

7 STRATEGY AND APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

7.1 Strategic Vision

The government's overarching development objective is to achieve poverty reduction, for which Poverty Reduction Strategy-PRS, Millennium Development Goals-MDGs, Sixth Five Year Plan-SYP have been adopted. While these provide broad policy frameworks, Integrated Multimodal Transport Policy-IMTP would provide a sector specific policy/strategy for transport interventions targeted at economic growth and poverty reduction. The draft IMTP has several objectives, which include reduction of transport cost, taking advantage of geographical location, and ensuring that transport meets social needs and the poverty reduction strategy. In view of the diverse problems being faced in Bangladesh, an optimal mix of 'market integration approach' and 'poles of development approach' is proposed as the strategic framework for transport sector development. The operational significance of this mixed strategy is that the development efforts are concentrated on the main transport corridors. Table 7-1 describes the strategic approach of Bangladesh to transport sector development.

Table 7-1 : Strategic approach to transport sector development

Target	Growth strategy	Transport strategy (supportive role)
Poverty reduction (Railway intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Export-led • Development of export processing zones for manufacturing • Provide cost effective , safe and reliable transportation of passengers and freight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to ports, EPZs, markets, etc. • Improvement of strategic transport corridors • Passenger: Inter-city • Freight: Container and selected commodities • Capacity enhancement • Enhance competitiveness of railway

7.2 Approaches

At present, rails faces enormous competition from the road transport and if rail is to survive as a viable mode it must significantly improve service quality and operational efficiency. Moreover, railway networks need multi-modal integration with road and inland water transport system as well as improve its own infrastructure facilities to be able to carry more traffic efficiently. In addition, operations of branch lines under Bangladesh Railway need to be reviewed based on potential demand for passenger and freight movement from the countryside.

An analysis of railway traffic, the commodity carried, their volume and origin-destination revealed that most passenger and freight movement takes place on a limited number of key corridors. In order to enable Bangladesh Railway to carry the anticipated traffic in the future, the Railway Master Plan focussed its attention on the major corridors where almost 90% of all traffic movement takes place. Alongside lack of major connectivity throughout the country also considered though future traffic volume of these new corridors have not been accurately analysed in the plan. The major existing and proposed new corridors are:

- Corridor 1: Dhaka – Chittagong – Cox's Bazar – Deep sea port
- Corridor 2: Chilahati – Ishurdi – Khulna – Mongla
- Corridor 3: Dhaka – Bangabandhu Bridge – Darsana/Benapole
- Corridor 4A: Dhaka – Bangabandhu Bridge – Rajshahi – Rohanpur
- Corridor 4B: Dhaka – Bangabandhu Bridge – Ishurdi – Parbatipur-Chilahati/Birol

- Corridor 5: Dhaka – Sylhet/Shahbazpur
- Corridor 6: Dhaka – Bangabandhu Bridge– Sirajganj/Roypur(Jamtoil) – Burimari
- Corridor 7A: Dhaka – Mawa – Bhanga – Jessore – Khulna – Mongla
7B: Dhaka – Mawa – Bhanga – Jessore – Benapole
7C: Dhaka – Mawa – Bhanga – Barisal
7D: Dhaka – Mawa – Bhanga – Kashiani – Gopalganj – Tungipara
- Corridor 8A: Dhaka – Mymensingh – Jamalpur – Tarakandi- Bangabandhu Bridge
8B: Dhaka – Bhairab Bazar – Mymensingh
- Corridor 9A: Dhaka – Mawa – Jajira – Rajbari – Moukuri (Mizanpur) – Bara Durgapur (KhasChar) – Pabna – Ishurdi
9B: Dhaka – Paturia – Douladia - Moukuri (Mizanpur) – Bara Durgapur (Khas Char) – Pabna – Ishurdi

In formulating the Railway Master Plan, the corridor approach considered the various infrastructural interventions that would be necessary to attract long-distance passenger and freight traffic, under the strategies identified below.

7.3 Focussing on the major commodities

Historically, the railway enjoyed a monopoly as a carrier and used to carry most of the principal commodities in the country, such as cement, coal, fertiliser, raw jute, POL¹, stone, food grains, and sugar cane. With gradual emergence of road transport, the railway started losing its market of cement, coal, raw jute and sugar cane. As a result, share of railway declined from 30% in 1975 to a mere 4% in 2005.

However, rail still dominates in carrying some commodities, namely POL, stone, iron & steel, and food grains (rice and wheat). The share of these commodities is about 85% of total rail freight traffic. In addition, railway also carrying about 10% of the containers and this has been growing at 9.3% per year since 2000-01. It is found that the commodities which are being carried by rail are mostly sea ports and land port based. Thus the proposed strategy includes the expansion and development of new Inland Container Depots (ICD's), as well as the handing capacity at land ports to overcome the exiting transfer problems. One of the consequences of this approach is the commitment to construct a new rail-based ICD at Dhirasram to attract the increasing container traffic to rail.

7.4 Gauge rationalization

Bangladesh Railway network consists of MG (64%) and BG (24%) lines and newly introduced Dual Gauge (DG) (12%) lines. So, it is obvious that uniformity in Gauge rationalisation leading to uniform gauge across the whole country must be one of top priority development activities of Bangladesh Railway. Considering both passenger and freight traffic carrying capacity, future national and regional connectivity requirement, and taking into account the connectivity issue of neighbouring countries, Bangladesh Railway must convert its network into Broad Gauge all over the country. Though this conversion will require a huge amount of investment for replacing the track, rolling stocks and ancillary facilities, but phase-wise conversion will be feasible. Bangladesh Railway must take necessary steps keeping this in mind when DPPs are prepared. Hence the strategy is to continue with two gauge systems in near future but within the plan period (next 20-year) there will be a Broad Gauge railway network system in the country.

¹ Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants

The construction of Padma Bridge at Mawa – Jajira will open up new opportunities for Bangladesh Railway for linking Dhaka directly with Jessore and Mongla Port as well as southern part of Bangladesh. A new BG line between Dhaka and Jessore will attract inter-city passenger as well as Benapole and Darsana freight traffic. The whole Faridpur area will also fall in the catchment area of rail transport. In addition, a direct connection between Dhaka and Mongla Port over the new bridge will provide a much needed alternative to Dhaka-Chittagong port-related traffic. Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA) are seeking the revival of Birol Land Port for cross border trade with India², which was in operational until April 2005. In this context, this Master Plan supports initially the construction of five km DG line inside Bangladesh (up to Birol Station with land port facilities) and subsequently further extension up to Parbatipur, which is well connected to both the MG and BG networks.

The Shahbazpur border crossing, which is a part the part of Trans Asian Railway (TAR) would need further attention in the near future. The route was in operation until 1995 and was at that time the only rail-based port (Chittagong Port) connection for the North-Eastern states of India (NE-India).

Any direct rail connection between NE-India and Kolkata would need the conversion of MG into DG up to Tongi via Akhaura. In addition, to facilitate the use Chittagong port NE-Indian States would need further extension of DG track up to Chittagong port. The implementation of all these proposals for providing connectivity's through Shahbazpur between NE-India to Chittagong and also to Kolkata through Bangladesh Railway system would however, need political commitments of both the Indian and the Bangladesh Governments.

7.5 Unlocking Line Capacity Constraints

Bangladesh Railway already faces serious line capacity problems in the Dhaka-Chittagong corridor. The proposed Tongi-Bhairab Bazar double tracking project and further extension from Bhairab Bazar up to Chinkiaстана double tracking will ease the problem to a large extent. With regard to the double line section between Dhaka and Tongi although it has at present a capacity utilization of 65%, constraints will be faced in the near future because of the potential for increased traffic on this section. Initiatives are therefore, underway for the Line Capacity Improvement between Dhaka and Tongi under Indian Line of Credit (LOC) by constructing 3rd and 4th line.

The present capacity of the Joydebpur-Jamtail line is very low, about 20 trains per day, due to long block sections. If the long block sections are split, the line capacity can be enhanced up to an optimal level. For further enhancement of the capacity, it would be necessary to go for construction of a parallel Banghabandhu Railway Bridge, dedicated to railway with the provision of double line from Joydevpur to Ishurdi.

7.6 Construction of important new links

The Padma Bridge at Mawa – Jajira must have provision for a BG Main Line Standard (BGML) rail track. After completion of this mega project BR will have to establish a direct connection with Jessore and Khulna and beyond up to Mongla Port. Freight traffic including to and from India (via Benapole and Darsana) will find a much shorter route to Dhaka. The new DG line between Ullapara and Baghabari will connect waterways and railhead for easier movement of

² And possibly Nepal

fertiliser, POL, coal and other commodities to the western and north-west region of the country. The plan has also considered the construction of Dohazari-Deep Seaport line, rail line up to Gundum linking to Cox's Bazar, and Dhaka-Comilla Chord line. Besides, the proposed Bogra-Sirajganj (Roypur) line will reduce the substantial distances of MG line for north-west region. In addition, construction of Dhaka-Jessore BG line will open up opportunities for rail connection to Barisal city. New intercity services between Barisal, Jessore and Dhaka are potential benefits of these new connections, which is part of the vision of the plan.

There is another opportunity Bangladesh Railway will grasp by constructing a Railway Bridge over Padma at Bara Durgapur (Khaschar) - Moukuri (Mizanpur) over Padma River. This Railway Bridge will connect Ishurdi with Dhaka through Bhanga- Jajira- Mawa. At present, there are both loading and speed restriction on Bangabadhau Bridge- no train carrying containers and goods are allowed, and passenger train speed limit is less than 20 km/ hour. Construction of the Bara Durgapur (Khaschar) - Moukuri (Mizanpur) Rail Bridge will partly solve this loading and speed restriction as trains coming from Ishurdi will be able to use this railway bridge to enter Dhaka.

7.7 Re-commissioning of track

In order to open up facilities for long distance regional traffic, the plan suggests for re-commissioning of Shahbazpur-Karimganj line as part of trade facilitation in the sub-region. Basically, the proposed line was the part of sub-continental railways network (in the British era) and is presently not in use. Moreover, Bangladesh being a member of several regional co-operations/groups, namely, SAARC, SASEC and BIMSTEC, the members of these groups has been stressed on the need opening up of historical lines for enhancing trade among the neighbouring countries.

7.8 Maintenance and rehabilitation of infrastructure

The most important approach for sustainable development of transport is a 'building on past achievements'. In line with this, the Master Plan has attached highest priority for BR is to ensure unconstrained maintenance of the existing infrastructure. A substantial portion of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in the early years needs to be targeted at track rehabilitation and signalling to improve safety and reliability. Adequate resources for maintenance need to be guaranteed annually for the strategic corridors for improving the quality and reliability of service and thus competing effectively with road transport. Programme for outsourcing maintenance will be encouraged. In this respect, training of supervisor and labour gang would be required.

7.9 Maintenance and procurement of rolling stocks

Optimal utilisation of rolling stocks is an important aspect of train operation. The more utilisation of rolling stock means less unit overhead cost for a certain time period. BR considers mainly time based utilisation of rolling stocks rather than kilometre runs, for instance, locomotives in excess of 30 years old are beyond their accountancy and due for replacement. It is found from the available data that the productivity of locomotives under Indian Railways is more than four times higher than of BR locomotives and coaches productivity is more than three times higher than Bangladesh. On the other hand, old aged

rolling stocks and lack of maintenance is another persistent problem of BR. In this context, the BR should have proper rolling stocks maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement plan. However, the poor quality of maintenance also reflects on the utilisation of rolling stock. As regards, the plan has suggested and taken care of modernisation of existing workshops under BR. The detail requirements of rolling stocks are spelt out in the section 8.2.