

Transport Policies and Plans



The transport policies adopted by each of the CARs reflect that they are landlocked; that their geographical situation offers opportunities to exploit transit traffic; that they need to reorient traffic away from the Soviet pattern; and that they need secure, reliable national links that do not require transit through neighboring countries. While the CARs give high

priority to the transport sector, they all face significant constraints in developing infrastructure and services. Their relatively small populations and large land areas (especially in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) and difficult mountainous terrain increase infrastructure costs (especially in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan). Furthermore, they have to weigh in the competing

requirements of domestic transport, especially the need to support key industries, to provide access to rural populations to distribute the benefits of economic growth, and to provide direct links between the population centers of a country. While it is true that many main routes used for regional traffic also carry significant levels of domestic traffic, this is not always the case.

Nationally, the transport sector is managed by a single ministry that is responsible for all modes of transport except in Uzbekistan where separate government organizations report to the transport department of the cabinet of ministers for different functions within the sector. At the subsector level, the degree to which state management and commercial responsibilities have been divided varies considerably from country to country. Generally, the economic basis of transport planning is weak, and this prevents effective prioritization of investments and policies in the sector.

Internationally there are several important regional organizations that seek to promote cooperation in transport between countries in Central Asia. These include the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Special regional organizations within these international bodies have been set up to provide multilateral frameworks for tackling those problems specific to Central Asia. The most important are the Special Programme for the Economies in Central Asia (SPECA) under ESCAP

and the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO).

The CIS has achieved broad success in establishing multilateral agreements on a range of issues concerning technical standards for transport. These include standards for road design, vehicle size and weight, and policies for charging oversized or overweight vehicles. Not all the CARs have, however, signed up, and fewer still have implemented them in domestic laws and regulations. The European Union (EU)'s basic multilateral agreement on international transport for the development of the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) signed on 8 September 1998 is a major achievement in defining the basis for cooperation in transport; however, much work remains to be done in implementing its detailed annexes.

All CARs are members of the International Road Union (IRU), which assists with implementation of international road transport agreements. For railway transport in

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the CIS, an inter-governmental agreement was signed as early as 14 February 1992. This organization coordinates the operations and development of the railways and has facilitated several important agreements on tariffs.

In general, the PRC does not participate in these broad multilateral agreements; however, it has made smaller-scale agreements. Most notable among those are the Transit Transport Agreement (PRC, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Pakistan on March 9, 1995) and the Agreement on International Road Transport (PRC, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan on 19 February 1998). The PRC also participates in general regional economic cooperation forums such as the Central-Asian Economic Union, the Euro-Asian Economic Community, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. For railways, the PRC is not a party to CIS agreements, but it participates in the Agreement on International Passengers Transportation, in the agreement on International Cargo Transportation, and in the Unified Transit Tariff (UTT) and Agreement for International Passenger Tariff (IPT) tariff agreements.

Though much has been achieved in the last 10 years in establishing the legal framework for regional transport, both in terms of international conventions and domestic legislation, much still remains to be done. ESCAP identified seven transport conventions as the minimum all countries should aim to ratify. Of these, only two have been signed by all the CARs and the PRC and only one country in the region, Uzbekistan, has signed all seven. Of particular importance is the Transport International Routier (TIR) convention that permits efficient movement of international trucks with minimum delay due to customs controls. The need to reduce such delays is particularly great for landlocked countries.

Even if the CARs have signed international conventions, they are often not implemented completely due to delays in incorporating the provisions in domestic legislation or to administrative difficulties. In the case of domestic legislation, although there is usually a clear legal basis for defining overall national transport responsibilities, the framework for defining the legal basis is often incomplete.





The CARs have a unique opportunity to become pioneers in regional integration. The main issue is not who owns the infrastructure but how it is used. What is needed is seamless integration of regional operations.