

JRTR



SPECIAL FEATURE: Rural Railways

**JAPAN RAILWAY
AND
TRANSPORT REVIEW**

November 1996 No.9

JAPAN RAILWAY AND TRANSPORT
REVIEW is published quarterly
by East Japan Railway Culture Foundation
(EJRCF).

East Japan Railway Culture Foundation

2-2, Yoyogi 2-chome, Shibuya-ku,
Tokyo 151-8578, Japan
Tel (81 3) 5334 0623
Fax (81 3) 5334 0624
Email info@jrtr.net URL http://www.jrtr.net
Chairman: Dr. Shoji Sumita
Vice-Chairman: Hideaki Kinoshita

Chief Editor:

Tatsuhiko Suga, Executive Director, EJRCF

Editors:

Mami Aoki, Senior Researcher, Institute of
Transportation Economics
Makoto Ito, General Manager, Study and
Research, Japan Transport Economics
Research Centre
Yoshihiro Akiyama, Director, Japan Railway
Technical Service
Seichi Takahashi, Assistant General Manager,
Technical Development & Research
Department, East Japan Railway Co. EJRC
Yoshitaka Inagaki, Assistant General
Manager, Management Administration
Department, EJRC

Head of Editorial Secretariat:

Keizo Takeda

Administrative Manager:

Hiroshi Komatsu

Editorial Staff:

Robert Hancock
Siubing Nagata
Reiko Nakajo

Translation, Design, & Production

Urban Translation Incorporated

© All rights reserved.

Printed in Japan.

Reproduction of the contents in part or
whole of this magazine in any manner is
prohibited without the prior written consent
of the publisher.



Old KIHA 52 DMU on JR East
Iiyama Line
(M. Mashima Photo Office)

Editorial

Keeping rural railways running

Even after the rapid motorization of Japan through the 1960s and 70s, most people hardly understood the real significance of the change. They continued believing that the railway was like an unsinkable battleship, and wanted trains to keep running in rural areas; they even wanted new lines built. When the railway management tried to close some lightly-used lines, protestors came to the head office by car! As JNR's financial crisis deepened, the management finally managed to close some loss-making lines, but most rural lines were maintained by heavy cross-subsidies from the profits of the highly-efficient shinkansen and Tokyo's overcrowded suburban services. The separation of the railway business in the less-populated islands of Hokkaido, Shikoku and Kyushu at JNR privatization in 1987, eased the cross-subsidization to some extent, but many rural lines in mainland Honshu still depend heavily on the profits of the shinkansen and Tokyo commuter services. The so-called Management Stabilization Fund for the smaller three islands also depends if not directly, entirely on the profitability of the three major railways in Honshu, because the capital funds were raised by issuing government bonds repayed through a complex financial arrangement from the profits of the three JRs in Honshu.

Such heavy interdependence within railways no longer exists in other industrialized countries, where central or local government takes responsibility to maintain unprofitable but socially-necessary railways. People living in Tokyo or using the shinkansen have so far accepted the burden of cross-subsidy for their fellow citizens in the countryside, but they may change their ideas because they can no longer afford such benevolence as Japan's economy reaches maturity. The railway may have to fight another political battle in the not-so-distant future.

T. SUGA

Contents

Photostory: Commuter Trains in Japan

Special Feature—Rural Railways

Maintaining Public Transport in Japan's Countryside	
- Burden Sharing and Subsidies Mitsuhide Imashiro	2
Regional Rail in Low-Density Areas Pierre Laconte	9
Railway Services for Rural Areas John Welsby	12
Regionalization in Public Short-Distance Passenger Traffic Klaus Daubertshäuser	18
Rail Transport in Rural France Marie Andrée Buisson	20

Another Perspective

The Historical Cities and Museums of Japan Ratan Lal Chakraborty 28

People

Japanese Rail Engineers in Cairo 30

Japanese Railway History 8

Wartime Railways and Transport Policies Yasuo Wakuda 32

Topics 36