

STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEKISTAN'S TRANSPORT SYSTEM AND ITS ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

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The transport system is the lifeblood of any country's economy, and for Uzbekistan, one of two doubly landlocked countries in the world, its efficiency is critical. The need to transit through at least two neighboring countries to access seaports has historically created structural disadvantages, increasing the cost of foreign trade and limiting access to global markets. In the context of economic openness, the relevance of this research topic is driven by the need to diversify foreign trade routes, reduce logistics costs, and integrate into international transport chains. The purpose of this article is to analyze the current economic performance of Uzbekistan's transport sector, identify key challenges, and evaluate strategic measures aimed at its development. The research methodology is based on an analysis of statistical data, strategic documents, and reports from international organizations.

Relevance of the topic. Since 2016, Uzbekistan has been implementing active reforms aimed at liberalizing the economy and strengthening regional integration. In this context, transport has transformed from a supporting sector into a strategic driver of economic growth. It accounts for 7,2 to 8–9 % of GDP and provides employment for approximately one million people. Over the past decade, the country has demonstrated steady progress in improving logistics, rising from 129th to 88th place in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI). However, despite this progress, significant challenges remain. High transportation costs, reaching 200 % of production costs for some manufacturers, and an aging truck fleet are undermining the competitiveness of national carriers.

Analysis Methodology To conduct a comprehensive assessment of the economic efficiency of Uzbekistan's transport system, a set of methods is used, including:

Comparative analysis of statistical data:

1 Analysis of the dynamics of key indicators, such as freight traffic volume, passenger traffic, and the share of transport in GDP over a long period [3].

2 Strategic analysis: Study of key policy documents, such as the "Strategy for the Development of the Transport System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2035" and the "Comprehensive Program for Improving Transport Infrastructure" [1].

3 Benchmarking: Comparison of the performance indicators of Uzbekistan's transport system with average values for Asian countries and other reference countries [2].

4 Factor analysis: Identification and assessment of the impact of various factors (geographical, infrastructural, regulatory) on the economic efficiency of the transport system.

Analysis of the Economic Efficiency of the Transport System

Current status and contribution to the economy. Uzbekistan's transport system is a unified system combining road, rail, and other modes of transport. An analysis of data from 2012 to 2020 reveals a steady positive trend. Freight transported increased from 858,7 to 1,378,8 million tons, while passenger traffic increased by 26,4 %. Meanwhile, the share of transport and communications in GDP during this period decreased from 11,2 to 7,2 %. This, however, does not indicate a decline in its importance, but rather reflects the outpacing growth rates of other economic sectors and structural changes in the national economy.

Table 1 – Key performance indicators of the transport sector of Uzbekistan (2012 and 2023)

Indicator	2012 y.	2023 y.	Change, %
Freight transported, million tons	858,7	1378,8	+60,6
Freight turnover, billion ton-km	66,4	69,1	+4,1
Passenger traffic, million	4763,0	5240,4	+10,0
Passenger turnover, billion passenger-km	100,2	116,7	+16,5

Performance Assessment by Transport Mode

1 Road transport dominates the transport system, accounting for 97 % of all infrastructure. It demonstrates high flexibility, especially for short-distance transportation. However, the industry faces chal-

allenges: a significant portion of the fleet is physically worn out, resulting in low international competitiveness and a high share of foreign carriers (approximately 82 %) in international transportation. Furthermore, the growth of freight traffic requires a multiple increase in network capacity by 2030 and 2050.

2 Rail transport – despite accounting for only 3 % of transport infrastructure, it plays a critical role in international trade and efficient long-distance transportation. It accounted for 66 % of export and 85 % of import freight volumes as of 2018. More than half of the tracks are electrified, a high figure for the region, but approximately 90 % of the rolling stock requires replacement within the next decade [1].

The impact of transport corridors on economic efficiency. A key element in improving economic efficiency is the implementation of a multi-vector transport strategy aimed at overcoming geographic isolation.

Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian Route): This route connects China and Europe via Central Asia, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, and Turkey. It is seen as an important alternative to the traditional northern route through Russia, especially in light of geopolitical risks. Uzbekistan is actively investing in the development of this route, including the construction of a logistics terminal in the port of Poti (Georgia). **China – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan Railway (CKU):** This project will directly connect Uzbekistan with China, bypassing Kazakhstan. It is expected to reduce the transportation distance by 900 km and travel time by 8 days, significantly reducing costs and increasing the competitiveness of Uzbek exports.

Trans-Afghan Railway Corridor: The Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar route project will provide Uzbekistan with the shortest possible access to Pakistani ports on the Arabian Sea, potentially reducing cargo delivery time from 35 days to 3–5 days and reducing shipping costs by a third.

Conclusions:

1 Uzbekistan's transportation system is experiencing quantitative growth, but its qualitative development and efficiency are lagging behind the needs of a growing economy. Despite the increase in transportation volumes, high logistics costs and infrastructure issues persist.

2 Improved efficiency is directly linked to route diversification. The implemented multi-option strategy for developing transport corridors is an adequate response to the challenges of geographic isolation and geopolitical instability, reducing the risks and costs of foreign trade.

3 The physical and technological condition of the infrastructure and fleet remains a key limiting factor. To dramatically improve efficiency, large-scale investments are needed in upgrading rail rolling stock, modernizing roads, and expanding logistics capacity.

Conclusion. The economic efficiency of Uzbekistan's transport system is crucial for achieving the country's strategic goals of becoming an upper-middle-income country and strengthening its position as a regional hub. The analysis shows that, despite existing challenges, the government is pursuing a consistent and comprehensive policy aimed at transforming its geographic disadvantage into a strategic advantage.

The success of this transformation depends on the coordinated implementation of several areas: continued active attraction of foreign investment and cooperation with international financial institutions; accelerating the pace of technical and technological modernization of all modes of transport; and further deepening regional integration and coordination of transport strategies with neighboring countries. Achieving these goals will not only significantly improve the economic efficiency of the transport sector but also provide a new impetus for the development of the entire economy of Uzbekistan.

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