is part of RCRC's wider strategy to work with private-sector partners to develop major infrastructure

projects. It is also intended to support sustainable urban development and contribute to the objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030."



- Qiddiya aerial view

(v). RESPONSES. On 18.11.25 this was published in "I.R.J." : Strong interest in Saudi Arabia's Qiddiya HS project

Expressions of interest have been received from around the world for the PPP scheme.

More than 145 companies have submitted expressions of interest (EOI) for the Qiddiya high-speed rail public-private partnership (PPP) project in Saudi Arabia.

The EOI bidding process, which was launched on September 12 and closed on October 12, is being conducted by the Royal Commission for Riyadh City (RCRC), in partnership with the National Centre for Privatisation and PPP (NCP) and Qiddiya Investment Company (QIC).

EOI bids were received in six categories. There were bids from 68 lead infrastructure development contractors. Non-Saudi bidders include: Bouygues Travaux Publics, France; FCC Construcción, Spain; Hyundai Engineering & Construction, Korea; Larsen & Toubro Construction, India; Marubeni, Japan; Mota-Engil, Portugal; Webuild, Italy; and Yap Merkezi, Turkey, as well as eight Chinese companies.

The 10 rolling stock and systems suppliers showing interest comprise: Alstom, CAF, Colas Rail, two divisions of CRRC, Hitachi Rail, Hyundai Rotem, Siemens Mobility, Stadler Rail and Talgo.

Twelve potential operators submitted EOIs including DB International, Italian State Railways (FS), Keolis, MTR Hong Kong, RATP, Renfe, Serco and Transdev.

EOIs were received from 16 equity investors, while 23 design and project management consultants submitted EOIs including Aecom, AtkinsRéalis, CH2M, Hill International, Italferr, Sener and Systra. EOIs were also received from 16 non-categorised companies.

The Qiddiya high speed line will run from Riyadh King Salman International Airport via King Abdullah Financial District in the centre of Riyadh to Qiddiya City, which will eventually have a population of 500,000. The line will have a maximum speed of 250km/h, and an end-to-end journey time of 30 minutes.

Riyadh Metro's proposed 65km Line 7 will also link Riyadh to Qiddiya City."

## (vi). LINK FROM QATAR TO SAUDI ARABIA

From "I.R.J." 14.10.2025: "The Qatar cabinet has approved the long-awaited plan to build a railway from Doha to Saudi Arabia. Approval was granted at the weekly cabinet meeting on October 8, chaired by Qatar's prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani.

This would be Qatar's first main line railway. The new line would be around 100km long and would run from Doha to Abu Semra on the border with Saudi Arabia, where it would connect with the planned section of the Gulf Railway running from Damman south to Ghuwairat on the border with the United Arab Emirates. Here the new line would connect with the existing Etihad Rail network to Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Fujairah.

Qatar's 2050 transport plan calls for a passenger rail line from the new Doha main international rail terminal to Doha's Hamad International Airport, and a freight branch line off the Saudi line to Hamad Port and Mesaieed Industrial City south of Doha.

It is hoped to complete the entire Gulf Railway running from Kuwait via Damman to the UAE and Muscat in Oman by 2030. A 45km branch across a causeway is planned from Damman to Bahrain."

[Ed. One wonders whether this sudden and long-awaited decision has anything to do with Qatar re-aligning itself with other Gulf states following the concurrent developments in the Gaza Strip... At the same time it appears that the project for a super-modern lineal city "The Line" with urban rail has been severely reduced or dropped altogether.]

## (vii). OLD NEWS: RIYADH METRO SETS IN VIENNA

A photo (below) received from Klaus Matzka shows several sets stored awaiting delivery in 2017, at the former Nordwestbahnhof in Wien



## C. TURKEY

### (i). LINE TO NAXCIVAN - CONSTRUCTION WORK STARTS

From "R.G.I." 01.09.2025: "A groundbreaking ceremony has launched construction of the Kars – Igdir – Aralik – Dilucu line, which will extend the rail network to the border of Azerbaijan's Naxcivan exclave. The ceremony on August 22 was led by Minister of Transport & Infrastructure Abdulkadir Uraloglu, who read out a message from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The 224 km double-track electrified line to be built by contractor Kalyon Insaat will have five stations at Digor, Tuzlucu, Igdir, Aralik and Dilucu, as well as five tunnels, 19 cut-and-cover tunnels, 10 major bridges, three viaducts, 144 underpasses, 27 overpasses and 480 culverts. Uraloglu said the project would cost €2.4Bn, and once complete the line will have a capacity of 15 million tonnes of freight per year.

The project has been included in Turkey's annual investment programme since 2022, with a projected construction time of seven years. In July this year the government announced that the project had secured a US\$2.8Bn external financing package led by Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, in partnership with Sweden's EKN Export Credit Agency and the OeKB export credit agency of Austria.

The project was subsequently given a further boost with the announcement that Armenia and Azerbaijan had agreed to conclude a peace deal which would involve the development of the Zangezur Corridor – to be renamed as the Trump Route for International Peace & Prosperity – which would link Azerbaijan's Caspian Sea ports with Naxcivan and Turkey through southern Armenia. 'The Zangezur Corridor will strengthen economic cooperation between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia and consolidate regional peace', said Uraloglu. 'It will further strengthen the socio-economic relations between Asia and Europe.'

In his message, President Erdogan said the line would help boost production and exports in eastern and southeast Turkey and improve connections between the Caspian and Mediterranean regions."

### (ii). NEW LINK WITH BULGARIA

From "R.G.I." 23.09.2025: "Plans have been announced for the rehabilitation and electrification of the 39 km railway between Yambol and Elhovo and the construction of a 32 km alignment between Elhovo and Lesovo where a new rail border crossing with Turkey would be built.

The 71 km route with three stations would be designed to enable passenger trains to run at 160 km/h and freight at 120 km/h. The new border crossing would relieve congestion at the existing Svilengrad – Kap?kule crossing.

A pre-investment study for the line has been completed under the European Union's TEN-T framework, and EU funding for the line is expected.

Minister of Transport Grozdan Karadjov and his Turkish counterpart Abdulkadir Uraloglu reached an agreement in principle for the project at a meeting in June, although Turkey has not yet announced plans for its side of the border. Around 15 to 20 km of new alignment would be needed to link the planned border crossing to the Istanbul Halkal? – Kapik?le main line.

The existing main line from Turkey to the EU border is currently being upgraded in an ongoing programme which is expected to be completed by the end of this year. This is intended to cut the journey time for passenger trains between Istanbul and the Bulgarian border from 4 h to 1 h and for freight trains from 8 h to 3 h."

### (iii). ESKISEHIR INDUSTRIAL LINK

From "R.G.I." 22.09.2025: "Turkish infrastructure manager TCDD has completed construction of a 7.5 km freight line linking the organised industrial zone in Eskisehir with the city's Hasanbey logistics centre. Work began in May. The project includes 6.5 km of sidings."

### (iv). LIGHT RAIL FOR TRABZON

From "R.G.I." 30.09.2025: "The General Directorate for Infrastructure Investments has announced details of the first stage of the long-mooted Trabzon light rail project.

The first phase has a target opening date of 2028. it would be a 15.5 km double track route running along the seafront from the city's main motorway access in the west to the airport in the east. There will be 16 stops with 70m platforms, serving locations including at the main hospital, the stadium of local football team Trabzonspor, the city centre, the university and the airport. The line is to be designed for speeds of up to 70 km/h.

Speaking in August, Turkey's Transport & Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said funding for the first phase would be included in Turkey's 2026 investment programme."

Previous statements by the municipality have indicated that the light rail line is likely to be operated as part of the city's existing municipal transport system.

A second phase is also envisaged, which would more than double the length of the route to 32 km with 56 stops. The extended line would stretch from Akçaabat in the west, through the city centre via the university and the port and then east as far as Yomra.

Trabzon is not currently served by Turkey's main-line rail network, although feasibility studies for a connection have been underway for some time. These envisage a 509km high-speed electrified line along the Black Sea coast, which would run from Samsun to Sarp on the border with Georgia via Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon, Rize and Artvin.

#### (v). VECTRONS FOR FREIGHT OPERATOR

From "R.G.I." 02.10.2025: "Akdogan Train Cargo has become the first Turkish company to order Siemens Mobility Vectron locomotives, placing an order for five multi-system electric locos for use on international corridors to EU destinations.

The 200 km/h locos will be equipped with ETCS Baseline 3 and relevant national train protection systems for operation on cross-border freight services in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, as well as on domestic routes in Turkey. They will also have the XLoad equipment package to increase haulage capability.

Deliveries are planned from the end of 2027. The order announced on October 2 includes a 10-year full-service contract, with options to extend the term by up to two years and to purchase five more locomotives.

#### Uninterrupted International Routes

Akdogan Tren Kargo expects the interoperable locos to enable it to offer uninterrupted end-to-end services carrying imports and exports between Turkey and the EU without the need to change locos at national borders.

This aims to contribute to Turkey's commercial integration with Europe and to sustainable transport goals, offering synergies with China's Belt & Road Initiative and the Middle Corridor routes linking Asia and Europe.

'The Vectron locomotives will allow us to seamlessly connect our domestic network with cross-border freight corridors across Europe', said General Manager Mustafa Pekmezcan. 'Running corridors seamlessly across the EU with Siemens Vectron MS with XLoad will reinforce not only green transportation but also will create new opportunities.'

Andre Rodenbeck, CEO for Rolling Stock at Siemens Mobility, said 'the introduction of the Vectron in Turkey marks a significant milestone for our locomotive platform and sends a strong signal for European-Turkish freight transport.' "



#### (vi). ISTANBUL RAILWAY BYPASS ROUTE STARTED

Turkey's northern railway bypass project, officially called the Istanbul Northern Railway Project (INRAIL), aims to build a new freight line to ease bottlenecks in Istanbul. The \$8.1 Billion project will construct a 125-kilometer freight railway from Çay?rova (Asian side) to Çatalca (European side), crossing the Bosphorus via the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge. It is part of the larger Middle Corridor initiative, designed to strengthen Turkey's role as a transport hub by bypassing the crowded Marmaray tunnel for freight traffic.

*The "Daily Sabah" on 01.10.25 reported thus:*

"Türkiye plans to move ahead with the long-awaited railway project that will cross over the Bosphorus, with a public tender expected before the end of the year, Transport and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said on Tuesday.

Known as the Northern Railway Crossing Project, it will create a new high-capacity rail line to strengthen freight and passenger connections between Asia and Europe, Uraloglu told a meeting in Kazakhstan.

The new double-track electrified line stretching roughly 126 kilometers (78.29 miles) is aimed at easing congestion in Istanbul, linking the city's two airports to the national rail network, and strengthening Türkiye's role in transcontinental logistics. The line will connect Çay?rova to Sabiha Gökçen Airport on Istanbul's Asian side and extend to Istanbul Airport and Catalca on the European side via the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge suspension bridge, one of the longest and widest of its kind in the world.

It is also known as the third bridge to span the Bosphorus, built for about \$3 billion and opened in late August 2016. Two other bridges connecting Istanbul's European and Asian sides are the July 15 Martyrs Bridge, formerly the Bosphorus Bridge, and the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, opened in 1973 and 1988, respectively.

Once operational, the rail line will boost the number of freight trains able to cross the strait, easing pressure on existing corridors.

"This year, we aim to publish the tender announcement. The project is a strategic infrastructure initiative to establish a railway link capable of handling heavy cargo transportation," Uralo?lu said.

"With this project, we will significantly increase the capacity of rail transport currently provided through the Marmaray under the Bosphorus."

Marmaray is the world's first underwater rail link between two continents. Opened in 2013, it carries subway commuters and serves freight trains. The Northern Railway Crossing Project is estimated to cost about \$4 Billion. A year ago, Uraloglu said Türkiye was close to an agreement with the World Bank for as much as \$3 Billion in financing.

Türkiye had also held talks with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to back the project. Uralo?lu had previously also said the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) could also provide financing.

#### Part of Development Road

The project has also been touted as one of the most important routes of the Development Road initiative, a high-speed road and rail link envisaged to run from Iraq's port city of Basrah on the Gulf to the Turkish border and later to Europe.

A preliminary agreement between Türkiye, Iraq, Qatar and the UAE to cooperate on the project was signed in April last year.

During his speech in Kazakhstan, Uralo?lu highlighted what he described as Türkiye's unique position as a logistics hub. "Our strategic advantage lies in acting as a natural bridge between Asia and Europe. We are using this potential to foster regional and global trade, diversify supply chains and support sustainable development," he noted.

The minister noted that recent transport investments contribute not only to Türkiye's economy but also to the wider Eurasian integration. He recalled the August groundbreaking of the Turkish section of the Zangezur Corridor, a 224-kilometer railway set to connect the Caspian basin with the Mediterranean. "This new route will strengthen economic cooperation in the South Caucasus, help normalize regional relations and open new trade opportunities," Uraloglu said.

He also underlined the challenges facing global transport corridors amid geopolitical tensions and climate change, saying that the Russia-Ukraine war reshaped maritime and land logistics between Europe and Asia. The traditional Northern Corridor is losing ground while the Middle Corridor and southern routes gain importance, according to Uraloglu. "However, infrastructure needs and corridor management still limit efficiency," he said, pointing also to risks such as drought at the Panama Canal and security issues in the Suez Canal that have highlighted the fragility of maritime trade.

#### Middle Corridor

Turning to the Middle Corridor, which links China and Europe through Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and Türkiye, Uraloglu stressed its growing importance.

"The Middle Corridor offers the shortest connection from China to Europe, saving transit time compared to the Suez Canal route, and generating billions of dollars in savings in global trade," he said. Citing World Bank data, he noted that boosting its capacity could raise China-EU trade by 30% and triple freight volumes by 2030, while cutting costs, delivery times and carbon emissions.

"The development of the Middle Corridor is not just a transport project, but a strategic step for regional stability," Uraloglu said. "Its future depends on the steps we take together, from accelerating customs processes to digital integration and investment coordination."

The minister added that international cooperation frameworks with the U.N., EU and Shanghai Cooperation Organization are vital for harmonizing standards and easing cross-border trade. Türkiye, he said, is taking an active role in advancing digitalization, green logistics and sustainable transport. Still, he acknowledged lingering hurdles such as infrastructure gaps, capacity limits, lengthy procedures and geopolitical risks. "We believe that every step taken in the heart of Eurasia affects not only the region but global trade as well," Uraloglu said. "The 'Greater Eurasia' vision is not only about transport but about increasing prosperity, strengthening peace and fostering cooperation. Türkiye will remain a strong part of this vision."

From RailFreight.com : "A reopening of the Muslim Union Railway, a newly introduced name for the Pakistan-Iran-Türkiye line, is right around the corner. Talks between the countries are in the final stages. Karimi Ghahi, the head of Iranian Railways, believes it will be faster and more economical than sea routes.

With the project nearing completion, the Muslim Union Railway should officially relaunch before the end of the year. It would connect Islamabad, Pakistan, to Istanbul in Türkiye. The transit time is expected to be 10-12 days, faster than transporting goods by ship.

"This railway line, which is over 6,500 kilometers long, plans to connect Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, to Zahedan via Tehran and the Razi border in [Iran's province of] West Azerbaijan to Istanbul. The last train service was in August 2022, but it was halted due to technical issues, delays at customs, and infrastructure damage caused by widespread flooding. Now, with a new agreement between the three countries, this line will be operational again by the end of December 2025", Karimi Ghahi told Turkish media.

#### A Geo-Economic Move

"The revival of this route is not just a transportation project", Ghahi added. "It is also a geoeconomic move that could redefine Iran's position on the Eurasian trade map." Iran hopes to position itself as a land bridge for energy and freight supply chains between Islamic countries. "With the resumption of the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train service, hopes for expanding economic cooperation, increasing goods transit, and establishing new ties among regional countries have been revived more than ever. Iran is at the center of this route", Ghahi concluded."



• Freight train to Turkey in Iran



• Bosphorus Bridge

#### (vii). FREIGHT SERVICE TO PAKISTAN

Türkiye and Pakistan want to restart rail freight services between the two countries, transiting Iran. The last time such a train ran was in August 2022 but it was discontinued due to a long list of problems. [Of course Pakistan uses broad gauge.]

#### (viii). 'MUSLIM UNION RAILWAY - faster and cheaper than sea routes'

#### (viii). NEW FACTORY FOR HIGH-SPEED TRAINS

From "I.R.J.": Turkey's minister of transport and infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloglu, has announced that state-owned rolling stock manufacturer Türasas has begun work on a high-speed train manufacturing and testing facility at Sakarya in the northwest of the country.

He reported that earthworks have been completed for Turkey's first high-speed train production facility within the site of the existing Türasas plant in Sakarya. Work to improve ground conditions is now underway before the foundations of the new plant are laid.

Covering an area of 15,000sq.m., the new plant is expected to create around 250 new jobs and contribute Lira 3.5Bn (\$US 85.4M) a year to the national economy. It will be able to produce and test up to 12 high-speed trains a year. Last year Uraloglu announced that Türasas had developed an eight-car high-speed train with a maximum speed of 225km/h. With a total of 582 seats, the new design will be compliant with the European Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI) for passenger rolling stock, persons with reduced mobility (PRM) and noise emissions.

"With this factory, built entirely with local and national resources, we will produce the high-speed trains our country needs," Uraloglu says. "Thanks to the high value-added products we will produce in our manufacturing facility, we will provide strong support to Turkey's R&D and technology infrastructure, the development of domestic industry, employment and the overall economy."

## D. EGYPT

### (i). FREIGHT CAPACITY INCREASE

From "RailFreight.com" 08.09.2025: "Egypt plans to boost its rail freight capacity by 46%

With its location at the crossroads of three continents, Egypt is ideally positioned to be a logistics hub. In a way it already is, thanks to the Suez Canal. Yet, Cairo is looking beyond the waterway and sees a role to play for rail. Egypt is looking to boost its rail freight capacity considerably by 2030. Demand for rail freight is expected to grow to 11 to 13 million tonnes annually by then. In 2024, that number was 8 million tonnes.

In its 2030 development plan, Egypt underlines the need for a secure transport system beyond the famous waterways: the Nile river and the Suez Canal. It aims to boost its rail freight capacity by 46%, according to Siemens Mobility. In order to achieve that, the country wants to add around 500 kilometres of tracks to its national railway network (for a total of 10,000 kilometres), as well as connect ports and dry ports to it.

Egypt's 2030 plan includes the creation of 32 dry ports and logistics zones. For example, cross-border trade is expected to be streamlined through upgrades to the Mediterranean port of Salloum.

The overall objective is to increase annual seaport freight handling capacity to 292 million tonnes, that is, with the help of rail connections. Cairo hopes to achieve this through various projects, including the construction of new terminals at Alexandria, Safaga, Damietta, and Suez, alongside dredging operations and tugboat procurement.

Siemens Mobility says that it will also play a role in Egypt's rail freight investments. The country will acquire 41 Siemens Vectron locomotives, each capable of hauling up to 1,200 tonnes.

Egypt wants to connect to the wider international railway network too. For that reason, it is considering a tunnel or bridge to Saudi Arabia."



- New planned high speed train factory (Credit Tirasas).
- Turkey. Site of new plant in Sakarya



### (ix). TURKISH INTERMODAL RAILPORT STARTS UP

"METRANS has initiated container transport operations from Railport Kartepe, located on the Asian side of Turkey. On 21 November 2025, the first full block train left the terminal in Kartepe, heading towards Dunajská Streda. This shipment establishes a new inland rail connection from Asian Turkey into Central Europe, expanding METRANS's intermodal reach beyond its existing Halkali - Dunajská Streda route. The service enables container loading and unloading at Railport Kartepe, providing additional options for operators involved in Euro-Asian cargo transport. The cooperation involves joint operations between METRANS, Railport Kartepe, and Pasifik Eurasia.

METRANS previously launched its Halkali - Dunajská Streda service in 2022. With the inclusion of Kartepe, METRANS's activities now extend across both sides of the Bosphorus."

### (x). ARKAS RAIL RECEIVES FIRST EURO DUALS

From the same source as above: "Stadler has delivered the first three EuroDual locomotives to private operator Arkas Rail. The company ordered five locos in July 2023 for delivery by the end of 2025. Arkas Rail is the second operator of EuroDuals in Turkey, after Körfez Ulaştırma, which operates seven of these electro-diesels."

### (xi). ADAPAZARI TRAMWAY

From "R.G.I." 24.11.25: "Works are scheduled to start by the end of 2025 on a 12km tramway in Adapazari, east of Istanbul."



### (ii). CAIRO - ALEXANDRIA LINE UPGRADE

From 'R.G.I.' 16.09.2025: "Hitachi Rail has deployed centralised traffic control system to manage 19 stations on the 200 km Cairo to Alexandria line. The CTC project is the latest stage in the modernisation of the rail corridor, which carries 54 million passengers per year.

The initial contract for the programme was signed in 2013, and has since been extended to encompass more than €100M of investment.

The mechanical and electrical signalling has been replaced with a modern electronic system, including digital interlockings, new signals and motorised drives. A fixed and mobile telecommunications system has been installed, with drivers able to communicate with the operations manager in case of emergency or failure. Level crossings have been modernised, and technical buildings constructed.

The modernisation project will enable Egyptian National Railways to increase the maximum speed of trains by 40 km/h to 160 km/h, reducing the journey time between the two cities to 2 h. The route's throughput is also set to grow by 40% to a maximum of 286 trains/day.

A progressive increase in the number of freight trains is planned, allowing the line to carry 15 per day in 2030 and 50 per day by 2060."



• Signalling centre

### (iii). CONTRACT FOR CAIRO METRO MAINTENANCE

From 'LRJ.' 19.09.2025: "Spanish rolling stock manufacture CAF has signed three contracts worth a total of over €450M with Egypt's National Authority for Tunnels (NAT), covering the modernisation and maintenance of rolling stock operating on Line 2 of the Cairo Metro, as well as maintenance of the Line 1 fleet.

The contract for modernising 39 trains on Line 2 comprises work to extend service life by 30 years, including replacement of traction equipment, the train control and management system (TCMS), and auxiliary converters. The braking system will be upgraded.

Interiors will be refurbished, and CAF will install new passenger information systems, CCTV, and onboard Wi-Fi. The workshops at Shubra will also be upgraded for maintenance operations and for mass production under the fleet modernisation programme.

CAF will also maintain the trains for 10 years, under a separate contract running concurrently with the modernisation programme.

The third contract covers the complete maintenance of 25 trains operating on Line 1. The contract has a term of 10 years, commencing when CAF completes the modernisation of this fleet under a separate contract that was signed in 2021. CAF is also refurbishing the Line 1 fleet maintenance depot at Kozzika.

CAF says that the three contracts awarded by NAT will be financed by the Business Internationalisation Fund (FIEM), administered by

Spain's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business. This provides funding for projects being undertaken by Spanish companies in export markets."

"R.G.I." reported 25.09.25: "The National Authority for Tunnels has awarded CAF three contracts totalling more than €450M for the modernisation and maintenance of trainsets on Cairo Metro Line 2 and the maintenance of trainsets on Line 1.

The contracts will be financed by the Spanish government's Business Internationalisation Fund. This supports projects completed by Spanish companies in international markets using cutting-edge services and technology.

Work to extend the life of the 39 Line 2 trainsets by 20 years will include replacing the traction and train management systems and auxiliary converters, upgrading the braking system, installing new passenger information systems, CCTV and wi-fi connectivity and refurbishing interiors and exteriors. The Shubra workshop will be upgraded to undertake the modernisation and accommodate maintenance operations. CAF will also provide complete maintenance of the Line 2 trains for 10 years.

Under a separate contract, CAF will also provide maintenance of the 25 trains on Line 1. CAF is currently refurbishing these vehicles under a 2021 contract, and the maintenance contract will run for 10 years from the completion of the modification programme.

CAF said the contracts announced on September 18 reaffirm its commitment to Egypt's 'dynamic' market."



• Cairo Metro cars

### (iv). ELECTRONICS FOR NEW SLEEPING CARS

Talgo has awarded the contract for the delivery of Intelligent Transport System (sistemas inteligentes de transporte, ITS) for the new Sleeping Cars that Talgo are building for Egypt National Railways to the multinational technology firm GMV. The contract includes the loudspeaker and communications systems, the Video Observation system (CCTV) and the so-called Mobile Communication Gateway (MCG), which all incorporate technology developed by GMV. The loudspeaker and response system enables the train personnel to speak to the passengers and in normal situations and in emergencies to maintain internal communications. The Video system incorporates a digital NVR recorder and IP cameras, which are distributed along the entire train, as well as touch-screen monitors in the cabs which deliver real-time imagery. The MCG system collects diagnosis data on board and transmits this for further analysis to the ground station.

All these systems are fully integrated into the supervision and guidance of the train and interoperability with the other on-board systems is guaranteed and an efficient administration of the train is assured.

This new contract strengthens the continuing cooperation between Talgo and GMV in various projects, both the creation of a new series of rail vehicles as also the modernisation of existing vehicles. It also strengthens GMV's position as a reliable technology partner in the international railway scene and spreads its presence in key projects for modernising passenger transport in Egypt. GMV has been offering ITS solutions since 1994."

(v). NEW TRAINS FOR EGYPT. From 'T-Online News' 19.11.2025:

"Soon rail travel in Egypt will be made much faster both for locals and four tourists thanks to German technology. Freight haulage will also be revolutionised. The German firm Siemens Mobility has presented its new high-speed train in Cairo for the first time. The revised version of the Velaro type, which also form the basis of the new DB ICE3neo, can reach up to 250km/h and has seats for 489 passengers. A total of 41 of these trains would soon be a part of a 2,000km high speed network which will link the most important cities of the country with three lines. According to Siemens the new network will be easily accessible to 90% of the population and will shorten existing travel times by 50%. The project has been carried out together with Arab Contractors and Orascom Construction.

Siemens stresses especially the measures taken to adapt the train to Egypt's desert conditions. The model developed and built in Germany has a stronger air filtration system, special cooling technology and defence mechanisms against sand, heat and dust, a vital aspect for reliable operations in the North-African country.

#### A Regional express for Egypt

Also presented was the Regional train 'Desiro High-Capacity' which can reach speeds of up to 160km/h. A week or so ago it had its first test run near the Dry Port west of Cairo. This Port is an important element in the so-called Green Line - a 660km long rail network which will link the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. Egypt's Transport Minister Kamel El-Wazir described the première of the train at the Trans-MEA Fair 2025 as "a decisive moment in the modernisation of Egypt's transport infrastructure." The project should significantly improve the experience of travel in the country and accelerate the links between cities.

(vi). To this also from "Bahnblogstelle" on 19.11 citing a Siemens press release of 10.11.25:

"The Desiro HC regional trains will also soon be under way; a total of 94 units will be delivered, each with 849 seats, air conditioning, ETCS Train Safety control and barrier-free access. These will be used on the Green Line - a 660 Km Network linking Cairo with Ain Sokhna, Alexandria and Marsa Matrouh. The Egyptian High Speed rail network should reach 2000km in a few years and link all important cities and reach almost 90 per cent of the population. Once it is complete, the country should have the sixth-largest high-speed network in the world."



#### (vii). HIGH SPEED OPERATING CONTRACT AGREED

From "I.R.J." 20.11.2025: "The Egyptian government has confirmed a 15-year operating contract for the country's high-speed network with a consortium of DB International Operations (DB IO) and Egyptian firm Elsewedy Electric.

The agreement was signed by the National Authority for Tunnels (NAT) and the consortium at a ceremony in Cairo on November 13. DB IO is part of DB ECO group, itself the international consultancy subsidiary of German Rail (DB). The "single digit billion euro" contract was awarded in 2022.

Minister of Industry and Transport, Kamel Al-Wazir, attended the signing by NAT chairman, Dr Tarek Gewaily, DB IO CEO, Niko Warbanoff, and Elsewedy Electric chairman, Ahmed El-Sewedy.

According to local media outlet Ahram Online, the contract stipulates that Egyptian staff must make up at least 95% of the operating company's workforce to ensure full transfer of expertise. The consortium will run extensive training programmes for Egyptian engineers and technicians to prepare them to operate the network independently in the future, as well as annual training for Egyptian drivers on Germany's high-speed network.

Al-Wazir said the agreement is part of the Ministry of Transport's plan to partner with global railway leaders and benefit from their technical expertise. He said that a single operator managing all high-speed lines will reduce operational overlap and interoperability issues. The contract also introduces a new revenue-sharing model.

The first phase of Egypt's planned 2000km high-speed network, a 660km line from Ain Sokhna port on the Red Sea, through Cairo and Alexandria, to Marsa Matrouh, is largely complete, with the first trains, based on the Siemens Velaro platform, starting testing on the line earlier this month."

#### (viii). HITACHI WINS ALEXANDRIA TRAMWAY UPGRADE

From "R.G.I." 19.11.25: "The joint venture of Hassan Allam Construction and Arab Contractors which is upgrading the Ramle tramway in Alexandria has awarded Hitachi Rail a contract to supply signalling and communications systems, the operational control centre, SCADA, CCTV, access control, passenger information systems and onboard equipment.

The Ramle tramway dates back to 1863, and operates on aging infrastructure which Hitachi Rail said was last modernized in the 1960s. It is one of the few tramways still running double-deck trams in regular service.

The modernisation project involves the reconstruction of 13.2 km of tram route and 24 stops to light rail standards. This is expected to improve services significantly, by doubling the commercial speed from 11 km/h to 21 km/h and decreasing headways from 9 to 3 min. This will reduce the end-to-end journey time from 60 to 35 min and triple capacity from 4,700 to 13,800 passengers/h per direction, contributing



• New Egyptian trains, Velaro etc. and top right, Desiro HC

to enhanced urban mobility while alleviating traffic congestion and lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions."

**(ix). TRAINING**

From "R.G.I." 24.11.25: "The Egyptian National Institute for Transport and engineering consultancy Egis have signed a memorandum of understanding to jointly develop and deliver railway systems and urban transport training programmes for young engineers.

The parties are to collaborate over a two-year period to design and implement specialised education and hands-on training initiatives focused on modern railway project disciplines including planning, design, construction, operations, safety and maintenance.

Young engineers will gain real-world experience and exposure to cutting-edge global practices in collaboration with the Egis Academy and through seminars, workshops, practical sessions, internships and field visits. Joint research efforts will support innovation across training methodologies and the evolving needs of the transport sector.

'Investing in our young engineering talent is investing in Egypt's future', said Nadia Hammad, National Programme Director at ENIT, on November 18. 'This collaboration plays a vital role in equipping the next generation with the skills and capabilities needed to lead Egypt's transport transformation and support our strategic infrastructure vision.'

**(x). DIESEL LOCO UPGRADE CONTRACT**

From "I.R.J." 18.11.25: "Egyptian National Railways has signed a \$C 296M (\$US 211.3M) contract with Advanced Power Dynamics (APD) of Canada, which will rehabilitate and upgrade 180 diesel freight locomotives for ENR.

The contract was formally announced at the TransMEA 2025 exhibition which took place in Cairo last week, in the presence of representatives from Egypt's Ministry of Transport and the Canadian embassy in Cairo.

APD says that it will bring locomotives built by Henschel and Adtranz back into service, while supporting local maintenance and spare parts manufacture in partnership with Egyptian companies. Engineering, project-management and supply chain activity will involve ADP's base in London, Ontario.

The contract was approved by the Egyptian cabinet in September. According to local media reports, its covers work to upgrade 55 locomotives that are currently in service and 125 that are not in operating condition, aligning with the Ministry of Transport's comprehensive overhaul plan that aims to localise maintenance activities."



**D. IRAN**

(i). From "R.G.I." 23.09.205: "Iran and Turkmenistan held talks in early September with a view to increasing cross-border freight traffic to 20M tonnes/year, including up to 6M tonnes by rail. The Iranian side proposed the formation of a China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway corridor based on an ECO Transit Transport Framework

Agreement ratified in 2006. Capacity is to be increased at the Serakhs and Incheh Borun border crossings, and passenger services could be offered between Mashhad in Iran and Mary in Turkmenistan."



**(ii). NEW CONTRACT FOR LOCOS AND CARRIAGES**

From "Lok Report" 10.10.2025:

"The Iranian MAPNA Group has signed contracts for the construction of forty heavy freight locos of the type MAP-30 and the overhaul of 36 "Iran Safir" Siemens passenger locomotives as well as an agreement for the support of the construction of fifty passenger coaches within the country.

The contract was signed in a ceremony on 05.10.205 with the Minister for Roads and Urban Development, the CEO of Iran Railways, the Governor of Yazd, the CEO of IDRO (Industrial Development and Renovation Organisation of Iran) and the President of the MAPNA Group. This agreement binds the Iran Railways with MAPNA and other enterprises in the private sector in order to strengthen both passenger and freight traffic on the rails.

The first contract commits MAPNA to the delivery of 40 heavy MAP-30 freight engines with a total value of 9,500 Billion IRR (190M Euros). This comprises the largest order for locomotives from home suppliers in the entire history of Iran. The production should take place in the MAPNA Locomotive Works.

A second contract comprises overhaul of 37 "Iran Safir" (Siemens) passenger locos with a value of 2,500 Bn IRR (50M Euros). These machines were originally built by Siemens or by MAPNA under licence and will be overhauled at the MAPNA Railway Maintenance and Operation development Company (MRM).

Parallel to this a Declaration of Intent was signed between Yazd Rail, MAPNA and Iran Railways to support home production and reduce the import of passenger vehicles by fifty; This work is planned for the MAPNA Wagon Pars works.



## Minister Praises the Qualified Experts of MAPNA

The Minister Mrs. Farzaneh Sadegh stressed the government's support for the infrastructure projects under the control of the private sector. She reminded attendees of her visit the previous winter at the MAPNA Locomotive Works. She said she had seen "young elites and qualified experts" who, despite the difficulties, remain loyal to this country and whose engagement she considered vital for the national development. She stressed that "all these projects will be carried out here and by the private sector."

The head of the Iranian Railways, Jabbar-Ali Zakeri, explained that the agreements were aimed at increasing home capacity in the locomotive and wagon production sectors, to reduce dependency on imports and to increase the proportion of rail traffic in both passenger and freight sectors. He predicted that this agreement would lead to a 10% increase in the capacity for hauling freight, a 30% increase in the traction for passenger services and a 5% growth in the capacity for passenger traffic.

Zakeri also sketched out the wider social and economic advantages of the projects and indicated that the total social results would be estimated at some 163.9M US Dollars; he said that the savings in fuel consumption were estimated at some 53M USD, whilst the reductions in accidents was also envisaged as saving some 70M USD. The initiative would also save an estimated 14.5M USD on climate-related costs, reduce road traffic by some 7.3M USD and reduce pollution by a further 19M USD.

### 85 Per Cent of the Locomotives would be Built in Iran

Mohammed Owliya, President of the MAPNA Group, said the new railway contracts would improve the railway infrastructure of the country, that 85% of the parts for the locos would be made in Iran which would therefore also serve to reduce dependence on imports. He referred back to the railway activities of MAPNA including the contract for 150 "Iran Safir" passenger locomotives which, in his opinion, had established the foundation for locomotive construction in Iran. He also recalled the Minister's visit to the factory the previous winter and her emphasis on the strengthening of domestic involvement in the railway sector. He said that the branch has now reached a stage in which "85% of the locomotives in this contract can be built in home factories and the import element will be only 15%."

He added that the project would also increase employment and contribute to the creation of an inland network of suppliers. He said the contracts would be fulfilled over a period of from 14 to 29 months, which reflected a very careful planning process.

In conclusion he suggested that the Government should make some of its already-approved special credits available for the ordering of rail vehicles and for guarantees in connection with the Iranian Railways in order to ease the financing. He declared that such support would reduce the investment risk factor. The MAPNA Group incorporates a broad-based Railway section which includes the areas of Design, Engineering, Ordering, Operation and Investment in railway projects."

### (iii). MASHHAD METRO 1: MAPNA TO SUPPLY 60 CARS

From "Metro Report Intl." 20.10.2025: "Mapna Group's rolling stock business Wagon Pars has won a contract to supply 60 light rail vehicles for Mashhad Urban Railway's light metro Line 1. The manufacturer said the three-car LRVs would be a 'sophisticated type of electric multiple-unit', designed for tight curves.

An initial section of light metro Line 1 opened in 2011, with 10.5 km underground and 8.5 km at grade. It was extended by 4.5 km to the airport in 2016. The fully segregated line is operated with a fleet of 70 three-car low-floor vehicles produced by CNR Changchun.

Announcing the latest order in September, Mapna said light rail can integrate 'seamlessly' with city traffic and offer an 'efficient alternative' to traditional metro systems without the cost of tunnelling."

## (iv). TEHRAN METRO LINE 4

From "Metro Report Intl. 10.10.2025: "On October 1 a consortium of Mapna, Boland Payeh and Chinese company CMC signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the construction of the 11km eastern section of Tehran Metro Line 4. The main contract is expected to be finalised within nine months, with design, construction and commissioning of the section including 10 stations and a depot to take a further 48 months. The estimated cost is €450M, with 15% to be provided by the city authority and Mapna committing to raising 85% of from external sources."

[Comment: Several videos online indicate that the water table under Tehran has dried out and the ground is sinking quite rapidly. If these reports are true it would make building an underground railway system even more challenging.

Within a few years of the opening of the railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem in 1892 a drought hit the latter city and the railway was used to bring wagons fitted with water tanks, that were filled at an intermediate station up to Jerusalem where the water could be sold to the desperate inhabitants..... One could say the railway in this manner effectively saved the city. *[In mid-November 2025 the news was of drastic water shortages in Iran that could even lead to the forced evacuation of Teheran. Much of this crying over spilt water indicates that the political leadership of the Mullahs had preferred to develop means of attacking Israel directly and indirectly, rather than reduce wastage and ensure basic supplies for their own population. Whatever, and bearing in mind this will be a challenge and a tragedy for many citizens, one wonders what good an expanded Metro system in Teheran will do if there are no citizens left there.... Or will the tunnels be used as underground weapons factories? Ed.]*

### (v). DOMESTIC METRO TRAIN DEVELOPED

From "R.G.I." 25.10.2025: "The city of Qom has awarded Mapna's rolling stock company Wagon Pars a contract to design and build three five-car metro trainsets as part of a project to develop domestic urban rail technology in Iran.

Mapna says this would be the first metro train to be fully designed and built by an Iranian company, and success could pave the way for similar contracts in other Iranian cities. Previous Iranian metro trains have been mostly supplied by Chinese companies, with localisation by Wagon Pars.

The scope of the contract announced on September 28 includes the use of Iranian technology for subsystems such as traction, control and braking systems, as well as doors, gangways, couplers, ventilation and passenger information systems.

Testing of the first trainset on Qom Line A is planned by March 2026."

### (vi). OIL FROM IRAN : SANCTIONS-BUSTING BY TRAIN

From "Bahnblogstelle" 28.10.2025:

"According to media reports Iran is for the first time exporting fuel also by rail via Afghanistan. In the first phase of the project 20 wagons with Diesel fuel have been delivered to the area of Afghanistan ruled by the Taliban, reported the Iranian state news agency Irna. The aim is to be able to export some 30,000 tons of fuel per month. A spokesman for the Taliban-controlled Ministry for Public Affairs confirmed the delivery by a "private company". His Ministry is working to expand the rail network "to provide further improved facilities for traders", he wrote.

#### Export further to China

Officially it was initially unclear whether this delivery was for the Afghan market or for exporting further onwards to China, which is the largest customer for Iranian mineral oil products. In view of the international sanctions, which also apply to Iran's energy sector, Teheran has until now created and used a complex system for exporting oil by sea to small Chinese refineries.

Speculation has been stimulated also by a posting of the controversial merchant Babak Sandschani on 'X'; In January he had spent eleven years in jail charged with corruption and in the meantime he has even been condemned to death. "For the first time we have opened the railway line from Iran to Afghanistan and further to China" he wrote.

#### Experts: Do not Underestimate the Logistics

The logistics behind such an export model to China are not to be underestimated, writes the analyst Gregory Brew of the Eurasia group on X. It is however "much more difficult" to disrupt the transport of raw oil by train than by tanker."



#### (vii). INTERNATIONAL PLANS

From "Al-Monitor" 02.11.2025: Iran revives Cross-Border Rail Projects in bid to anchor Eurasian trade routes.

"Iran aims to turn its rail network into a strategic lever across Eurasia, despite risks from sanctions and regional instability. (By Sabena Siddiqi).

Iran is making a quiet but strategic push to control key rail arteries linking Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. By reviving the Istanbul - Tehran - Islamabad (ITI) line, launching a new Afghan connection and advancing a new transit corridor with Russia, Tehran is hoping to use railways as leverage in an increasingly contested Eurasian transit market.

In the span of just one week in late October, Tehran finalized plans to restart the long-stalled ITI freight line by December, signed a new five-year pact with Turkey and Afghanistan to construct the Herat to Mazar-e-Sharif railway and moved to complete the final missing segment of the North-South Transport Corridor with Russia. Officials from Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey have met repeatedly in recent weeks to coordinate construction schedules, upgrade existing tracks and discuss operational agreements, signalling a renewed push to turn long-discussed plans into concrete projects.

#### Reviving the ITI

At an 11-nation regional transport conference in Islamabad on Oct. 25, Iran's Minister of transport and urban development, Farzaneh Sadegh, met with Pakistan's ministers of commerce, communications and railways – Jam Kamal Khan, Abdul Aleem Khan and Hanif Abbasi – to push forward plans to restart the freight train service.

A joint action plan to expand cooperation is soon expected and will include upgrades to the Quetta - Taftan route, which are scheduled to begin next year. Sadegh urged both sides to fast-track implementation of existing agreements.

The freight service is expected to resume by Dec. 31, pending final discussions on tradable goods and operational details.

Since taking office in August 2024, the administration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has made railways a top priority.

But though frequently envisioned as a bridge between Europe and South Asia, the ITI freight service has been revived and shelved several times since its debut in 2009. Part of the Economic Cooperation Organization's regional connectivity initiative, the ITI service was last launched in December 2021 but was suspended eight months later due to administrative, financial and infrastructure issues.

Torek Farhadi, a former senior adviser to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank based in Geneva, told Al-Monitor that Iran's rail network needs modernizing, but "larger systemic problems such as electricity and power distribution infrastructure overshadow potentials for growth of the rail network."

He added, "Were there no [Western] sanctions, a feasibility study is warranted, proving what additional trade a stronger train network would handle that is not already handled by the current infrastructure."

#### The Train to Afghanistan

At the heart of this strategy is the Herat-Mazar-e-Sharif railway, a project that could simultaneously anchor Tehran's economic outreach and reinforce its western frontier, while testing whether Kabul can turn newfound connectivity into regional engagement and a semblance of legitimacy.

On the sidelines of the 36th Regional Assembly of Middle East Railways, which met on Oct. 22 in Turkey, the project gained momentum. Jabbar Ali Zakeri, Iran's deputy transport minister; Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, the Taliban's deputy minister of public works; and Veysi Kurt, director-general of Turkish State Railways, signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen railway cooperation.

Zakeri highlighted during discussions that linking networks, cutting cargo transit times and expanding passenger services are central to regional integration and sustainable development. The Turkish delegation emphasized the project's long-term vision of connecting Iran with China via Afghanistan, potentially establishing a major new trade route across Eurasia.

#### Completing the INSTC

Adding momentum to these efforts, Tehran and Moscow are expected to finalize their long-delayed Rasht - Astara railway deal this month, which will coincide with the rollout of the 20-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, signed by Presidents Pezeshkian and Vladimir Putin in January 2025.

This 162-kilometre stretch will close the final gap in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal route linking Indian ports to Northern Europe via Iran, the Caucasus and Russia. With this connection, Tehran could emerge as a central transit hub along the entire north-south axis.

Sadegh told Azerbaijani news outlet Trend in mid-October that Iran would complete the land acquisition "by year-end, while Russia has already begun preparatory studies for construction." Once operational, Iran plans to transport up to 15 million tons of cargo annually along this route initially.

Nikita Smagin, an independent analyst specializing in Iran-Russia relations, told Al-Monitor that the INSTC has become "particularly relevant" for Russia as an additional transit route following the war in Ukraine and the imposition of Western sanctions.

He added that it increases Russia's "logistical security" and Iran appears to be a "reliable partner when it comes to sanctions," noting that while Turkey and China have responded to Western sanctions against Russia to varying degrees – with Beijing still purchasing large volumes of Russian oil but using payment methods to avoid secondary sanctions – "Iran at this stage completely ignores the Western position on the matter, as it is itself under extensive sanctions."

However, Smagin cautioned that although the INSTC exists formally, its efficiency remains low, with most businesses preferring alternative

routes due to the absence of a direct railway connection between Iran and Russia. With the Rasht-Astara link, a continuous railway route could finally be established between St. Petersburg and the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.

He stressed, though, that “mere construction” of this route would not suffice, as most of Iran’s railways are single-track and would require a second line, along with additional infrastructure investments such as platform extensions and unloading tracks. Smagin concluded that completing the Rasht-Astara section may be just the “first step” toward making the railway component of the north-south corridor genuinely efficient.

#### Security Risks Ahead

Currently, worsening tensions between Islamabad and Kabul could delay the Afghan leg of Iran’s rail strategy, while growing political instability in Afghanistan could heighten security risks. Even without these factors, the Taliban’s uneven record in protecting foreign-built infrastructure remains a serious concern.

Discussing the security risks that could impact Iran’s planned railways, Schahriar Hatam, an international relations consultant on Iran, told Al-Monitor that the ITI faces “critical operational threats” while traversing Pakistan’s Baluchistan province due to insurgent activity. He added that there is also the potential for “targeted cyber-kinetic or military attacks” on INSTC infrastructure by “hostile external powers.”

Hatam noted that Western-backed routes such as the Middle Corridor and the Zangezur Corridor, backed and supported by Turkey and Azerbaijan, can “bypass Iran in the Eurasian transit market” and are perceived by Tehran as a “strategic threat.”

Western sanctions continue to limit Tehran’s access to finance and technology, slowing cross-border cooperation and investment. In Farhadi’s assessment, Iran’s “ambitions have serious limits as long as the country is subject to sanctions.”

However, Hatam argued that Iran’s railway strategy could help “secure national resilience” against international sanctions. With this plan, he said, Iran can “generate hard currency from transit fees, mitigating the impact of sanctions,” diversify trade routes, avoid threats to congested maritime choke points, and “consolidate its regional influence.” According to Hatam, total cargo transit through Iranian territory had already increased by 26% in the 11 months leading to February 2024.”

#### (viii). IRAN PLANS NEW RAILWAY FOR CHINA - EUROPE TRAFFIC

From “RailFreightCom” 27.11.2025: “Iran is planning to build a new 200-kilometre long railway to facilitate China - Europe traffic. The country’s transport minister, Farzanegh Sadegh, stated that Tehran wants to build a line to the Turkish border, which could become part of a rail-only corridor to Europe.”

This from “Times of Israel” 01.12.25: “Iran and Turkey have agreed to begin constructing a new joint rail link to serve as a strategic gateway between Asia and Europe, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Sunday.

The planned route, known in Iran as the Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway transit line and running towards Turkey’s Aralik border region, will cover around 200 kilometres (120 miles). It will cost roughly \$1.6Bn and is expected to take three to four years to complete, Iranian authorities have said.

Earlier this month, Iran’s transport minister Farzaneh Sadegh said the rail line would transform the southern section of what was once the Silk Road into an “all-rail corridor ensuring the continuity of the network between China and Europe.” It would also ensure “fast and cheap transport of all types of cargo with minimal stops,” she added.

At a joint press conference on Saturday with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan, Araghchi said “emphasis was placed on the need to remove barriers to trade and investment between the two countries.”

“The two countries also stressed the importance of the rail link... in the region and expressed hope that the construction of this line can start as soon as possible,” he added.

The ancient Silk Road was a vast system of trade routes that for centuries linked East Asia to the Middle East and Europe, facilitating the flow of goods, culture, and knowledge across continents.

In 2013, China announced the construction of the “Belt and Road Initiative”, officially known as the “New Silk Road” – a project that aims to build maritime, road, and rail infrastructure to boost global trade.

Iran has been seeking to expand infrastructure and trade with neighboring countries as part of efforts to revitalize an economy strained by decades of international sanctions.”



• Inaugural Iranian train to Afghanistan

#### (ix) ELECTRIFICATION PLANS

From “Intellinews” 28.7.2025: “China and Iran have finalised a major deal on July 15 to electrify 1,000 kilometres of the Razi – Sarakhs railway line, a vital transport artery linking Turkey and Turkmenistan through Iranian soil, Tejarat News reported on July 28.

The agreement, announced in Beijing during a meeting between Iran’s Railway CEO Jabbar Ali Zakeri and China Railway President, marks a significant step in deepening bilateral trade ties and advancing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China Railways has had a long relationship with Iran, being the only country apart from Russia willing to work with Iran. The programme to invest also comes as part of efforts by Beijing to shorten transit times between Southern Europe and East Asia as part of the so-called southern corridor, which runs through Iran both south and west. The rail link is a significant milestone in Tehran’s efforts to expand trade and infrastructure links across Eurasia. The Iranian state media reported that the inaugural train departed from Tehran in May and travelled more than 5,300 km to the Chinese city of Xi’an in just over 14 days. The route, which crosses Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan before entering western China, forms part of the broader China-Central Asia-West Asia corridor under Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The project covers half of the nearly 2,000-kilometre corridor, aiming to upgrade the infrastructure by electrifying and expanding dual-track sections, substantially increasing freight capacity and speed.

Currently, only the Tehran – Mashhad section is double-tracked. This expansion will enable faster, higher-volume container transit across Iran. It will strengthen its role as a key Eurasian logistics hub, with Chinese engineering teams likely to play a significant part in contracts.

The deal comes amid a surge in rail container traffic between China and Iran. In the first half of 2025, container volumes jumped by 260%, showing the corridor’s growing importance in linking China with Europe

and Central Asia. This rapid growth highlights the potential of the China–Iran–Europe rail corridor to revive the historical Silk Road's legacy as a trade lifeline.

Despite geopolitical tensions that continue to threaten regional stability, including last month's cancellation of a China–Armenia multimodal service passing through Iran due to security concerns, Tehran and Beijing remain committed to boosting transport connectivity. This infrastructure upgrade forms part of a broader multilateral push involving Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey to develop an integrated Eurasian logistics network.

The proposed Trans-Afghan Railway has become the second most strategically important initiative for Uzbekistan after the China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan (CKU) railway, according to Deputy Minister of Transport Jasurbek Choriev.

The railway would take a route running from Termez, Uzbekistan, to Naibabad, Maidan Shar and Logar (all in Afghanistan) and through to Kharlachi (in Pakistan on the border with Afghanistan). Route mapping, geological surveys and economic and financial assessments will all form part of the study.

In its initial phase, the railroad, as envisaged, would carry up to 3M tonnes of cargo annually, and there are plans to scale up to 15–20M tonnes by 2035–2040.

The delivery of the Pakistan section of the railway will involve building through challenging mountainous terrain, requiring the construction of five tunnels and 312 bridges.

Of the new investment, Iranian officials described the opening as a “breakthrough”, as it will reduce transport costs and delivery times for goods traded between the two countries. The overland journey is significantly shorter than traditional maritime routes via the Strait of Malacca and the Suez Canal. The route also effectively bypasses the US sanctions on Iran and also provides China better overland access to the Middle East. “The launch of this corridor is a major step forward in diversifying Iran’s trade routes and strengthening its position in regional transit,” said Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.

The rail link is expected to allow the direct delivery of Iranian bulk goods like petrochemicals, agricultural products and construction materials, while facilitating the import of Chinese electronics, machinery and consumer goods.

Iran has invested heavily in recent years to expand its rail infrastructure, which comes in the context of other developing overland links, including the Middle Corridor. There was also a new railway link between China and Kazakhstan that opened in November 2023, the Ayagoz–Tacheng railway connection, which is also part of the BRI. The new railway line connects Tacheng in China's western Xinjiang region with Ayagoz in eastern Kazakhstan. It is the third rail border crossing between the two countries, alongside the Alashankou–Dostyk and Khorgos–Altynkol corridors.”

## E. JORDAN

### (i). MAFRAQ TOURIST TRAINS

Jordan Hejaz Railway to operate tourist train service to Mafraq.

From “The Jordan Times” 24.04.2025:

“A new tourist train service will begin operating in Mafraq on Saturday, marking the launch of the first heritage rail trips in the governorate. Organised by the Jordan Hejaz Railway Corporation (JHR) in partnership with the Rahab Municipality, the initiative aims to promote domestic tourism and revive interest in Jordan’s historical and cultural landmarks.

The journey will offer more than just scenic views, as passengers will be greeted at the station by a traditional Mafraq folklore group

performing cultural dances celebrating the region's rich heritage, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The itinerary includes visits to Rahab's centuries-old churches and its famous mosaic relics, symbols of the Kingdom's religious and cultural diversity. A traditional bazaar featuring local cuisine and handicrafts will also be part of the experience, where visitors will have the opportunity to sample regional dishes and purchase artisanal products while supporting local producers and communities.

“This journey is part of our broader vision to expand the role of the railway in heritage tourism,” said JHR Director-General Zahi Khalil. “By highlighting historically significant areas, we aim to create memorable experiences that also contribute to local development,” Khalil added.

He stressed the importance of working with municipalities, community organisations and the private sector to create “meaningful” tourism experiences, noting that reviving railway stations as cultural landmarks is “central to preserving national memory.”

The Mafraq route is part of a series of heritage journeys planned by the corporation to reconnect Jordanians with their history through rail travel and to showcase the Kingdom's diverse cultural and geographical identity, Petra added.”

### (ii). LOOKING AHEAD?? MORE AMBITIOUS REVIVAL PLANS

(a) First - From the “Jordan Times” 11.09.2025:

“Transport officials from Jordan, Syria, and Turkey submitted a joint memorandum to their respective ministers on Thursday, proposing a series of strategic projects to enhance road and rail connectivity among the three countries.

The proposals, presented during a trilateral technical meeting in Amman, include reopening the Bab Al Hawa–Cilvegözü crossing for Jordanian trucks via Syria, pending technical compliance, and reviving the historic Hejaz Railway with Turkish support to aid Syria's reconstruction efforts, the public service TV Al Mamlaka reported.

Jordan would also offer technical assistance to maintain Syrian locomotives.

Officials further agreed to launch joint technical studies for a modern railway network linking the three nations to global trade corridors.

Another key proposal involves boosting the overland freight route from Jordan's Aqaba Port to Turkey and onward to Eastern Europe through trilateral cooperation agreements.

The meeting was chaired by Jordan's Secretary-General of the Transport Ministry, Fares Abu Diya, and attended by Syria's Deputy Transport Minister for Road Transport Affairs, Mohammad Rahal, and Turkey's Director General of Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Burak Ekan. Technical delegations from the three countries also participated.

In his opening remarks, Abu Diya welcomed the delegations and described the meeting as a significant step toward strengthening cooperation in the transport and logistics sectors. “These meetings transform strong bilateral relations into practical economic and strategic initiatives,” he said, adding that the dialogue helped lay the groundwork for future joint projects.

Syria's Rahal highlighted the importance of railway development in supporting trade and facilitating the movement of goods and passengers. He underscored the economic and developmental benefits of restoring the Hejaz Railway.”

(b). Another report from “RailFreight.com”: “Syria, Türkiye and Jordan are looking to revive a historic railway to boost regional connectivity. A meeting between transport officials from the three countries concluded with a joint proposal to improve regional rail and port infrastructure and to seek out a connection to Eastern Europe.

The key proposal of the meeting relates to a revival of the historic Hejaz railway. The old Ottoman line only operated for twelve years, between 1908 and 1912, and connected Damascus (Syria) to Medina (modern day Saudi Arabia).

A revival of the Hejaz railway could extend the reach of rail infrastructure to the Red Sea by improving transportation capacity to Jordan's Aqaba port. That would create a direct overland link between the Red Sea and Türkiye, and by extension to Europe. The three countries make an explicit proposal to improve the freight route between Aqaba and Eastern Europe.

#### A Modern Railway Network

The transport officials also agreed to launch technical studies for a modern railway network beyond only the Hejaz railway. Such a network should connect the countries to global trade corridors, according to The Jordan Times. That could mean the maritime Suez Canal route, but also overland corridors, such as the INSTC and the Middle Corridor.

Beyond simply rail infrastructure, Jordan has offered technical assistance to Syria in locomotive maintenance. It also hopes to reopen the Bab Al Hawa-Cilvegözü crossing for trucks."

(c). "I.R.J." reported thus on 23.09.25: "Turkey, Syria and Jordan have reached preliminary agreement on a draft memorandum of understanding (MoU) to cooperate on the development of transport infrastructure, which includes reviving the Syrian section of the Hedjaz Railway which once connected Damascus with Medina in what is now Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was announced by Turkey's minister of transport and infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloglu, following a meeting held by the three parties in Amman, Jordan, earlier this month.

"The historic Hedjaz Railway is being revived," Uraloglu said. Turkey will provide assistance with replacing 30km of missing track in Syria, while Jordan will assess its technical capacity to support the maintenance, repair and operation of locomotives within Syria.

Built under the Ottoman Empire and originally planned to connect the imperial capital Istanbul with the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the 1050mm-gauge Hedjaz Railway was completed between Damascus in Syria and Medina in 1908, running for 1300km. The network contracted following the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of new nations in the Middle East, but passenger and freight services have latterly been operated on the 217km between Damascus and Amman by Jordan-Hedjaz Railway (JHR)."

In fact we have several reports which overlap but are also different in tone and perspective. Amongst other things it is never quite explained where the missing 30km are nor - very significantly in view of recent reports of Turkey helping to restore the old HR station and line at Amman - is it clear whether the old 105cm line would be rehabilitated - surely a rather bizarre idea in the modern world - or whether a new standard-gauge line would be built, maybe partially on the HR trackbed (and thus obliterating the existing line) but enabling through freight traffic from Turkey etc. to reach Aqaba and also a link with the expanded Saudi network.

(d). This from 'TRT World' - and supplied with a map which noticeably totally obliterates 'Israel' and replaces it with 'Palestine'.... By Ezra Karatas Alpay, published on 27.09.2025:

"The historic Hejaz Railway is all set to chug back to life, marking the revival of an Ottoman-era rail link that once took traders and pilgrims from Istanbul to the Muslim holy cities of Medina and Mecca and all the other places that fall in between.

Türkiye, Syria and Jordan have pledged to restore and modernise the line, a project officials and experts say could carry not only trains, but also the promise of economic revival and regional reconciliation.

At a tripartite technical meeting of the transport ministries in Amman on September 11, the three countries agreed to take "the first concrete step" toward reviving the line. Associate professor Suay Nilhan Acikalin, an international relations academic at Haci Bayram Verli University in Ankara, says that the re-opening of the Hejaz Railway would not be just "a powerful historical symbol but also a tangible driver of prosperity and regional cooperation".

"The revival of the Hejaz Railway is of great significance for the region," she tells TRT World.

The Amman talks also produced a draft memorandum of understanding to deepen transport cooperation across road, rail and logistics corridors. The document is expected to be signed later this year at the ministerial level. Türkiye will prepare a detailed action plan ahead of the meeting, setting out concrete steps for trilateral technical groups to pursue.

One of the most immediate outcomes was an agreement to resume road transport between Türkiye and Jordan via Syria, ending a 13-year suspension.

Minister Uraloglu also pointed to the strategic importance of connecting Türkiye more directly with the Red Sea through Jordan's Aqaba Port, a move that could strengthen supply chains across the Middle East and beyond.

#### Strategic Significance

Acikalin places the revival of the railroad within a larger geopolitical context, underscoring both the symbolism and the practical value of the initiative.

"It is one of the projects that has taken concrete form within Türkiye's broader efforts over the past three years—both in the fight against terrorism and in advancing development goals."

"Alongside the Development Road Project with Iraq and a potential northern corridor through Zangezur, this initiative represents a multidimensional push toward growth," she adds.

Acikalin emphasises that renewed stability in Syria - following the fall of the Asad regime - has made such projects possible. "For decades, the areas traversed by the Hejaz Railway were crippled by conflict," she notes. "Yet with Syria now entering a period of stabilisation, the prospect of reviving this line—linking Iraq, Syria, Türkiye, and the broader region—has become both feasible and deeply significant."

International relations scholar, Professor Oktay Firat Tanrisever from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, stresses the project's strategic and economic dimensions.

"Restoring and modernising the historic line—particularly the Syria-Jordan connection—would reopen a vital trade corridor between Türkiye and the Red Sea," he tells TRT World.

"Türkiye could greatly expand its trade with Saudi Arabia and the Horn of Africa, delivering goods more quickly, reliably, and cost-effectively," he continues. "For Syria, this would create new trade routes and boost overall commerce among regional states. Cooperation in transportation between Türkiye, Syria, and Jordan will not only extend access to wider geographies but also foster stability and development across the region."

The track connects Türkiye, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, traversing 1,750 kilometres and connecting some of the most important urban centres in the region.

Türkiye's Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Abdulkadir Uraloglu, said that Ankara will support Syria in completing 30 kilometres of missing track infrastructure, while Jordan will explore technical capacity for locomotive maintenance and the potential to operate its historic engines as far as Damascus.

## A Railway with a Past and a Future

Originally inaugurated in 1908, the Hejaz Railway was built to connect Istanbul with Medina, facilitating both trade and pilgrimage. In its earliest days, the railway carried pilgrims on their sacred journey to the holy cities, stitching together distant communities across deserts and frontiers.

The railway was built between 1900 and 1908 under the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, forging a vital link from Istanbul to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, while also extending through Damascus and into parts of Yemen.

Its collapse during World War I left large stretches derelict, with surviving stations and locomotives preserved more as relics than infrastructure. Now, with momentum from both governments and regional experts, the line is being reimagined as a project that bridges the past and the future.

"Reviving the Hejaz Railway is not only about restoring a line of steel and stone," Minister Uraloglu stated. "It is about reconnecting peoples, opening new trade routes, and building a future of stability and prosperity in our region."

Once realised, the line would stand as both a resurrection of history and a reimagining of the region's future: a network of rails stretching from the Istanbul Strait to the Red Sea, carrying commerce, cooperation, peace and prosperity."

So - a Happy End for everyone, without Israel??? "TRT" incidentally is the official Turkish Radio and Television Corporation and financed by Turkish taxpayers....

historically there is some relevance to this, the 'Emirate of Transjordan' being carved from 'Palestine' by the British in 1922....]:

"A century after it was first laid, the Istanbul - Damascus section of the Hejaz Railway is poised for revival. Türkiye has unveiled plans to modernise this iconic emblem of Ottoman ingenuity – a project originally envisioned to unite the Muslim world and ease the travel for Islam's holiest pilgrimage.

"This project is not just about restoring a railway; it is about reconnecting a historical legacy," stated Abdulkadir Uraloglu, Türkiye's Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, during a recent press conference. The minister highlighted Syria's dire need for infrastructure rehabilitation, revealing plans to rebuild airports, roads, and railways. The initial phase focuses on the railway's extension to Damascus, rekindling a route that once embodied unity and progress.

"We aim to renew the infrastructure and ensure the railway's continuity, starting with the section to Damascus," Minister Uraloglu added. The restoration carries immense significance, not only for preserving historical heritage but also for strengthening transportation networks and fostering economic vitality in the region.

"This was more than a transport project," Dr Ozden Zeynep Oktav, a political scientist at Istanbul Medeniyet University, told TRT World. She sees the railway as a reminder of what was once possible. "It was a unifying force for Muslims across continents," Dr Oktav noted. "The railway line was built with contributions from far and wide—from Russia to Indonesia, from South Africa to Egypt. Its construction shows the deep interest and commitment within the Muslim world to fostering solidarity."

## A Legacy Rekindled

The primary function of the Hejaz Railway was to facilitate pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina, but its tracks also carried trade goods and fostered cultural exchange.

By the time it was completed in 1908, the railway's 1,320 kilometres of track connected Istanbul to Damascus and Medina, slashing the arduous 50-day pilgrimage from Syria to the Holy Cities down to just five. World War I, new borders, and conflicts rendered it obsolete, with key lines ceasing operation between 1948 and 1975.

Beyond its spiritual mission, the railway promoted economic growth, linking remote regions and invigorating trade. Communities along its path flourished as goods, knowledge, and culture flowed freely, reinforcing the unity of the Muslim world.

Minister Uraloglu underscored the project's broader significance: "This restoration will strengthen trade routes, enhance cultural ties, and place Türkiye's infrastructure on a global stage. It represents progress, unity, and shared prosperity."

The Turkish government has sent a team of experts to the site of the tracks to carry out an initial assessment for the revival of the project.

The revival carries the hope of rekindling that unity, even in a world vastly changed. "This railway symbolises the unity of all Muslims," explained Dr Oktav. "Built with contributions from a global Muslim community, it represents solidarity and resilience. Its restoration today is a beacon of hope for the Islamic world."

The railway became a symbol of shared purpose and identity, even serving as a strategic asset during World War I and the Hejaz Rebellion. "This railway played a vital role during World War I and the Hejaz Rebellion. It transported civilians and sacred relics to Damascus and enabled soldiers to move efficiently during wartime," Dr Oktav added.

The railway's original route passed through Istanbul, Damascus, Amman and Medina, with stops in present-day Palestine and Saudi Arabia.

(e). [We add here another article by the same authoress that came out on Jan. 1st. 2025 and also refers to "present-day Palestine" - whereby she unwittingly means what became "Transjordan" after 1922.... and "Jordan" after 1948... which might rather annoy the Jordanians even if



Sultan Abdulhamid II himself took extraordinary steps to protect the sanctity of Medina, ordering that felt be placed beneath the rails to muffle noise near Prophet Muhammad's resting place.

### Dream of Unity on Iron Rails

Restoring the Istanbul-Damascus segment is as much about the present as the past. Uraloglu outlined Türkiye's ambitions to restore the Istanbul - Damascus section as part of a larger vision to strengthen regional and international transportation networks.

"This restoration will bolster trade routes, enhance cultural ties, and elevate Türkiye's infrastructure on a global stage," Uraloglu said.

Türkiye embarks on an ambitious undertaking as the Hejaz Railway is set to once again unite regions, boost economies, and inspire cultural exchange. Its revival promises not only to reconnect Istanbul and Damascus but also to rekindle a legacy of peace and progress.

"This is about more than just transportation," Dr Oktav said. "Reopening this line is a statement—a reminder of shared history and the potential for shared progress."

So here we have it, clearly laid out - the dream is to link all Moslems in the world again (even to Russia!) under a beneficent Turkish ruler, a modern-day Abdulhamid. Maybe Mr. Erdogan should take the title Abdul Hamid III? Intriguing is also the reference to the Hejaz Revolt - what is meant by this? The revolt of the Hashemites against the Ottomans?

(f). This in turn leads to an earlier article of 24.12.2024 which is also highly revealing:

"Türkiye ready to repair, rebuild infrastructure in war-torn Syria

"Syria needs everything to take a new beginning, the Turkish minister of transportation and infrastructure has said, adding that Türkiye has prepared an action plan for repairing and rebuilding the war-torn country's airports, bridges, roads, and railways.

Syria has five airports, two of which have recently been operational, Damascus and Aleppo, Abdulkadir Uraloglu said at a press conference in the capital, Ankara, on Tuesday, noting that these airports require significant improvements. Damascus Airport handled approximately 100,000 trips last year, while Aleppo managed between 50,000 and 60,000, the minister said, adding that a Turkish team checked airports and discovered that there is no radar system.

"There is an air radar application that we use on our mobile phones. Imagine, they were trying to manage it from that mobile phone application," he said.

Computers from the 1990s are still used at these airports, and there are no proper X-ray devices, detectors, or anything else, he explained.

He added that the runways are seriously ageing and that the first flight to Damascus and Aleppo was entirely on the pilots' initiative, in other words, without any system and under visual conditions.

"So our friends made a determination, and then we have put forward an action plan," he said. The minister said Türkiye will take action to revive Damascus Airport in the first phase.

He said, "There are parts of the railways that go from Türkiye to Hejaz; they have not been operated for a long time. We will quickly identify them and take a position to ensure the integrity of the railroad up to Damascus in the first place.

### Hejaz Railway

"We sent passenger trains there in 2009-2010. There is infrastructure there, but only in certain regions," the minister said.

The approximately 1,750-kilometre Hejaz Railway was built by Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II to connect Istanbul, Mecca, Medina,

Yemen, and Damascus. It began operating in 1908. The railway, which contributed to the region's development, was built for religious, military, and political purposes. The line had been providing Hajj pilgrims with a safe route.

### M4, M5 Highways

Reminding the terror operations, he said, "Whether in the internal dynamics in Syria, the M4 and the M5 highways have always been discussed. In other words, a highway can have such an impact on the politics of a country."

Türkiye is dealing with these roads, but Ankara has already done a lot of work, particularly on highways, the minister said. The M4 highway connects the capital, Damascus, and Aleppo, while the M5 highway links the Mediterranean city of Latakia to Aleppo. The 450-kilometre M5 is a strategic highway in southern Syria, close to the borders with Jordan and Türkiye.

The Highway links the country's largest provinces: Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and Idlib.

It was a vital economic route for the country, particularly connecting the industrial hub Aleppo.

The 120-kilometre M4 also runs through the M5. Half of the M4 spent a long time in the war zone. "I can say that we have done a lot of work there and repaired many destroyed bridges," the Turkish minister underlined.

### Communications Infrastructure

The minister said Syria is 20-30 years behind Türkiye in terms of communication, noting that cell phones are not used at many points.

Uraloglu pledged that "We will make the necessary determinations about these, and we will try to realise them as the ministry, as I said; everything is needed there."

He said even though Syria was not able to print its own money, Russia has been printing for it.

"Right now, many countries in Africa are in a similar position; some developed countries are printing their money. At this point, Türkiye will support there."

### Importance of Mediterranean

He acknowledged Syria's strategic location as a gateway to the Mediterranean but noted that its ports are underdeveloped. "We will most likely make determined efforts to make specific investments there.

"Of course, a Maritime Jurisdiction Agreement, probably, so that we can protect our interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Blue Homeland; our relevant institutions will take a position there when the day comes."

Türkiye had previously prepared a similar agreement with Libya.

The delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas is critical given the presence of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the presence of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya, Greece, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC), in addition to Türkiye.

Although the TRNC issue remains unresolved, the GASC made maritime boundary agreements with Egypt in 2003, Lebanon in 2007, and Israel in 2010, disregarding the equal rights of the Turkish Cypriots.

The Agreement on the Delimitation of Maritime Jurisdiction in the Mediterranean, signed on Nov. 27, 2019, by Türkiye and Libya, is significant because it protects the two countries' rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## Trade history

"In terms of trade," the minister said, Damascus and Syria have a history. "We will do our best to revive it." Stating that such an agreement will increase the effectiveness and competence of both Syria and Türkiye, he said, "At the point of oil and hydrocarbon exploration there, taking into account international law, we will share or expand all kinds of authority as two countries.

"Of course, first of all, an authority needs to be established there. Look, the salaries of the civil servants there need to be paid."

He also said there is a plan for armed groups to lay down their arms. "This will definitely be on the agenda, but it would not be very accurate to say that it is today's agenda."

*[One could add here that any look at the TRT website will reveal several articles and video clips discussing Turkey's willingness to aid Syria in reconstruction, of course for its own longer-term interests. Ed.]*

(g). <https://syrianobserver.com/foreign-actors/tripartite-agreement-to-revive-historic-hejaz-railway-and-resume-land-transport-via-syria.html>

"The Syrian Observer" of 24.09.2025 cites "SHAAM", repeats some of the same press release but has of course a Syrian perspective and adds:

"Turkish Transport and Infrastructure Minister Uraloglu has announced a landmark agreement to support the completion of the final 30 kilometres of the historic Hejaz Railway line in Syria - an initiative welcomed as the start of efforts to revive this vital project and strengthen regional cooperation in the transport sector. In remarks carried by the Anadolu Agency, Uraloglu said that Turkey would back the completion of the remaining superstructure of the Hejaz railway in Syrian territory. .... According to the minister, Jordan will study technical options for maintaining, repairing and operating locomotives, as well as explore the possibility of deploying its own trains along the Hejaz route to Damascus.... [Does this mean to Deraa and the border, or all the way to Damascus and the Cadem workshops? Ed.]

The minister also underscored the importance of creating transport corridors that would strengthen Turkey's links to the Red Sea through Jordan's Aqaba port. He stressed the need for joint technical studies to expand Syria and Jordan's access to international trade routes via Turkish territory." [This would also reduce Jordan's need for access via Beit Shean to Haifa and the Mediterranean. Ed.]

(h). This snippet from the "Daily Sabah", based in Istanbul, on 25. 09.25, adds to the perspective:

"... Originally constructed between 1900 and 1908 under Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, the Hejaz railway line stretched approximately 1,750 kilometers, linking Istanbul to the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as Damascus and parts of Yemen.

Designed to facilitate pilgrimage to Mecca, the railway also served strategic military and administrative purposes, bolstering Ottoman control over distant provinces.

The line featured engineering feats such as stone viaducts, desert stations and narrow-gauge tracks adapted to harsh terrain. Though largely dismantled or damaged during World War I and subsequent conflicts, portions of the railway remain intact and have long been the subject of restoration efforts."

[So maybe reaching Yemen is also a part of the dream? The coming years promise to be interesting. There was a "Hedjaz Railway" stand at the Railway 2025 trade fair. Ed.]

(i). "Railway Gazette" adds more information on Syria:

"Turkey has agreed to fund reconstruction of 30 km of railway in Syria which was destroyed during the civil war, Turkish Transport

Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu announced following a meeting between transport officials from Turkey, Syria and Jordan.

Syria's Ministry of Transport reported that the section to be repaired would be between Damascus and the border with Jordan, but did not give a precise location.

Uraloglu also confirmed that Turkey is working on a broader transport action plan aimed at boosting connections between the three countries and opening up a corridor to Jordan's Red Sea port of Aqaba. The three sides agreed a memorandum of understanding for co-operation to boost transport links.

At the same meeting on September 11, Jordanian officials agreed to explore the possibility of taking on responsibility for the repair, maintenance and operation of locomotives in Syria and for the possible start of rail services between the two countries.

Rail services in Syria were halted in 2012 because of the civil war which resulted in the destruction of much of the infrastructure. Limited services were restarted in 2020, and main line test operations between Aleppo and Hama began in August 2025.

Rail operations inside Jordan use the 1,050 mm gauge of the famed Hedjaz Railway. Trains run from the Syrian border as far as the capital Amman, but the line from Amman south to Ma'an and on to the Red Sea port of Aqaba has been out of use since 2018.

The original Hedjaz Railway continued from Ma'an as far as Madinah in what is now Saudi Arabia, but was abandoned after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Plans to revive the line were abandoned after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Beginning in the 2000s, the Jordanian government started acquiring land for a proposed line from the Syrian border via Zarqa to the Saudi Arabian border following the old Hedjaz route, as well as a line linking Aqaba to this planned Zarqa - Saudi Arabia line, a new alignment between Mafraq and Irbid, and a line between Amman and the Iraqi border. To date though, no progress has been reported."

(iii). A TURKISH TV FILM ON THE HEDJAZ RAILWAY

The link:

<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/suriyede-bir-osmanli-mirasi-hicaz-demir-yolu-893025.html>

- leads to a brief film in Turkish.

This is only a short film but it starts with a Polish narrow-gauge 0-8-0 on a train, then an East German tank engine - but THEN turns to useful, relevant and interesting material on the construction of the line and aerial shots of the desolation of Damascus standard-gauge station today. Later there are brief shots of a BR 'Britannia' 70054 and a train of, I think French 6-wheelers crossing a steel fishbelly girder viaduct... clearly stock shots turned into an AI goulash. The text on the website, in Turkish, is better and reads (translated by DeepL):

"An Ottoman Legacy in Syria: The Hejaz Railway

Commissioned by Sultan Abdulhamid II and constructed between 1900 and 1908, the Hejaz Railway connecting Damascus and Medina was the most significant railway in the Ottoman Empire. The TRT News team filmed Damascus Railway Station, the starting point of this important project.

During his 33-year reign, one of the most important projects of Abdulhamid II, who elevated a state on the brink of collapse to new heights, was the Hejaz Railway.

The first railway line built in Ottoman territory before this was the Alexandria-Cairo line, which entered service. This project, carried out by the British with the support of the governor of Egypt at the time, was followed by railway lines built in Anatolia and Rumelia.

Of all the railways in the Ottoman geography, the most important one was the Hejaz Railway, both in terms of its length and its military, political and economic potential.

It would Facilitate Pilgrimage to Mecca and Increase Trade

The idea of constructing a railway between Damascus and Deraa was based on the concept of connecting the Red Sea and Damascus, proposed by the German-American engineer Charles Zimpel.

Although this proposal could not be realised due to the political and economic conditions of the Ottoman Empire, numerous projects were prepared for the construction of a line connecting Istanbul and the Hejaz.

Sultan Abdulhamid, in addition to being the Ottoman sultan, attached great importance to the Hejaz due to his title of Caliph of Islam. The railway project was of vital importance in order to strengthen the power conferred by this title and contribute to the unity of the Islamic world.

The Hijaz Railway Project was met with great joy among Muslims in distant lands. Thanks to the project, more Muslims would be able to perform the Hajj pilgrimage in a shorter time.

Although not as widely discussed as the religious benefits it would bring, one of the most important aims of the railway project was to speed up the transport of troops. As the project was part of national policy, it would also contribute to increasing wealth, industry and trade in Ottoman territories, and the areas through which the line passed would develop.

#### Commission for Railway Construction

On 2 May 1900, when the decision to implement the project was made, the Commission was established in Istanbul. Chaired by the Sultan himself, the Commission was an institution authorised to oversee railway construction works.

The commission undertook the tasks of constructing the line, procuring the necessary products for the work, such as rails, wagons, sleepers, locomotives, cement and lime, appointing engineers and officials, paying the salaries of those involved in the work, and supervising all activities. In addition to this commission, commissions were also established in Damascus, Beirut and Haifa.

#### How was the construction process?

Construction of the Hejaz Railway began on 1 September 1900, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of Sultan Abdulhamid's accession to the throne. The width of the line was set at 1 metre 5 centimetres, including the rails.

The 11-kilometre section between Mazyrib and Der'a was inaugurated on 1 September 1901. Thus, the first completed section of the line was unveiled.

The second completed section of the line was the Der'a-Zerka section. The official opening of this section also took place on 1 September 1902. Following this opening, on 17 November 1902, the 20-kilometre section of the line between Zerka and Amman was completed. On 1 September 1903, exactly one year after the Damascus-Der'a line, the line reached Maan.

By September 1906, 800 kilometres of the Damascus-Hejaz line had been completed. After the Tebtük/El-ula section was also completed, Muslim workers took over the remaining section, as non-Muslims were prohibited from travelling beyond this point. By September 1908, the length of the line had reached 1,464 kilometres, and the cost had exceeded 3 million lira.

*The Donation Campaign was initiated by Sultan Abdülhamid*

Donation campaigns conducted outside the Ottoman Empire were concentrated mainly in countries where Ottoman diplomatic representatives were present.

Outside Egypt, donations to the Hejaz Railway were made from regions with Muslim populations such as Morocco, Russia, China, Java, and Sumatra.

Sultan Abdülhamid personally launched the domestic campaign with a donation of 50,000 lira. High-ranking officials, religious leaders, civil servants and businesspeople also made donations for the railway line. During the construction process, in which Ziraat Bank loans also played an important role, approximately one-third of the line's cost was covered by domestic and foreign donations. Medals were prepared for those who made donations, thereby increasing motivation.

#### Opened 116 Years Ago

The 450-kilometre Medina-Mecca section of the Hejaz Railway could not be completed due to Bedouin attacks and imperialist policies. Consequently, the convenience it offered for the pilgrimage remained limited, and the line's greatest contribution was in the military sphere.

Following the opening of the Hejaz Railway on 1 September 1908, daily services began on the Haifa - Damascus line and three services a week on the Damascus - Medina line.

During the construction of the line, 2,666 masonry bridges and culverts, 7 iron bridges, 9 tunnels, 96 stations, 7 reservoirs, 37 water tanks, two hospitals and 3 workshops were built.

#### Sultan Abdulhamid's Respect for the Prophet

Sultan Abdulhamid II, who devoted great effort to the Hejaz Railway from start to finish and personally oversaw every stage of its construction, demonstrated remarkable sensitivity in the sections of the railway near Medina.

Believing that noisy construction work in the holy lands would disturb the Prophet's spirit, Sultan Abdülhamid had felt laid under the rails.

#### Turkey to Restore the Ottoman legacy Hijaz Railway in Syria

Following the overthrow of the 61-year-old Baath regime in Syria, many structures are awaiting reconstruction and restoration. Turkey has also begun support efforts in many areas for Syria's reconstruction process.

Transport Minister Abdülkadir Uraloglu said in a recent statement to journalists that Turkey would restore some sections of the historic Hejaz Railway in Syria. Uraloglu said they would quickly assess the situation and take steps to re-establish the railway connection to Damascus in the first phase.

"There are sections of railway lines there that run from Turkey to the Hijaz. We know that certain parts of this network have not been operational for a long time. We will quickly assess the situation and take steps to restore the integrity of the railway network to Damascus in the first stage.

In 2009-2010, we sent passenger trains there and made a journey. There is infrastructure there. We know that in some areas, for example in Iraq, railway tracks have been stolen and sold as scrap metal. We are also facing this in Syria."

'If the Train reaches Gaziantep from Aleppo, then Istanbul and Damascus will be connected.'

Bahattin Sharma, the Transport Minister of Syria's new government, also told TRT News that the line from Aleppo to Gaziantep could be repaired.

Sharma said, 'When the train reaches Gaziantep from Aleppo, then Istanbul and Damascus will be connected.'

[Noticeable is that the map broadcast shows 'Palestine' instead of 'Israel'...]

**(iv). Minister of Transport Inaugurates Steam Locomotive After 40-Year Hiatus.**

From "Jordan News" 15.10.2025. [And see also below, a subsequent meeting.] "Minister of Transport Dr. Nidal Al-Qatamin on Wednesday inaugurated a restored steam locomotive that the staff of the Hejaz Railway Corporation successfully refurbished and brought back into operation after being idle for nearly 40 years.

During his visit to the corporation, the minister was briefed on the progress of the Hejaz Railway Museum project, which has reached about 80 percent completion and is expected to open to visitors during the first half of next year. The museum will showcase historical artifacts that document the national narrative and highlight the railway's role in Jordan's history.

Dr. Al-Qatamin listened to a briefing from Dr. Zahi Khalil, Director General of the Jordan Hejaz Railway Corporation, on the institution's current operations and future plans. These include regular tourist train services, operating three weekly trips from Amman to Mafraq and Amman to Al-Jeezah, as well as plans to organize tourist journeys within Wadi Rum and from the Jardanah area north of Ma'an to the palace of the late King Abdullah I. The corporation also aims to boost domestic tourism and enhance the Hejaz Railway's standing as a cultural and historical landmark.

In the presence of Ministry Secretary-General Fares Abu Diyeh and several directors from the ministry and the corporation, Al-Qatamin underscored the historical significance of the railway, which embodies a deep-rooted Hashemite and Jordanian heritage. He stressed the importance of preserving and maintaining the railway's historic buildings and facilities, and utilizing them to highlight national and cultural symbols.

The minister also called for further institutional development and resource investment to fulfill the corporation's transport and tourism objectives, emphasizing the need to adopt digital transformation and strengthen the technological infrastructure across administrative and technical operations.

The visit comes as part of a series of field tours the Minister of Transport is conducting to assess the status of affiliated institutions and their development projects, identify challenges and needs, and ensure the advancement of Jordan's transport sector across all modes."

The loco in question is 2-8-2 No. 23 (Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn 7433/1952); According to Iain Scotchman this loco was in fact working in May 2017 (substantially less than '40 years') on a BLS special train northwards from Amman, but failed with leaking boiler tubes and had to be detached at Al-Zarqa.

**(v). Four years late but 'linked' to the above story is one from 2021, also in 'Jordan News' -**

**Jordan Railway Project: Better Late than Never.**

By Nadine Daher, June 15, 2021

"Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh revealed last week that the government was looking into a major railway project in Jordan and was in contact with companies interested in the initiative. Historically, passing through Jordan is the Hijazi railroad which extends from the Jordan-Syria border in the north to the Saudi border in the south passing through Zarqa, Amman and Maan. It was built by the Ottoman Empire in 1908 and is currently not in service.

The Aqaba Railroad was established in 1975 for the purpose of transporting phosphates.

The most recently proposed railway project includes a railway link between port city of Aqaba and the Maddouneh dry port in Amman to

transport goods, with plans to then expand regionally to connect the Kingdom to its neighbours.

"This project has been under review for more than 10 years; it has direction and an economic benefit but there are no finalized plans," former minister of transport Lina Shbeeb said in an interview with "Jordan News".

In order for the project to move forward, Shbeeb believes that there needs to be commitment and thorough planning to attract investment.

"The government does not have the ability to fund the whole project, so it is likely that the private sector will provide funding or partner in funding," she explained. "It must be presented and marketed in a way that is attractive to the private sector."

Assistant Director of Jordan Hijaz Railway Corporation Nidal Assaf told Jordan News that building a new railroad would cost an estimated two to three billion Dinars, minimum. This is due to the high cost of developing the infrastructure, from materials to the construction in addition to other costs including the trains themselves.

Another challenge is the lack of local expertise on the matter. "For the planning and project design we can get help from global companies," said Shbeeb. "But design is not all that matters; once the railway is active, we need people who are able to manage, maintain and repair the line."

In order for the project to be economically feasible and attract these investors, it needs to focus on transporting both goods and people, and it needs to be electric, explained shipping association chairman Duraid Mahasneh in an interview with "Jordan News".

"If we use electric trains within the country, that will save us from pollution, reduce gas emission and cost," he said. "The transportation sector consumes over 45 percent of the fuel and creates around 40 percent of air pollution in Jordan."

However, Mahasneh believes that the current proposed train route, including Aqaba, Maan and to the south of Amman does not tackle the areas with the greatest density in the country. "We should concentrate on the areas with density of population and transportation."

Developing this project, if done correctly, will have its benefits for the country. These range from economic to safety benefits, the experts agree. "The desert road and main roads, for example, get damaged quickly due to high pressure as we do not have alternatives," said Shbeeb. "If we are able to develop a railroad to transport heavy loads, this will help relieve pressure on the road and reduce renovation costs."

Additionally, the project will provide local job opportunities, decrease transport costs for companies and reflect a positive image on the country to the region and the world, she said. "The railway capitalizes on Jordan's strategic positioning regionally and its political stability which would then promote economic investment."

The experts added that the longer it takes to move forward on this project, the higher the cost will be, and it would represent a missed opportunity.

"We are behind, railways are essential to transportation globally, they carry a greater number of people, the cost is less, and the trains are faster," said Assaf. "We should have started this a long time ago but what matters now is to take these decisions and move forward."

[One wonders who these 'experts' are but revealing is the sheer lack of experience and expertise in building and operating modern transport systems. Ed.]

**(vi). MEETING**

From Facebook, pictures of a formal meeting held in one of the carriages and a text (translation by AI and Ed.):



ambitious plans for the future which are to be implemented according to a fixed timetable.

The visit was held in the framework of the efforts of the Transport Ministry to support national institutions of an historic nature and the efforts to maintain the cultural and historic heritage of transport in the Kingdom."

## F. ETIHAD RAIL

### (i). ETIHAD RAIL TO BUILD NEW NETWORK IN JORDAN

From "Rail Technology" 05.09.2025: "Etihad Rail to oversee \$2.3Bn rail project in Jordan

"Etihad Rail will spearhead a major new railway network in Jordan as part of a \$2.3Bn investment by the UAE into the country's mining and railway sectors.

The state-owned rail company has signed an agreement with the Jordanian Ministry of Transport to facilitate the development of railway projects in Jordan as it builds a 360km network linking phosphate and potash mines to the Port of Aqaba.

Etihad Rail CEO Shadi Malak said: "We are keen to leverage our proven expertise in developing and operating the UAE national railway network to support the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's ambitious plans for advancing its rail infrastructure and driving economic growth."

The project will see the UAE and Etihad Rail oversee the construction of the rail network and supporting infrastructure, including loading and unloading terminals, and provide maintenance, repair, and operation services for the network.

The investment also saw Etihad Rail sign two memorandums of understanding with the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company and the Arab Potash Company on the rail transportation of around 16 million tonnes per annum of phosphate and potash to Aqaba.

According to the Jordanian Government, the project is not expected to begin construction until 2030, with detailed studies on its development to be conducted first by the end of next year before bids for construction work will begin in early 2026."

- [Railway train to Aqaba - when these trains were still running](#)

- [Hedjaz Original old carriages in Amman](#)
- [Hedjaz Jordan Railway GE diesel loco in Amman](#)



"The Transport Minister Dr. Nadal Al-Qatamin as Chair of the Administrative Board of the Jordan Hedjaz Railway Foundation led a meeting held in an historic saloon carriage, where a range of themes and topics for the development and expansion were discussed and the activation of further projects for the future.

Minister Al-Qatamin made a tour of the facilities of the Al-Hijazi Line Foundation and inspected several projects, including the restoration work on locomotives and rolling stock and the newest developments in the Museum of the Foundation. He emphasised how important it is to maintain this historic sites which are an original part of Jordanian transport identity and stressed the importance of developing the infrastructure and to ensure trained competence in order to guarantee future continuity and its role in tourism.

"The Minister stated that our presence today in this open historical museum reflects the origins in the past and the evolutionary progress in the Transport sector, which is one of the most important indicators of the link between the generations and the history of the country. At his side the CEO of the Jordan Heritage Railway Foundation, Zahl Khalil, explained that the organisation is working on the development and restoration of the stations that run from the north to the south of the Kingdom and that there are





• Train to Aqaba

this new contract reinforces our position as a trusted partner and marks the beginning of a long-term commitment with Etihad Rail.'

#### OTHER AGREEMENTS

At Global Rail 2025 Abu Dhabi Airports and Hafeet Rail formalised an agreement to explore opportunities to link the future UAE – Oman railway directly with Al Ain International Airport, which is close to the border. This would support passenger and freight connectivity with Sohar in Oman. 'We aim to create a seamless multimodal hub that unlocks its transformation into a vital centre for regional trade, tourism, and industry', said Elena Sorlini, Managing Director & CEO of Abu Dhabi Airports.

A preliminary agreement to launch a Bonded Rail Corridor linking Khalifa Port in Abu Dhabi with Fujairah Terminals in Fujairah was signed by Etihad Rail, Abu Dhabi Customs, Fujairah Customs, Abu Dhabi Ports Group, Fujairah Terminals and Noatum Logistics. The secure customs corridor will offer co-ordinated pre-inquiry procedures, with final customs formalities completed at the destination. Pilot operations are scheduled to begin before the end of 2025.

Other MoUs were signed by Etihad Rail and MerMec to strengthen co-operation in assessing the condition of signalling systems and railway technologies, between Etihad Rail and the Ministry of Railway Transport of Turkmenistan to strengthen international co-operation and knowledge exchange, and between Etihad Rail and India's RITES to explore investment opportunities and business collaboration."



• Etihad train

#### (ii). ETIHAD RAIL AND KEOLIS SIGN ON PASSENGER SERVICES

From "R.G.I." 02.10.2025: "National railway developer and operator Etihad Rail has formed the Etihad Rail Mobility 50:50 joint venture with Keolis to launch passenger train services in the UAE from 2026. Keolis will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the passenger services under the long-term partnership agreement.

##### Passenger Services

The first four stations will be located in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah. The 200 km/h trains will operate on the existing freight network, which now covers 900 km from Ghuwaifat of the border with Saudi Arabia to Fujairah, and is being extended by a further 238 km to Oman under the Hafeet Rail project.

Keolis told 'Railway Gazette International' that the network is designed to connect all seven emirates and passenger trains are expected to serve 11 major cities and key sites. However, as the project is still under development, the exact routes and service patterns are still being finalised.

Etihad Rail has previously ordered seven push-pull passenger trainsets from CAF and four from CRRC Qingdao Sifang

UAE Minister of Energy & Infrastructure Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei said 'by 2030, the network's capacity is expected to reach 60 million tonnes of freight and 36 million passengers annually. This will contribute to advancing sustainable development goals, reducing emissions, and enhancing the competitiveness of the national transport sector.'

##### Joint venture

'This joint venture marks a bold step forward towards launching passenger services in the nation', said Azza Alsuwaidi, Deputy CEO of Etihad Rail Mobility, after it was announced at the Global Rail 2025 event in Abu Dhabi on September 30. 'Keolis brings extensive expertise in safely and efficiently managing complex rail networks, while keeping passenger satisfaction as a priority. Its proven success both locally and globally makes it the ideal partner for what we aim to achieve.'

He said the partnership was 'about more than building railways; it is about shaping the future of transport in our nation and setting the stage for the launch of our passenger services in 2026. We are determined to provide a seamless, world-class rail service that will transform the travel experience and enhance the quality of life in the UAE.'

Keolis Chair & Group CEO Marie-Ange Debon said 'We are extremely proud of this strategic partnership with Etihad Rail. We will leverage their high-quality rail infrastructure by bringing our expertise in launching new operations and delivering service excellence to offer a safe and sustainable mobility solution across the United Arab Emirates. Alongside our operation within the Gulf Co-operation Council region,

#### G. LEBANON

Work continues on the restoration of the old locomotive depot and station at Beirut Mar Michel, as witnessed by this invitation:

*"From: Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Libano <iciebeirut@esteri.it>*

Date: Thu, 2 Oct 2025 at 21:10

Subject: Invitation - Presentation: Requalification of the Old Mar Mikhail Train Station (Italian Cooperation project)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

You are warmly invited to a public presentation of Requalification of the Old Mar Mikhail Train Station, an Italian Cooperation project, taking place on Tuesday, 7 October 2025 at 5:00 PM at Cinema Royal, Bourj Hammoud.

Held within "La città in scena. Urban Regeneration: the Italian way to a sustainable future" - the Italian exhibition on urban regeneration currently open to the public at Abroyan Factory (Bourj Hammoud) - the session will introduce the project, its objectives and phases, and the envisioned future uses of the former station for the city and its communities.

Opening remarks: H.E. Fabrizio Marcelli, Ambassador of Italy to Lebanon

Speakers: UN-Habitat; UNESCO; Directorate General of Antiquities (Ministry of Culture); Directorate General of Railways (Ministry of Public Works & Transport)

Moderator: AICS – Italian Agency for Development Cooperation"

On 31.10.25 the Polish Ambassador was also taken to visit the restored station and line at Baabda and pointed out that three Polish SU45 diesel locos are still standing idle on the HBT line but could be reactivated.

From videos posted on Facebook it appears that in December at least one and maybe more locomotives were pushed into the (restored but still roofless) shed at Mar Michael, clearly a part of the scheme for general improvement of the site. It also appears that quite a lot of the old rack line has been literally dug out of the earth and vegetation that had covered it. Not for use but for display, as a reminder of what once was.



## H. CENTRAL ASIA

[Over the years 'Harakevet' has spread its wings to the north and east to encompass relevant news in the Central Asian Republics since, although this is not our 'core' interest, so much of what is happening in the northern parts of the Middle East is connected to traffic and infrastructure developments in the wider region.

The issue is geographical, cultural and even linguistic. In conversations with many people it is clear that, although most Europeans would have no problem in identifying Italy or Greece or

Egypt on a map, they would struggle when it comes to locating Azerbaijan or Turkmenistan or Georgia... If one speaks of "the Near East" then the areas of most interest are those nearest to Europe; if one speaks of the "Middle East" then suddenly we have a region which is "in the middle" and surrounded by neighbouring regions on all sides, so that the links eastwards and north-eastwards are as relevant as those westwards and north-westwards... This section is a bit of a sammelsurium

of dislocated snippets but will hopefully serve to increase readers' awareness of the wider context. Ed.]

#### (i). "THE MIDDLE CORRIDOR" AZERBAIJAN TO KARABAKH

Azerbaijan Railways (ADY) reintroduced a weekly passenger service from Baku via Yevlaz to Aghdam on August 30, following the reopening of the southern section of the Yevlaz - Barda - Aghdam line in the Karabakh region.

The service is operated by Stadler Flirt DMUs and departs Baku on Saturdays at 07.10, arriving in Aghdam at 11.53. The return trip departs Aghdam at 18.20 and arrives in Baku at 22.55. The trains have four classes, standard, standard plus, business and first, and Wi-Fi is available.

Passenger trains last operated to Aghdam in 1993 when operation was suspended due to hostilities and the occupation of Karabakh. At that time, the 371km overnight journey from Baku took around 8h 30min. The line is being extended south of Aghdam to Xankandi.

ADY switched over the 122km Ujar - Hajigabul section of the Yevlaz - Baku main line from 3kV dc to 25kV ac electrification on September 5, following the successful operation of freight and passenger trains.

The work also included resignalling the section. As part of the project, ADY has introduced a Multi-Process Management (MPM) system which allows signalling, communications, and control processes to operate in parallel. ADY says MPM will enable it to reduce train intervals, increase freight capacity, and contribute to safer, faster, and more reliable operation.

ADY has already converted the 254km Boyuk Kasik - Gandja - Ujar section from 3kV dc to 25kV ac. The final phase covering the 127km section from Hajigabul to Baku will be completed in 2026-27, converting the entire Baku - Boyuk Kasik mainline to ac electrification.

"Once completed, this flagship corridor, which carries the bulk of Azerbaijan's international freight traffic, will be fully modernised in line with global standards and capable of supporting the growing role of the Middle Corridor in Eurasian trade," ADY says."

#### (ii). BAKU – TBILISI – KARS LINE WILL GROW TO A CAPACITY OF 17 MILLION TONNES BY 2034'

From 'I.R.J.' "The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway, a key line on the Middle Corridor between China and Europe, will more than triple in capacity." By 2034, the BTK will have an annual capacity of 17M tons, up from the present 5M tons. ...

#### WORLD BANK ESTIMATE

In "Railfreight.com" 29.09.2025 the World Bank is reported as stating that the Middle Corridor works will cost a total of 28 Billion dollars over the next fifteen years.



- The (already existing) Akhalkalaki terminal, in Georgia, along the BTK line. A new one will be built next year. Image: © Azerbaijan Railways )

#### (iii). GEORGIA

From "RailFreight.com" 24.10.25:

"Georgian Railways announced multiple initiatives to boost traffic along the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK), one of the vital arteries of the Middle Corridor. The company is planning to start construction of the new terminal in Akhalkalaki, near the border with Türkiye, in 2026. Moreover, the company wants to introduce electronic customs clearance to reduce transit time."

#### (iv). UZBEKISTAN PERSPECTIVE.

From "RailFreight.com" 17.10.2025: "The Middle Corridor: Europeans tend to look at it with skepticism, whereas the Chinese celebrate each newly launched train. In between them are the Central Asian countries, such as Uzbekistan. National Uzbek rail freight forwarder O'ztemiryo'lkonteyner (UTK) sheds some light on the country's positioning in international trade and which role the company plays in that strategy...."

On 18.10.2025 "Railfreight.com" noted: "Container trains along the Middle Corridor are continuously increasing. During the first nine months of 2025, they grew by 39% compared to the same period last year"



#### I. AFGHANISTAN.

##### (i). Afghanistan begins Construction of final phase of the Herat Railway

From 'R.G.I.' 18.09.25: "The Ministry of Public Works and the provincial government have formally launched construction of the final phase of the railway corridor from Iran to Herat.

The first three stages of the line from Khaf in eastern Iran are already complete, with the current terminus at Rosnak on the road between the Iranian border and Herat having been officially opened in December 2020.

Stage 4 is being built in two phases, with the 43km Phase 1 from Rosnak to Robat Paryan reported to be more than 90% complete. Construction of the 47.3km Phase 2 from Robat Paryan to the Herat industrial area and airport was launched with a ceremony on September 14, and completion is expected within two years.

#### Domestic Financing and Construction

Stage 4 Phase 2 is being built by Afghan conglomerate Gamma Group with the support of Russian Railways subsidiary RZD International under a contract signed on March 28 2024.

The US\$54.6M project is being financed domestically by the Ministry of Mines & Petroleum, which in January 2025 granted Gamma Group's mining business Gamma Eagle rights to extract lead and zinc at Sarsarkhak in Yakawlang in return for commitments including constructing Stage 4 Phase 2 of the railway and building a hospital in Wardak.

#### Crossroads of Asia

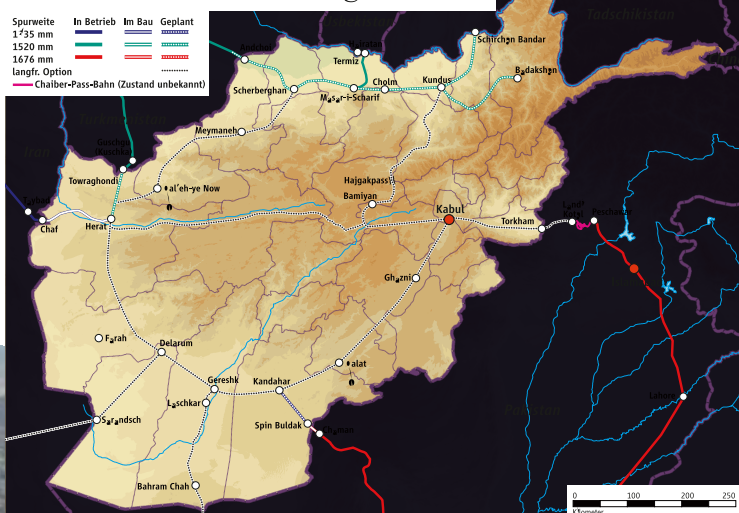
At the ceremony marking the start of work of Stage 4 Phase 2 Deputy Minister of Railways Mawlawi Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada said expanding the rail network is of strategic significance, and the Khaf – Herat corridor would make Afghanistan a crossroads linking Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East.

Herat Governor Sheikh Maulana Islam Jar said the project would help transform the city into a bustling transit hub, while Mohammad Nasir Amin, Head of the Herat Chamber of Industries & Mines, said the project would cut the cost of transporting a tonne of freight from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas from US\$130 or more by lorry to US\$40 by rail.

The 225 km Khaf – Herat project is the first 1,435 mm gauge railway in Afghanistan, matching the standard-gauge networks in Iran and Turkey. The 75 km Uzbekistan – Mazar-i-Sharif line and the two short cross-border lines from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan are 1,520 mm gauge.

Future rail plans in western Afghanistan include an extension to Herat of the 1,520 mm gauge line from Turkmenistan which currently ends at Towraghondi on the Afghan side of the border, and a line from Herat to Kandahar and Spin Boldak near Pakistan's railhead at Chaman."

## Schiennetz in Afghanistan



• Photo of construction in Afghanistan and their "inland port"

In an official statement the Taliban government said the proposed railway would start at Hairatan on the border with Uzbekistan and run across Afghanistan to Spin Boldak on the border with Pakistan. There is an existing freight yard at Hairatan, while Spin Boldak is close to the Pakistan Railways railhead across the border at Chaman.

At the meeting, the cabinet approved a report which recommended the adoption of the 1,520 mm gauge for the Trans-Afghanistan line, in preference to 1,435 mm gauge.

### Gauge Challenge

The choice of gauge has long been problematic when drawing up proposals to develop a national rail network in Afghanistan. Breaks of gauge are inconvenient, but the country's neighbours use different gauges. The existing railway from Hairatan to Mazar-i-Sharif and the two cross-border lines from Turkmenistan into Afghanistan use 1,520 mm broad gauge, which was adopted by the Russian empire and now forms an extensive and interoperable network across the former USSR as well as Mongolia and Finland. The railway from Khaf in Iran to Rozanak in Afghanistan's Herat province uses the 1,435 mm standard gauge found in Iran, China, most of Europe and North America. Pakistan and India use 1,676 mm broad gauge."

### (iv) LINK TO TURKMENISTAN

From "R.G.I." 27.10.2025: "Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Works has launched work on the 10km second phase of the Aqina – Andkhoy railway at cost of US\$12M. The railway from Turkmenistan to the Afghan side of the border at Aqina was opened in 2016 and upgraded in 2021. Construction phase two is being undertaken by domestic contractor Arya Khan Afghan, under the supervision of the Turkmenistan's railway authority. The ministry said survey and design work is underway for the a further 55 km extension in Jowzjan province."

### (ii). TURKMENISTAN BORDER CROSSING

From "RailFreight.com" 29.09.25: "Afghanistan has started upgrading the Turgundi dry port on the border with Turkmenistan. That country is likely providing major financial support for the project. The landlocked countries of the region are hoping that improved infrastructure in Afghanistan will strengthen connections to Pakistan, and by extension, to the world via the Indian Ocean."

From "R.G.I." 29.09.2025: "A ceremony has launched work to expand facilities at the Soviet-built rail freight terminal at Towraghondi on Afghanistan's side of the border with Turkmenistan. The project costing US\$5M to US\$7M is expected to be completed within one year.

### (iii). GAUGE ISSUES

And then in "R.G.I." 24.10: "Prime Minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund chaired a cabinet meeting on October 20 which considered a number of issues including the gauge for the proposed Trans-Afghanistan Railway.

## (v). KABUL OFFICE

From "R.G.I." 29.09.2025: "On September 15 Uzbekistan to Mazar-i-Sharif railway operating contract holder Sogdiana Trans and local partner Khan Daqiq Trading Co. opened an office in Kabul to support to Afghan entrepreneurs with logistics services. Sogdiana Trans said this marks an important step in the expansion of its activities and demonstrates its desire to develop new routes connecting Europe, the CIS, Afghanistan and Pakistan."

## J. KAZAKHSTAN

### KAZAKHSTAN ORDERS MORE LOCOS

From "R.G.I.": "National railway KTZ has awarded Wabtec contracts worth US\$4.2Bn to supply 300 TE33AT Evolution Series freight locomotives and provide long-term support for new and existing locos."

Wabtec said the 'landmark' multi-year deal signed on September 22, during a working visit of Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to the USA, was the largest locomotive agreement in the company's history. KTZ said it was the largest transaction the history of Kazakhstan's locomotive industry and would strengthen the country's role as a strategic player in the Eurasian transport technology market.

### TE33AT Evolution Series

The 1520mm gauge diesel locomotives will be manufactured at Wabtec's wholly-owned Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty factory in Astana, which has produced more than 600 locomotives for KTZ and export customers since 2009 and has reached a localisation level of 45%.

Intended to support KTZ's ongoing expansion and fleet renewal plans, the locomotives will be designed to suit the country's diverse and demanding weather conditions and terrain. They are expected to offer improved fuel efficiency and longer maintenance intervals compared to previous Evolution Series locomotives operating in Kazakhstan.

The 15-year service agreements covering the maintenance of new and existing locomotives aims to ensure high reliability and optimised operating costs, while guaranteeing stable jobs in the service centres at Sekseul, Ayagoz, Makat, Aktobe, Astana, Shalkar and Almaty.

A delegation from KTZ visited the Wabtec engine factory in Grove City, Pennsylvania, to discuss deepening co-operation in technology transfer, personnel training and technical support. KTZ said that following the meeting Wabtec confirmed plans to launch the production of diesel engines in Astana during 2026.

### Unlocking the Region's Potential

'For over two decades, our partnership with KTZ has been critical in transforming Kazakhstan's rail industry', said Wabtec President & CEO Rafael Santana. 'This historic agreement embodies KTZ's visionary approach for the country's rail network as the primary link between Europe and Asia. By delivering advanced locomotives and long-term service solutions, Wabtec is a proud partner in Kazakhstan's progress, helping to unlock the region's enormous potential and developing the engineering competencies in the country's railway industry.'

Commenting on the deal on X (formerly Twitter), US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick said 'while our rail industry faces unfair attacks from the nonsensical rush toward electric-only policies, this deal delivers strong support for one of our most significant industries. This \$4bn deal is more than just a huge success story. It's about American innovation leading the world, supporting thousands of jobs in Texas and Pennsylvania, and strengthening the US-Kazakhstan partnership. These locomotives will power connectivity across Europe and Asia, linking the Middle Corridor with American technology at its core.'

KTZ CEO Talgat Aldybergenov said 'Kazakhstan plays a key role in realising the transit potential of the Eurasian continent. This new agreement confirms our commitment to advanced technologies in the

transport sector and will also make a significant contribution to the development of industry and railway engineering in Kazakhstan."

*On 10.10.2025 in Railfreight.com:*

"Key Kazakh transit railway sees freight volume spike immediately after upgrade finalises

After three years, construction work on the Dostyk - Moyunty railway in Kazakhstan came to an end at the end of September. Since the double tracks were..."

(ii). From "R.G.I." 27.10.2025: "CRRC Dalian TE36A mainline diesel locomotives have been approved for operation in Kazakhstan, with the first two commissioned at national railway KTZ's depot in Mangistau."

(iii). Also from "R.G.I." 29.09.2025: "KTZ Express and MSC organised what they say is the first containerised export shipment of wheat flour from Kazakhstan to the USA to promote Kazakh flour to the American market under the Eurasian Legacy brand. The route covered Kostanay, the port of Aktau, Poti, ports in Turkey and Spain and New York. Monthly shipments are planned."

(iv). In "RailFreight.com" 07.10.2025: "Georgia and Azerbaijan launch block train from Black Sea to Caspian Sea. Georgian Railway (GR) and Azerbaijan Railways (ADY) have signed an agreement for a block train between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea."

From the "Georgian Public Broadcaster" website 02.10.25: "Georgian Railways to introduce block trains from Georgian ports to Baku. Following the successful operation of the Poti - Tbilisi - Poti service, Georgian Railways is set to launch a new block train connecting Georgian ports directly to Baku. According to Georgian Railways, this new service will run along a route encompassing Batumi, Poti, Tbilisi, Absheron, Sumgayit, and Aliatsi.

They emphasise that the block train will link the Black Sea ports with Azerbaijan's major terminals on a fixed schedule. The two parties signed a mutual agreement in Almaty.

"Georgian and Azerbaijani Railways are offering cargo owners a streamlined 'terminal-to-door' service. The block trains will operate on a predetermined timetable, enabling cargo owners to transport containers from the port of Poti to Baku swiftly. They will know in advance how long their containers will take to reach Baku, as well as the return time for empty containers," Georgian Railways explained. This new service is expected to shift the transportation of empty containers from road to rail, reducing pressure on the roads and minimising environmental impact.

"This is a simplified logistics solution for cargo owners, who will receive containers from Batumi, Poti, or Tbilisi to Baku, and vice versa, within a specified timeframe, without delays. Not only will this save time, but it will also reduce costs, since parking cargo and empty containers at terminals incurs daily fees. Georgian Railways remains committed to streamlining logistics services. We aim to maximise cargo transport, which will ultimately increase the revenues of Georgian Railways," stated Lasha Abashidze, Director General of Georgian Railways."

(v). From 'RailFreight.com' 01.12.2025: "Austrian Rail Cargo Group (RCG) and Kazakh KTZ Express signed an agreement on the joint use of RCG's terminal in Central and Eastern Europe."

- [Kazakhstan freight train](#)

## K. AZERBAIJAN

### (i). A POLITICAL BREAKTHROUGH

The political reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan is



transforming the freight transport landscape in the mountainous Caucasus region. Whereas the two countries would not allow transit (rail) freight to, through and from one another until very recently, now transport networks are opening up with new opportunities for trade.

#### (ii). AZERBAIJAN REOPENS LINE TO KARABAKH REGION

From "I.R.J." Nov. 2025: "Azerbaijan Railways (ADY) reintroduced a weekly passenger service from Baku via Yevlax to Aghdam on August 30, following the reopening of the southern section of the Yevlax – Barda – Aghdam line in the Karabakh region.

The service is operated by Stadler Flirt DMUs and departs Baku on Saturdays at 07.10, arriving in Aghdam at 11.53. The return trip departs Aghdam at 18.20 and arrives in Baku at 22.55.

Passenger trains last ran to Aghdam in 1993 when operations were suspended due to hostilities and the occupation of Karabakh. At that time, the 317 km overnight journey from Baku took around 8h 30min.

ADY switched over the 122km Ujar – Hajigabul section of the Yevlax –Baku main line from 3kv DC to 25kv AC electrification on September 5, following the successful operation of freight and passenger trains. The work also included resignalling the section. As part of the project, ADY has introduced a Multi-Process Management (MPM) system which allows signalling, communications and control processes to operate in parallel. ADY says this will enable it to run trains more frequently and increase freight capacity, contributing to a safer, faster and more reliable operation.

ADY has already converted the 354km Boyuk Kasik – Gandja – Ujar section to 25kv AC. The final phase, covering the 127km section from Hajigabul to Baku, will be completed in 2026-2027, converting the entire Baku – Boyuk Kasik main line to AC electrification."

In the same way we like to keep an eye on what is happening in North and North-East Africa...

#### L. ETHIOPIA

From "R.G.I." 10.10.2025: "Ethiopian Railways Corp. and Italian company COIPA Italia have signed a framework agreement for strategic co-operation to modernise the country's railways and support the revival of the Awash – Kombolcha railway project.

The agreement signed in Addis Ababa on September 10 includes the adoption of European safety, quality and efficiency standards, knowledge transfer and training programmes to build local skills, repowering locomotives, integrating digital systems and predictive diagnostics and expanding regional co-operation to position Ethiopia as a transport hub for east and central Africa.

#### Awash – Hara Gebeya project

COIPA Italia said it would also support the 'revitalisation' of the 270 km Awash – Kombolcha section of the Awash – Hara Gebeya railway. In 2012 ERC signed a US\$1.7bn turnkey contract for Turkish firm Yap? Merkezi to build an electrified standard gauge line running 392 km north from Awash on the Djibouti – Addis Ababa line. Construction began in 2015, but work was halted by regional instability, and the infrastructure and equipment were damaged during the Tigray conflict. This year ERC began seeking international partnerships to support the project's revival.

#### Economic transformation and regional integration

ERC CEO Hilina Belachew said the agreement with COIPA Italia 'represents a fundamental step toward strengthening Ethiopia's railway infrastructure and integrating the best European engineering expertise'.

COIPA Italia is already involved in projects to develop Ethiopia's rail infrastructure and logistics hubs. CEO Vito Favorito Sciamarella said 'this partnership will deliver technology transfer, expertise and investment opportunities, while at the same time strengthening ERC's institutional capacity. We are proud to make our experience available to support the

sustainable growth of Ethiopia's transport system, creating value for local communities and new development opportunities.'

Italian Ambassador Agostino Palese said the agreement 'is not only a business partnership, but a symbol of Ethiopia-Italy friendship', adding that modern, efficient and sustainable rail transport is 'a key driver of economic transformation and regional integration'."



• New viaduct, in Ethiopia

#### M. ERITREA

*This is from a chatty advert by Bernd Seiler in "Trackside" issue 53, Dec. 2025, p.47:*

#### FAREWELL TO ERITREA

Like it or not, it is a very sad fact that the glory days of a railway rising from the Red Sea to Asmara will soon be over. The railway was only rebuilt, after decades of closure, because President Isayas Afewerki (now 79) wanted it done. No successor is in sight acting as a 'guardian angel' over the railway as Afewerki did. Although a massive damage was repaired in the lower section of the line, nothing else was done. Apathy rules, to the extent that I was even forbidden to use my own resources to restore the line. Later, material was supposedly ordered and the army was to be deployed for reconstruction work. But in reality? Empty promises. The condition of the vehicles gets worse and worse after they were refurbished in the 1990s/2000s.

We are therefore planning a farewell visit to Eritrea to revisit the most outstanding section of this fantastic railway. If you haven't made it to Asmara yet, here's another chance. Only time will tell whether it will be the last, but that is, sadly, what we fear."

If any reader is interested, contact Far Rail Tours at

[www.FarRail.com](http://www.FarRail.com), or [mail@FarRail.com](mailto:mail@FarRail.com)

The date planned is February 21 – March 1 2026.

#### N. LIBYA

(i). RESUMPTION OF RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION: From "I.R.J." 28.07.2025: "Libyan Railways has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China Civil Engineering Construction (CCECC) that could lay the groundwork for construction to resume on the North African country's stalled project to build a national railway network.

Libyan Railways signed three contracts with the Chinese company to support the development of three lines totalling more than 1,400km in 2008. However, work came to a halt following the outbreak of civil war and the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011.

The lines are:

- a 170km line running east-west along the Mediterranean coast from the capital Tripoli to the Tunisian border

- a second 450km coastal section from Tripoli to Sirte, and
- an 800km north-south line running from Misrata on the Mediterranean into the Sahara Desert towards the borders with Chad and Niger.

The east-west coastal line would be standard-gauge double-track, electrified and suitable for 250km/h operation. The north-south line would support 120km/h operation and be built with a view to future electrification.

Under the MoU, signed during a recent visit by Libyan Railways officials to Beijing, CCECC will resume work on the masterplan for the network, as well as establishing working groups to tackle legal, financial and technical issues, and in reviewing the final project design to enable work to resume.

CCECC is not providing any financial assistance to Libyan Railways to support the work.

Libyan Railways is studying potential cross-border lines to landlocked countries in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, with a view to establishing Libya as a transit corridor for freight traffic moving the European Union (EU) across the Mediterranean Sea.

It also held talks with Russian railways (RZD) in 2024 over the possible resumption of construction of the 551km Sirte - Benghazi line. RZD was awarded a contract in 2008 to deliver the project, which was estimated to cost a total of \$US 4Bn at the time. Despite the award of several



• Somewhere in Libya

systems contracts, including for signalling and communications to Ansaldo STS (now Hitachi STS), work also came to a halt after the outbreak of civil war."

(ii). From "Railway Supply":

Libya Moves Forward with Major Railway Construction Plans

19.07.2025: "Libya has signed a new agreement with China to resume key railway projects, aiming to reconnect major regions and boost economic growth through strategic transport links.

During the World High-Speed Rail Congress in Beijing, Libyan authorities finalized a memorandum of understanding with China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). The deal targets the revival of three major rail routes: Tripoli-Ras Ajdir (170 km), Tripoli-Sirte (472 km), and an 810 km link from Misurata port to the iron ore fields near Sabha.

The initial contract for these projects was signed in 2008, with completion scheduled for 2013. But the civil war in 2011 halted all work and disrupted plans for a 554 km coastal line between Sirte and Benghazi. Libya and China Revive Strategic Infrastructure

The new agreement includes updating technical designs, revising previous plans, and creating a phased implementation strategy. This approach ensures efficient execution and alignment with current engineering standards.

Financing will come from the Libyan government in cooperation with Chinese partners. This joint investment highlights the strategic value of railway infrastructure for trade, logistics, and industrial growth.

Libya Targets Growth Through Connectivity

Analysts say these projects could create thousands of jobs, improve freight transport, and attract new investments. For Libya, modern railways promise better connectivity, economic diversification, and stronger integration with international markets.

By partnering with CCECC, Libya aims to leverage Chinese expertise and accelerate post-conflict recovery. The move signals the country's determination to overcome years of stagnation and invest in long-term development."

151:08.

**NOTES AND COMMENTS**

**(i). POSITIVE FEEDBACK**

Every now and again something happens which makes all the toil, the stress and the expense worthwhile. Steve recently received a mail from an old friend, Tom Lori: "I was born in 1940 in Haifa, my father came from Austria and made Aliyah in 1935 when the times looked bad for Jews in Europe. He was also an engineer and had worked on the Austrian Rail network, and on arrival in Palestine as it was then, was employed by the Iraq Petroleum company [a subsidiary of British Petroleum] to build an oil pipeline from Mosul to Haifa via Jordan. Bits of that pipeline can still be seen near Kibbutz Gadot on the bottom of the Golan.

During WW2, we (and several hundred Jewish families) were taken to Uganda by the British to establish a Jewish Homeland there, where he and other men were first made to build Entebbe airstrip, [now Entebbe Airport] so we could be supplied. [Earlier, before the road to Kampala was built, all our supplies and mail etc. were brought in by Sunderland sea planes, as Entebbe lies on the shores of Lake Victoria.]

Anyway, after the war, when we were released from the internment camp, Abba got a job and we moved to Kampala, where he built a model railway in the garage, letting our old blue Humber Super Snipe with running boards stand outside on the drive. It [the model railway!] went up mountains, through tunnels, over bridges, over ravines among the

mountains. He made the rails and overhead power lines, everything from scratch, even the Loco made of thin ply-wood with a small electric motor. After the war nothing much was available, especially in Uganda, so almost everything had to be hand fabricated. He always said, "We do NOT play with trains, we operate this model railway!" I have very fond memories of my old Abba.

Once again, thank you so much for the Email and I look forward to the paper copy of HaRakevet."

**(ii) ITALY GOES MAD**

On Monday 22 September large numbers of dock workers and others went on strike and rioted, blocking ports but also railway lines and the stations at Rome and Milano - the later being subjected to much vandalism - in an effort to show the world how righteous they were in refusing to handle shipments for Israel. The Prime Minister criticised this severely, stating it would not help people in Gaza one bit but would affect people in Italy who would have to pay for the consequences...

**(iii). HOW TO HELP (?) GAZA**

This story simply has to be included to record for posterity the self-righteous obsessive foolishness of the current period. In "Today's

Railways – Europe” No. 357 p.5: “ANTI-WAR PROTESTORS DAMAGE RAILWAY PROPERTY. Railway property was attacked and damaged during protest against the war in Gaza in early October. On the night of 2 October the station hall at Bologna Centrale suffered extensive damage amid only a minimal police presence.

The following day traffic was suspended for several hours at some major stations leading to cancellations and delays as protestors trespassed on the track. At Firenze concrete slabs were placed on the rails and an ETR.500 high speed trainset was vandalised.”

**(iv). HOLLAND ALSO GOES MAD**

The Editor suspects that in ten years' time the world will have forgotten most of the Gaza war issues, just as they have forgotten everything else about the Middle East except for a few warped images. They have forgotten the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War, Operation Cast Lead, the civil war in Lebanon, the kidnappings and massacres of the Assad regime in Syria, Black September in Jordan and so many more. (Hands up if YOU remember anything about these?) So - although it is not directly relevant to Middle East railways, we think it important for the historical record to preserve these news items from RailFreight.com on 08.10.2025:

“A wave of rail blockades hit the Rotterdam port from April to June of this year. An activist group had set its sights on freight railways. In their view, the trains contribute to climate change by transporting coal and other pollutants. They also argued that rail freight plays a role in the Gaza war. “As long as the logistics empire is facilitating genocide, climate collapse and human rights abuses, we will block their business”, the group stated at the time.

The six rail blockades between April and June led to hundreds of thousands of euros in financial damages. Dozens of trains were stuck, which on April 24 led to 150,000 euros in damages per hour (the protest lasted for 3.5 hours in total).

**Back on the Tracks**

After a summer hiatus, climate activism is back on the Rotterdam railways. On Sunday 5 October, XR and two other groups occupied the railway to protest coal transportation. This time around, the protest was not so much about just “blocking”, but also “undermining”: the activists sought to remove the ballast from underneath the tracks, which would mean that trains would no longer be able to safely run there.

“After inspection by the maintenance contractor, the damage turned out to be greater than expected”, a spokesperson of infrastructure manager ProRail told SpoorPro. “Ballast has also been removed from under the sleepers, and this requires repair with larger equipment.”

**The Municipality Facilitates**

“Demonstrating is a fundamental right”, the spokesperson added, “but demolishing the track is not one of them.” she adds. The rail infrastructure manager previously called the action “unacceptable”. It wasn’t the first time that the activists removed stones from beneath freight railway lines, as they had previously done so in the port of Amsterdam.

A spokesperson for the activist groups said they were not stopped by police, “not even when we went under the fence and removed stones.” The municipality announced last week that it would not ban the action and would facilitate it, specifically to ensure it was as safe as possible. The municipality position, similar to the one it adopted earlier this year, could not count on much sympathy from the involved rail parties.”

*[This last sentence is clearly an understatement but the story also indicates for many why the Right Wing parties are making progress in many European political systems; it seems to many to be a choice between the Far Right and Chaos. There are of course echoes here of the 1950's.... Ed.]*

A later item states that Dutch riot police cleared the demonstration on the following Saturday 11th Oct. - i.e. after a whole week..... The activist group 'Geef Tegengas' (“Put power in the opposite Direction”) claimed 800 participants, a photographer estimated only 400, the police arrested ca. 300... Note the flag which is clearly designed to confuse any loco drivers - is it green, or red, or white, or black?



*(This might be as good a place as any for the Editor to add a few thoughts of his own. Following the super-quick Trumpian announcements of 'peace' (and the Hamas public murdering of their opponents once the IDF*

*pulled back)* On 8-14 October attention turned back to the enormous convoys of thousands of road lorries per week which are driven from Ashdod to the Gaza Strip. Has no climate activist like Great Thunberg noticed how bad this is for the climate, that a reinstated railway link conveying (checked then re-packed and sealed) containers of supplies to the aid agencies would be so much better!?



**(v). RIGA MUSEUM**

Alfred Klein-Wiesenburg of Vienna was recently (August 2025) in Riga and has sent some relevant images.

This four-wheel box car bears an unusual set of markings and I am not sure how 'genuine' they are. LATVPZ C seems to be the Latvian marking and then in German LETT E.D. (Lettischen Eisenbahn Direktion?)

To the number 803-449 I can say nothing but the 'Deutsche Wehrmacht' marking is unusual. The adjacent information plaque reads as follows:

“It seems that the Box Car was built in the 19th century in Germany and most probably served in Baden State Railway. Of course originally it was built for normal (1435mm) gauge but now the car can run on Russian (1520mm) gauge. It is not known when and where it was regauged. The box car has original frame, axle boxes as well as coupling sets that were in use in the Soviet Union till the 1950s. One wheelset and the door mechanism also look very old. Museum staff found this car at Madona stations where it was used for storage. In 1998 the car was moved to the museum by railway and it was refurbished in 2008.” “Wagon length 10,000mm; Wheelbase



5,500mm. Width 2830mm.”

In the Holocaust museum stands a grey bogie



van of more Russian style, again carrying non-authentic but symbolic markings relating to the long-distance deportations.



## (vi). THE MESILA PARK, TEL AVIV



This a park laid out on the original alignment of the railway from Jaffa station to the (old) Tel Aviv station. On 08.09.2025 Sybil Ehrlich wrote: "Today I walked the entire length, which didn't take long, since it's approximately 1.2 km in length. The location is authentic, but of course nothing else is.

It starts very near the corner of Yehuda Halevi and Allenby streets and follows the old trackbed to HaTachana. It's a pleasant walk, but obviously it isn't original track, and just for fun I measured the "gauge". I could see immediately it looked somewhat narrow; turns out it's 101cm at the start. (Never go

anywhere without a tape measure...) At the end, it's 96cm! This is a fine old Tel Aviv tradition - the "commemoration" of the 1920s Jaffa tramway is similarly bizarre.



Where it crosses Herzl Street the two parts are not aligned (picture 3). Picture 4 is the only reference to the line's history. Picture 5 is Chelouche Bridge. The "track" comes to a sudden end at a brick wall (Picture 6), adjacent to the Tachana and a couple of minutes' walk from Elifelet light rail station. I am not sure what the "bean" sculpture on the left is supposed to be. There are no other vegetable sculptures anywhere around.

Considering there are no real remains, it's not too bad."

## (vii) A DREWRY

### DIESEL LOCO

In "Heritage Railway" issue 336 for Sept. 2025 p.39 is an item on Drewry 0-4-0DM DC 2164 being re-launched into service on the Derwent Valley Light Railway after overhaul, which includes:

"DC 2164 was originally given Ministry of Defence Works No. 37 and shipped to the Middle East, spending time during the Second World War in the War Department in Egypt. While it did not do much work, primarily due to its small size for what was required, its sisters were used in places like Cherbourg.

In 1947 it was returned to the MoD depot at King's Norton Birmingham and sold the following year to Shell-Mex at Trafford Park,

Manchester, staying there until 1964 when it moved to BP at Saltend near Hull.

In 1984 it was donated to the York Area Group of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway by BP. Until about 1995 it was used by the line's Permanent Way department until mechanical failure saw it taken out of service, and four years ago it arrived at the DVL. A full mechanical assessment was carried out by Richard Gibbon OBE, former head of engineering at the National Railway Museum..... and a restoration team formed. DC 2164 has been repainted in Middle East green livery, which it would have carried during its service overseas. It is dedicated to the memory of those who served in the region during the Second World War..."

## (viii). And a LOCO FOR MESOPOTAMIA

George Moon has done some research on a Manning Wardle 0-6-0ST "Bembridge" which apparently in 1917 was purchased by the War Department and sent to Mesopotamia! Alas no further details are (yet) known, although we know of several L&SWR 0395 class 0-6-0 tender locos which were used here (as well as in Palestine and Salonica).

George writes: "The info came principally from 'Locomotives of Quality' by John E. Simpson, pub. 2000 by Burlington Press, Cambridge, ISBN 1 974498 02 4.

I also have 'Manning, Wardle & Co. Locomotive Works List' by F. W. Mabbott, pub. Thomas Alexandr (sic) 590-592, Bristol Rd, Selly Oak, Birmingham (no postcode or ISBN quoted).

A trio in A4 softback format is entitled 'The Locomotives Built by Manning, Wardle & Company' by Fred W. Harman, all published by Century Locoprints (Vol.1, 'Narrow Gauge', ISBN 0 9535313 0, Vol.2 'Standard Gauge', ISBN 0 9535313 1 7 and Vol. 3 'Broad Gauge and Works List', including non-locomotive products and locos built after the demise of MW, ISBN 0 9535313 2 5).

From Vol 2 above, MW 517 was built to Order 9130 and dispatched 5 March 1875, for Scott & Edwards, Melmerby. These were contractors and also built the Bembridge branch for the Isle of Wight Railway where it was named "Stanley". It was sold to IWR in 1882 and renamed "Bembridge".

It was bought by the Government in 1917 and renumbered WD 11 for use in Mesopotamia and did not return to the UK afterwards."

And: " 'Middle East Railways' by Hugh Hughes, published by the Continental Railway Circle 1981 (ISBN 0 9503469 7 7) in the section on Mesopotamia and Iraq shows three other MWs, 1063/1888 "CORNBROOK", 1291/1896 "LORD WINDUS" and 1673/1906 "ELEPHANTA", but there is no trace of the "BEMBRIDGE" One presumes that "ELEPHANTA" was a fairly substantial machine!"

## (ix). MORE ON MESOPOTAMIA

In the "British Overseas Railways Journal" Autumn 2025 p.80 is a brief biography of Victor Bayley CIE, CBE, FICE 1880 - 1972. Born in Brixton, London he trained at Bristol 1899-1901, then from 1902-1905 worked in the Drawing Office at the Great Western Railway at Swindon, including a period in charge of the Dynamometer Car. From 1905-1908 he worked on railway construction in India, mainly on the Nagda-Muttra State Railway, then served as Assistant Engineer and as District Carriage Superintendent at Karachi District and from 1900-11 as Deputy Carriage Supt. North-West Railway before a period as Assistant Engineer in the remodelling of Lahore Station and then as a Superintendent of Local Manufacturing on the East India Railway. From 1915 to 1917 he was Superintendent of Munitions - one sees a very wide range of expertise picked up along this career.

On 5th Jan. 1918 he sailed from Bombay as Second Lieutenant, Indian Army Reserve, attached to the Royal Engineers and a Temporary Captain. He became Deputy Superintendent (Engineering), Baghdad West Division Railways, Mesopotamia, in charge of all maintenance over 250 miles and also constructed 100 miles of line on the Division.

Hardly surprisingly, perhaps, this was followed by two years 1919-1920 of sick leave.... before he returned to work in India until retirement in 1931.

He also wrote several adventure stories, even science fiction as well as Reports for the Institute of Civil Engineers and an autobiography.

**(x). PIRMASENS MEMORIAL**



In the hills and woods of the Pfalz lies Pirmasens, reached by a ca. 7km single track branch from Pirmasens Nord which is in the middle of nowhere but serves as a junction for lines to Saarbrücken, Kaiserslautern and Landau.

The town was severely bombed in 1941 and 1944 and found itself later in the American Occupation Zone. The modern station (from 2001) is a three-platform terminus with two stabling sidings. Beyond it, at Bahnhofstrasse 22-26 a detached length of track and, separate, a buffer stop accompanied by two memorial Stele acts as a memorial to the deported Jews. On 27 October 1938 40 Jews of Polish origin were arrested and next day brought to the Hauptbahnhof, loaded into carriages and taken via Kaiserslautern, Ludwigshafen, Mannheim, Berlin and Frankfurt (Oder) to the Polish border at Neu-Bentschin, with two policemen as guards in each carriage. Here they were cast out into the cold and forced to walk along the tracks into Poland but, as is well known, the Poles refused to accept them and for three days the passengers could only camp out near the tracks before being accommodated in a ruined mill building - some for the next year.

The memorial was dedicated on 6 November 2018.

**(xi). MORE TO 'BROOKFIELD'**

In 150.08(xi) we mentioned a British steam loco that had originally been intended for export to Turkey. Here from Rob Bayliff is more information:

H.C. Casserley photo 54396 WD 73 at Normanton by Derby 22 May 1948

F. Jones former WD 73 at Norton Colliery June 1954

From Locomotives at War, P. M. Kalla-Bishop, Bradford Barton, Truro: Chapter VI S. & M. Depots and Bridging, page 91: "Another 0-6-0 tank was WD 73, built by W. G. Bagnall in 1941 and the delivery of which had been frustrated by the war. It was said to have been intended for a Turkish colliery. This was a useful little engine, but had a deep and wide front buffer beam which was out of gauge slightly for the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Rly., unfortunately; it chipped bits out of the platform at Kinnerley and so on. Consequently WD 73 was restricted to certain lengths of track and only men who knew where it could go and where it could not were allowed to drive it. Later it was sent to an obscure WD establishment situated south-east of the main line in an old factory between Melbourne Junction and Derby. ("No. 1 Railway Home Group R.E. Mid. Div.") From casual observation of this depot from passing trains one would have supposed that the cramped quarters would have maximised the buffer beam nuisance. After 1945 WD73 as sold to the Norton Colliery at Clay Cross."

See also <https://preservedbritishsteamlocomotives.com/w-g-bagnall-works-no-2613-brookfield-0-6-0pt/>

In 2021 it had boiler work and other repairs performed at the Mangapps Farm Museum.



HaRakevet - design and layout Steve Waldenberg, Leeds, UK. Digital print by Thistle Print Ltd, Bramley, Leeds ©



Restored G12 Loco