
Establishing a Multinational Transport-Hub Network in Northeast Asia: Concept and Measures

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TRENDS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND TRANSPORT

Economic globalization requires changes in the traditional modes of international transport. In recent years, a large group of multinational corporations has emerged and has become the motivation and main force behind economic globalization. A huge international production and marketing system has therefore formed, which has raised much higher requirements for speed, safety, and quality of transport.

Regional economic cooperation has led to increasing demand for domestic freight transport. Interregional trade in Northeast Asia has been increasing as a percentage of the region's overall foreign trade. The deepening of regional economic and trade cooperation will accelerate the volume of hub throughput and will increase the hubs' share of overall freight transport.

The establishment of a comprehensive transport hub network has become a characteristic of the era of economic cooperation. Two tendencies have emerged in the development of the modern communications and transport industries. One is the modernization of transport tools and equipment, and the other is the diversification of modes of transport. Transport will thus become more systematic, rational, and effective, which shows that modern communications have entered a new and comprehensive hub era.

The port is a major facility for the establishment and development of a regional comprehensive hub network. Thus the harbor is the key link in such a network, whose main characteristic will be multimodal, international transport of containers.

It is essential to set up governmental cooperative agencies for hub infrastructure among the seven countries of the region.

These measures are designed to promote the construction and development of a comprehensive hub network in the region.

COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASIAN-EUROPEAN CONTINENTAL BRIDGE

Transit transport or continental-bridge transport, which combines transport both by sea and across the continent, has become an important area in which Northeast Asian countries can pursue further cooperation in the transport sector.

In the 1980s, China decided to begin the construction of a new Asian-European continental bridge. This project was completed in September 1990.

The port of Tianjin is an important bridgehead of the Chinese continental bridge and has the following strong advantages:

- It was the first port in China to provide service across the continental bridge. In 1979 it started a combined sea and rail service by way of Manzhouli (on the Chinese-Russian border) to Europe. As the new continental bridge across western China neared completion, Tianjin made the first efforts (in 1989) to provide services along this route.
- It can offer the most routes across China. At present, there are three routes: One leads to Siberia via Manzhouli and another to Siberia by way of Erlian Haote (Erenhot, on the Chinese-Mongolian border) through Mongolia. The third route leads westward by way of the Ala Mountain Pass to five Central Asian countries.
- It offers the shortest overland distance to Europe. The railway route across the former Soviet Union—from Nakhodka (on Russia's Pacific coast) to Brest (at the border with Poland)—is 10,430 kilometers, whereas the route from Tianjin to Brest via the Ala Mountain Pass is 9,724 kilometers. And the route from Tianjin to Brest via Erlian Haote is even shorter, at only 9,003 kilometers.
- It has the largest number of containers in transit. The total volume of container transport has exceeded 23,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) over the past ten years.
- Tianjin is rich with experience in port organization and management. This port is well known for its high quality of service, prompt and speedy transport, and its many preferential policies.

To strengthen cooperation and overcome difficulties, in order to promote the development of a new transport route between Asia and Europe, better use should be made of this northern seaport and railway routes to foster the formation and development of the Asian-European continental bridge and transit transport.

AIR TRANSPORT

A hub network should be established among major cities in seven countries to increase the volume of air freight and to form an efficient transport network.

The prospects are favorable for developing international transport among the countries of Northeast Asia and among the cities in this region as well as in the United States. The present facilities for air transport should be more fully used to form a really efficient network.

Tianjin's international airport is equipped with advanced facilities and has an annual freight handling capacity of 140,000 tons. It is expected to play an

increasingly important role in promoting trade among the countries in Northeast Asia.