

Turkey Set For Crucial Corridor Upgrade

An ambitious project to build a new high-speed line between Ankara and Istanbul in Turkey is set to more than halve journey times, and could be the precursor to a new wave of rail upgrades in this fast-growing country.

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ANKARA is the capital city of Turkey, with a population of about 5 million, whereas Istanbul is the country's biggest city, with a population of nearly 12 million. Travel between the cities is extensive, making it easily the most crowded travel corridor in the country. The Ankara-Istanbul line also serves many towns, increasing congestion.

The electrified line is 576km long, the majority of which (378km) is single track. Infrastructure quality is below modern standards, and there are many sharp curves, down to a radius of 300m, making an increase in speeds unfeasible.

Six express trains and one sleeping-car train a day run between Ankara and Istanbul, with another three trains providing local stopping services. 12 million people per year travel between Ankara and Istanbul across all modes. In 2001, road carried almost three-quarters of all passengers. Rail's market share was 10%, while that of road and air was 73% and 17% respectively. For freight, the picture is worse, with rail having a market share of 3%—a poor showing when a total of 48 million tonnes of freight is carried. Unless the railway is upgraded and rehabilitated, market share will continue to decrease.

Initial plans focused on upgrading the existing line. However, a desire to



Trains like this CAF emu will soon run in Turkey.

increase line speeds to 250km/h, and concerns about curve radii and deformation effects from freight trains encouraged the government to alter the scheme last year.

Now known as the Ankara-Istanbul High-Speed Train Project, a new double-track line will be built with a maximum speed of 250km/h. The existing line will be used by freight and other traffic.

It means that journey times between Ankara and Istanbul will fall from 6h 30min to 3h. The new route will be 43km shorter, and double-track and electrified throughout.

The project is being built in two phases. The first 251km section from Sincan to Inönü will cost \$US 747 million. It is due for completion at the end of the year, and in April, it was two-thirds complete.

The second phase, the 158km from Inönü to Köseköy has 39 tunnels and 33 bridges and viaducts. This will be com-

pleted in 2008 at a cost of \$US 1.27 billion.

The remaining sections from Ankara to Sincan and from Köseköy to Gebze are due to be completed in 2008 as well. The latter is expected to cost \$US 1 million.

New stock will be needed to operate on the line, and 10 high-speed trains are being built by CAF, Spain. The six-car emus have a top speed of 250km/h, and a capacity of 419 passengers.

Turkey is also planning to develop an indigenous capacity for high-speed rolling stock, and to this end, an agreement was signed between Turkish State Railways (TCDD), Rotem-Hyundai, Korea, and ASAI-Haco, earlier this year.

The Ankara-Istanbul high-speed project could be a forerunner for future projects of this type. Once complete, journey times between Turkey's two biggest cities will be cut, and a safe, comfortable and rapid transport mode will introduced. **IRJ**

