

From Silk Road to Modern Highway: How IsDB-Financed Project Slashes Travel Times in Kazakhstan

As the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) gears up to commemorate its Golden Jubilee, it reflects on a legacy of transformative initiatives that have catalyzed sustainable development across its member states. Among these, the road reconstruction project in Kazakhstan's Jambyl Region shines as a remarkable testament to the power of strategic investment in bridging divides and unlocking economic potential. This initiative not only aligns with the IsDB's commitment to infrastructure development but also symbolizes the crucial role of connectivity in fostering regional prosperity.

Kazakhstan, a nation poised strategically at the nexus of Asia and Europe, holds the potential to act as a pivotal bridge between continents. A particularly critical segment of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) transit corridor, spanning 58.1 kilometers, had fallen into severe disrepair. This route, crucial for linking Kazakhstan with key economic partners such as China, Russia, and other Central Asian nations, was beleaguered by safety hazards and infrastructural inadequacies. These issues not only elevated the risk of traffic incidents but also imposed lengthy travel times and stifled business opportunities, particularly in the wake of China's economic ascent.



In response to this pressing challenge, the IsDB, in partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan, embarked on a crucial project to rejuvenate the Jambyl region's transport artery. This project envisioned the transformation of the beleaguered CAREC corridor into a state-of-the-art highway that adheres to the

highest international standards of safety and efficiency. The refurbished road, laid with top-quality asphalt-concrete, now features three bridges, twelve interchanges, and sixty-six culverts. Furthermore, the inclusion of an upgraded road service point, eight bus stops, and nine rest areas has significantly enhanced the road's functionality and sustainability, fostering a well-integrated transport ecosystem.

The project not only concluded within budget but also ahead of its schedule by six months, marking a significant achievement in project management and execution. The revitalization effort has yielded profound economic and social benefits: employment opportunities for 500 individuals during the construction phase, a surge in daily traffic volume from 4,000 to around 6,000 vehicles, and a reduction in travel time between key cities from 90 to 45 minutes. The initiative has substantially reduced freight transport costs by half, from 10% to 5%, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of local businesses and opening avenues to new agricultural zones and essential services.



This project transcends its immediate impacts, offering invaluable lessons for future infrastructure endeavors. It underscores the essence of meticulous planning, quality assurance, and stakeholder engagement in achieving project success. Moreover, it highlights the criticality of maintenance and sustainable use, leading to the introduction of a national road toll system and measures to prevent road deterioration, such as axle load control.



As the IsDB marks a half-century of dedicated service to development, the road reconstruction project in Kazakhstan stands as a beacon of its enduring commitment to enhancing the lives and livelihoods of its member states' populations. This project has not only transformed a crucial transportation corridor into a modern highway but has also set a new paradigm for sustainable infrastructure development, paving the way for a future where Kazakhstan, and indeed the entire region, can fully leverage its strategic position for collective prosperity and integration.