Early Warning System

WB-P517871

Syria Railway Rehabilitation and Modernization Project

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Quick Facts

Countries	Syria
Specific Location	East-West rail corridor (Al-Sharqiya–Homs–Tartus)
Financial Institutions	World Bank (WB)
Status	Proposed
Bank Risk Rating	A
Voting Date	2026-11-30
Borrower	Government of Syria - Ministry of Transport, Project Management Team
Sectors	Infrastructure, Mining, Transport
Investment Type(s)	Grant
Investment Amount (USD)	$ 200.00 million
Project Cost (USD)	$ 200.00 million

Project Description

According to the Bank’s website, the objective of this project is to restore safe, resilient, and low-carbon freight connectivity on selected priority rail corridors and enhance the resilience and operational efficiency of the railway sector in Syria.

Syria's transport network is in a state of collapse, crippled by over a decade of conflict, the devastating 2023 earthquake, the accelerating impacts of climate change, and chronic under-maintenance. The system's operational constraints extend beyond infrastructure to rolling stock and equipment. The mainline locomotive fleet offers limited operations, with core units operating at very low readiness, and auxiliary and shunting locomotives even at lower or non availability, severely constraining operations. Rolling stock is similarly degraded as only about half of tank wagons are operable, while passenger services have effectively ceased due to the complete unavailability of coaches and trainsets. Maintenance capacity is very limited, as most track machinery is out of service and limited spare part stock. Combined with inoperative signaling and communications systems, reduced station availability, and workforce shortages, this results in low operating speeds and high inefficiencies across the network.

In this context, system constraints have translated into a sharp contraction in freight activity. Annual freight volumes have fallen from approximately 8.5-9.5 million tons prior to the revolution to a fraction of that level today, reflecting the collapse of transit traffic and the near disappearance of key bulk commodities. In particular, phosphate, which was historically one of the railway's core revenue streams, has effectively disappeared. Before the revolution, phosphate traffic reached about 2.4 million tons in 2007 and remained above 2.1 million tons in 2010, moving from inland mines to Tartous port for export. This flow has since collapsed to negligible levels, with only marginal volumes recorded in recent years and none transported in 2025 and early 2026. As a result, current operations are largely limited to residual movements of fuel and basic commodities, underscoring the urgency of restoring the network's capacity to carry strategic freight.

Despite these challenges, the strategic relevance of rail remains compelling. Syria's value lies in two complementary corridors. The East-West corridor, linking the Mediterranean ports of Latakia and Tartus through Homs to Iraq and onward to Umm Qasr on the Gulf. The North-South corridor, connecting the European and Turkish networks through Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus down to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the wider Gulf. Together, these axes position the country as a natural transit hub at the crossroads of international trade. Rail offers decisive advantages on such long-distance routes--faster transit times, lower cost per ton, and improved safety relative to alternative modes--with the East-West haul, for example, been able to be completed in 24-36 hours versus 14-16 days by sea.

Hence, the MoT has emphasized the urgent need to establish a solid foundation to drive economic growth through improved rail connectivity, trade facilitation, and logistics performance, leveraging the country's strong export potential as well as by offering reliable regional and wider connectivity. To achieve such objective, challenges facing the rail sub-sector extend beyond infrastructure rehabilitation and modernization.

Designed as a regional integration initiative, the project's primary goal is to quickly support high priority physical rehabilitation activities, generate positive cross-border effects through rail connectivity improvements and support sustainable development through institutional reforms. In addition to the direct benefits to Syria's economy and people, this regional integration aspects could also provide Turkiye and Iraq with more reliable access to Mediterranean ports, give Jordan better access to European markets, and offer Lebanon enhanced connectivity to the wider region. Success requires coordinated action among countries to ensure harmonized standards and interoperability. Restoring critical infrastructure, incorporating traction systems and maintenance capacity, and reactivating strategic corridors are therefore central to reviving freight activity. It will strengthen domestic supply chains, enable private sector participation, and reestablish Syria's role in trade through regional integration.

Early Warning System Project Analysis

Environmental and Social Risk Classification: **Substantial**. Civil works will mostly be limited to current railway right of ways (ROWs), with no major new construction planned. Currently, there is no available information on the presence of informal settlements that have been established near the impacted railway lines.

Environmentally and operationally, the priority corridor identified was characterized by heavy industrial and strategic materials transport, including phosphates, grains, and fuel oil. The project will involve the physical rehabilitation and modernization of this damaged line (Al-Sharqiya–Homs–Tartus), including the use of heavy machinery for track maintenance and repair, and addressing at-grade crossings with roadways. Climate risks such as floodings and extreme heat, and geophysical risks such as earthquakes and landslides may be a concern.

Investment Description

- World Bank (WB)

Total Project Cost: US$ 200.00 million
IDA Grant: US$ 200.00 million

Contact Information

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Bank Documents

- Concept Project Information Document (PID)
- Initial Environmental and Social Review Summary (ESRS) - Syria Railway Rehabilitation and Modernizat