

ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL DYNAMICS OF ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY INDICATORS OF UZBEKISTAN RAILWAYS

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Annotation: *This scientific article comprehensively analyzes the historical dynamics of economic efficiency indicators of the railway system of Uzbekistan. The study highlights the main economic indicators of railway transport activity - the volume of freight and passenger transportation, the cost of transportation, the level of income and profitability, the effectiveness of infrastructure investments, and changes in labor productivity over time. The article analyzes the impact of structural reforms, tariff policy, and modernization processes implemented in the last years of the Soviet era and the post-independence period on the economic efficiency of railway transport based on historical sources, official statistical data, and regulatory legal documents. The research results are important for determining the patterns of development of the railway transport system of Uzbekistan, drawing scientific conclusions on transport economics and infrastructure policy.*

Keywords: *Railways of Uzbekistan, economic efficiency, historical dynamics, freight and passenger transportation, transport costs, profitability, investment efficiency, tariff policy, transport reforms, the period of independence.*

In the early years of independence, part of the Uzbekistan railway system had to transit through the border regions of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, which meant that cargo was subjected to additional border control and transit tariffs. For this reason, the Uzbekistan Railways organization has begun efforts to replace railway sections passing through Tajikistan and Turkmenistan with national railway lines, that is, to build new internal railway sections in the territory of Uzbekistan. Finally, in 2016, the domestically integrated, national railway network in the country was completed[1].

With the creation of an integrated internal railway network, the cost of freight transportation across the republic has significantly decreased. This allowed businesses and manufacturers to deliver products on time and at a lower cost, resulting in reduced production costs and increased competitiveness. Connections between large industrial zones, small and medium-sized industrial enterprises, and agricultural regions have been improved through an integrated railway network. This strengthened the exchange of products and raw materials between the regions, laying the foundation for the development of national production. The domestic railway network increased transit efficiency in international trade. In particular, the Angren-Pap railway line facilitated the export and import of products from the Fergana Valley, which served to increase the volume of foreign trade. Thanks to this, logistics speed and economic efficiency have increased.

In 2018, Uzbekistan Railways accounted for about two-thirds of the country's domestic transport cargo turnover and volume. Railways accounted for less than 10 percent of transit freight

traffic, about 20 percent of freight turnover, 19 percent of imports, and 13 percent of imports, as well as 9 percent of exports and turnover. The average railway distance for transit transportation through Uzbekistan (540 km) was twice that of domestic transportation (227 km), exports (258 km), and imports (163 km) [2].

Based on this information, it can be seen that railway transport plays a key role in the domestic cargo transportation market of the country. Compared to road, air, and water transport, the railway's ability to cover a larger volume of freight transport, its relative low cost, and its convenience for long distances contribute to maintaining its leading position in this sector. The high share of the railway in the internal transport turnover indicates its ability to quickly and efficiently transport large volumes of cargo. This means the need for investment and modernization of railway infrastructure. In turn, the growing volume of cargo transportation and the growing demand for logistics require investments in modern technologies and high-performance transport systems.

When analyzing the coefficient of types of transport in the Republic of Uzbekistan from January to September 2018, highways lead with an indicator of 49.2 percent, followed by gas pipeline transport with 17.8 percent. In third place are the railroads, which have been performing strategic transportation tasks[3].

The decline in freight traffic is directly related to the cooling of relations with neighboring countries. Because a large part of transit transportation is carried out through the territory of neighboring fraternal republics. In turn, it should be noted that the establishment of high customs tariffs by neighboring republics has led to an increase in transportation costs.

The expansion of transit traffic by rail was included among the priority tasks defined in the Development Strategy of the Uzbekistan Railways Organization for 2015-2019, adopted in 2015[4]. "The railway organization of Uzbekistan aims to use its strategic position in Central Asia, connecting with international transit corridors to the north, south, east and west.

In the 2019 business plan, the Uzbekistan Railways organization reflected goals aimed at increasing its main existing transit transport flows. These relate to transit transportation between Saryagash (near Tashkent) on the Uzbek-Kazakh border and Afghanistan (Keles-Galaba) and the Kyrgyz Republic (Keles-Bekabad), as well as to the Boldyr-Kudukly flows between Tajikistan and Turkmenistan"[5].

It should be noted that in the Republic of Uzbekistan, railway and road transport are the two leading modes of transport for export and import. Railways are often the least expensive means of transporting goods over long distances. Automobile transport has advantages for short-distance travel. In 2018, Uzbekistan's railway transport participated in the transportation of 66% of export cargo, 85% of import cargo, and 84% of transit cargo. Although the railway remained dominant in the transportation of trade goods, the share of road transport showed stability during 2015-2018, in particular, in the transportation of export goods.

From 2014 to 2018, the total volume of freight traffic of Uzbekistan Railways steadily increased, but the volume of freight turnover did not change, which means a decrease in the length of freight traffic. It was during this period that both the volume and turnover of passenger transportation increased significantly. The volume of freight traffic of Uzbekistan Railways remained stable in the first half of 2019, while freight turnover slightly increased in the first half of 2018[6].

During 2018, the volume of passenger transportation by rail increased by 1.29 million people and amounted to 22.3 million people, which indicates a growth of 6.1 percent. Passenger turnover increased by 56.2 million passenger-km to 4,350 million passenger-km, an increase of 1.33% compared to 2017. The current growth trend continued in the first half of 2019, with 11,788 million passengers transported. In 2018, the figure was 11.51 million passengers. Passenger turnover in the first half of 2019 amounted to 2.161 million passenger-km, compared to 2.127 million passenger-km in the first half of 2018.

The decrease in the volume of transit cargo passing through the territory of Uzbekistan can also be explained by the construction and commissioning of new railway lines in neighboring countries. Thus, today in the neighboring Republic of Kazakhstan, with the assistance of the states of Turkmenistan and Iran, a new railway line "Uzen - Bereket - Gurgan" has been opened in the North-South direction. The opening of this line was beneficial for all countries located on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea and their neighbors. As a result of studying and researching the theoretical issues of increasing the competitiveness of railway corridors, we came to the conclusion that in recent years, new railway projects are being actively implemented in most countries of Central Asia, providing for bypassing the railways of Uzbekistan.

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