

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Rehabilitation of Bridges for Java North Line

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The construction of railway in Java was begun in 1864 during Dutch colonial era by the private railway company NV. NISM. The success of the NV. NISM in building railway of 110 km long between Semarang-Surakarta in 1870 had motivated many investors to build railway in other regions.

The main railway from west to east of Java consists of two lines: The North Line and The South Line. The North Line which was initially a private railway company, was constructed below standards. Many of the bridges along the North Line did not meet the 1921 regulations of 20-ton design load. Consequently, large locomotives cannot run directly from Jakarta to Surabaya. Large locomotives had to be switched to smaller ones at Cirebon Station. Moreover, despite the fact that these old bridges had undergone repeat repairs, most are deteriorating, and speed restrictions should be imposed on some sections for the safety reason.

Demand for railway service as a mass and safe transportation is growing steadily. In particular, fulfilling the demand for economy-class travel is the Indonesian government's highest priority, and improving railway facilities to provide a safe and reliable means of transportation is a pressing need. Based on these circumstances, the Indonesian government had begun restoration work on the North Line. Since 1970, the OECF (the present JBIC) started to provide support for rail track rehabilitation in a number of projects. A survey conducted by OECF as part of these projects pointed out the need to repair and establish a maintenance system for railway bridges. The objective of this project is to ensure the operation of the North Line and to reduce transit time, together with strengthening transport capacity, by restoring railway bridges as well as bridge inspection and repair stations.

Indonesian's national long-term development plan (2005-2025) specifies the importance of the railways as one of the modes of transportation which transports a large volume of passengers and freight and the need for government assistance to develop its potential and to increase its role to connect regions as prime mover of national development for the improvement of people's welfare. And Railway Law No. 13 stipulated that the Government is responsible for providing and maintaining railway infrastructure including bridges.

The importance of the Java North Line, the main trunk line linking the capital of Jakarta with Indonesia's second largest city, Surabaya, continues to grow. The increase in the volume of passenger and freight transport indicated that this line played an important role in Indonesia's railway sector. The transportation during the Lebaran/Idul Fitri is extremely important for many Indonesians. Many members of lower-income groups or economy-class train users travel long distances only during this period. Ensuring a means of transportation for lower-income groups who use economy-class trains only during Lebaran is one of critical policy objectives for the Indonesian government. In this regard, the project is considered highly relevant

Before the project, the design load of many bridges built in the east of Cirebon was 15 tons or less. Thanks to this project, all bridges along the North Line satisfy the 1921 regulations of 20-ton design load. Direct operation without changing locomotives became possible through the entire Jakarta-Surabaya section after the project. As a result, travel time between Jakarta-Surabaya was shortened by a total of approximately 33 minutes.

The goals of this project were: to expand transportation capacity through bridge restoration and to ensure operation and shorten transit time by reducing the number of sections with speed restrictions due to bridge deterioration was confirmed.