



High-speed railway projects need careful study to ensure success

Fifty years after Japan launched its high-speed railway line, there's no denying it's been a game-changer. Run by Japan National Railways, the shinkansen¹ cuts travel time between historical economic centers and connects a network of cities. It's the spine of one of the most important regional economic belt developments in the world. It's spurred economic growth in the cities it serves and transformed the country's economy to what it is today.

It's no surprise other countries are looking at Japan's experience in running bullet trains to make sure their huge investments will pay off in the long run.

High-speed rail hubs are among the most expensive infrastructure in the world, and the challenges and opportunities of setting them up vary from country to country. Almost all countries with bullet trains have reported a dynamic change in urban systems associated with the projects within only a few years of the railway's inauguration.

The Republic of Korea has followed a development model similar to Japan's, but it needs to further integrate regional public transport with high-speed rail corridors and stations to increase revenue.

The high-speed railway operator in Taipei, China is especially unique. After almost going bankrupt 10 years ago, the company has resurrected itself by streamlining operations and making bullet trains more sustainable.

Studies on high-speed railway systems and their impact on urban life suggest that the railway's influence on a region changes over time. To ensure success, governments need to examine proposed projects carefully. How areas around rail stations can be developed, for

¹Shinkansen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GV7PcsJECw>

instance, must be studied closely. Stations are important not only in planning and designing a rail project but in creating and improving a city's image.

Success depends on collaboration and cooperation between the public and private sectors. Gathering, sharing, and analyzing data are crucial to ensure that urban systems flourish. Stakeholders should also remember that a high-speed railway is just one component of city infrastructure and must be tied to processes and policies that govern urban life.

It takes about a decade for a high-speed railway system to succeed. So a vision of the project is essential. So is meticulous planning. And so is consulting the project's multiple stakeholders.

This episode is based on a [post](#) on ADBI's blog, Asia Pathways, by [Shreyas P. Bharule](#), an associate at the Asian Development Bank Institute.

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