
Batinah Railway feasibility study to be completed by 2009

Wednesday, 14 Oct, 2009

Oman Observer reported that a key study into the feasibility of introducing a rail network in the Sultanate is due to be wrapped up before the end of 2009, setting the stage for the design and eventual implementation of this landmark project. A joint venture team of experts from Systra Consulting of France and the National Engineering Office of the Sultanate is close to completing its study of the broad scope and elements of a rail system that will initially run the length of the Batinah region with a branch line extending to Al Buraimi on Oman's border with the United Arab Emirates. Network extensions to Duqm and Salalah, among other economic hubs and population center around the Sultanate are envisaged in later stages of the initiative.

According to officials, the feasibility study will serve as a blueprint for the Supreme Committee for Town Planning in charting a detailed strategy for the realization of Oman's aspirations for rail based transportation services. Based on the findings of the study, the SCTP is expected to embark on the detailed engineering design of the rail network, complete with stations, marshalling yards, rolling stock requirements and so on. A contract for the engineering design consultancy services contract is expected to be awarded by around mid 2010.

Significantly, the feasibility study will spell out the broad outlines of the Batinah Railway network. It delineates the network into 3 key sections: the first is a roughly 260 kilometers length that runs from Barka to Khatmat Malaha on the Sultanate's northern border with the UAE; the second section extends approximately 30 kilometers south from Barka to Rusayl, while the third section is a roughly 110 kilometers branch line that runs from Sohar to Al Buraimi.

According to officials, the alignment of all three sections comprising a total network length of around 400 kilometers has been more or less finalized. The main Barka Khatmat Malaha trunk line will run, for the most part, within an already delineated corridor that will house the proposed Batinah Expressway, an ambitious 6 lane superhighway that will run from Barka to Khatmat Malaha.

Envisaged is a mostly twin track, broad gauge network catering primarily to freight trains in the initial phases of the project. Nevertheless, the network will be designed for high speed trains given the need to make rail travel attractive to Oman's motor loving populace, when passenger services are eventually added to the network.

In places, the alignment traverses rugged terrain and wadis, necessitating the construction of major rail bridges and tunnels along the route.

The alignment abuts the industrial Port of Sohar which along with Freezone Sohar and the Sohar Industrial Estate are expected to generate significantly volumes of freight traffic for the Batinah Rail network. Tributary lines are proposed to lead directly into the port as well as other key areas of the Greater Sohar Industrial Area, feeding the rail network with all manner of freight cargo including containerized cargo, ore, petroleum products, chemicals and other industrial products.

Freight traffic flowing in and out of Sohar will be channeled through a Freight Station proposed to be set up on a dedicated plot adjoining the first phase of the Freezone Sohar project. Also envisaged is a marshalling yard at Barka with stations planned at various points along the length of the network.

Oman's nascent rail network will ultimately be integrated with an inter GCC rail system that will crisscross all 6 member states. The roughly 2,000 kilometers network will eventually connect Salalah on Oman's southern coast with Kuwait's border with Iraq. The USD 14 billion project is likely to be operational during the 2016-2018 time frame. In the longer run, it could also be part of an ambitious intercontinental network that connects the Middle East with Europe and Asia.

(Sourced from Oman Observer)

For more news visit at www.steelguru.com