

## Sustainability key to regional transportation strategy

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HE Abdulla Rashed Al Otaiba, Chairman, Abu Dhabi Department of Transport opened the biennial Roadex-Railex show, the largest exhibition for the road, rail and public transport sectors in the Middle East at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) today.

As a part of Abu Dhabi's goal to become the most sustainable capital in the world by 2030, they have revealed plans for a new freight and passenger railway extending from the emirate of Abu Dhabi's western region through Dubai, Sharjah, Umm Al Quwain, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Ajman. The construction of the Union Railway is about to start and will cost between Dhs30bn and Dhs40bn with construction. It is set to be completed in 2015.

Across the region, a coordinated GCC network will include one rail line of 1,970 km connecting all GCC countries and Qatar via a bridge. The second line of 1,984 km will stretch between Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman. The wider standpoint is for the railway network to extend to Jordan and Syria, linking the Gulf with Asia and Europe via Turkey.

It is generally accepted that rail travel, when compared to short haul flights, is cheaper to run as operational costs are lower. In addition, lost time and the cost of actually getting to and from the airport, taking a train will be cheaper, quicker and more convenient. However most importantly it can cut carbon emissions per passenger by up to 90%, furthermore when compared to road freight, trains produce 85% less carbon emissions than trucks and lorries.

"All projects in the region whether it be cargo or passenger are all being designed with sustainability in mind. The GCC rail network, along with road and aviation projects, are there to not only link all of the GCC countries, but to address the growing issue of air pollution that the region faces with CO2 emissions."

said Adel Al Awadi, Marketing Director, Serco Middle East.

"Emirates and Etihad Airlines collectively have 196 flights a week to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. This is equal to approximately 9.7 million kilograms of CO2 emissions a week (when running at 100% capacity) caused by these flights alone. Where as travelling by train would only create approximately one million kilos of carbon emissions per passenger per week," said Richard Pavitt, Exhibition Director, Roadex-Railex

With a steady rise in respiratory and bronchial asthma, the UAE is facing a problem with air quality, especially in the hotter months, with added humidity. In a recent survey by Maplecroft, UAE and Saudi Arabia were ranked in the top 6 worst offenders for CO2 emissions in the world with UAE taking top spot.

The poor performance of the UAE and Saudi Arabia reflects their near 100% reliance on fossil fuels and their use of energy intensive desalination plants to produce drinking water. The UAE dropped 15 places from last year to take the bottom spot due to a huge 25% jump

in its overall carbon output between 2006 and 2008 and a 20% rise in per capita emissions.

"Sustainability is the main reason we are exhibiting that this year's show, it is not only important for the GCC rail network and rail in general but across all sectors of transportation. We installed the very first traffic lights in Abu Dhabi 40 years ago, today we are here to showcase green and sustainable solutions," said Peer Fischer, Vice President Intelligent traffic systems, Siemens Middle East.