

# JRTR

Japan Railway & Transport Review

Feature

## Expansion of High-Speed Rail Services

- Opening of Tohoku Shinkansen Extension to Shin Aomori and Development of New Faster Carriages—Overview of Series E5/E6
- Marketing Opening of Tohoku Shinkansen Extension to Shin Aomori
- Current Status of Hokkaido Shinkansen
- Aomori Railway—Keystone to Tohoku Shinkansen
- Kyushu Shinkansen and Background to Establishment
- Development of High-Speed Railways in China

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The exterior of Series E5 *Hayabusa* (JR East)

## Establishing High-speed Railways in Japan and China

China opened a 200-km high-speed line between Shanghai and Hangzhou in October 2010, completing a high-speed railway network of more than 7400 km—a huge jump from the 120 km of high-speed track created by the opening of the Beijing–Tianjin line in August 2008. What is more, work is progressing steadily to hit the targeted total of 16,000 km by 2020. In turn, a look at Japan shows that we have just ushered in the first extensions to the Japanese shinkansen network in a long while with 80 km of track between Hachinohe and Shin Aomori in December 2010 followed by 150 km between Hakata and Shin-Yatsushiro in March 2011. Nevertheless, even including the Hokuriku Shinkansen extension (to be completed in 2014), the distance covered by shinkansen in Japan only amounts to 3000 km. Additionally, with work—implemented in accordance with the 1970 Nationwide Shinkansen Railway Development Act—progressing at a snail's pace, Japan's shinkansen programme still has yet to be completed after 40 years. Why is there such a difference between Japan and China? Shinkansen construction in Japan has not been considered from the stance of how work can be pursued to reliably raise the usefulness of public transport but has instead been considered based on political decisions. Exacerbating the situation, building of airports in prefectures across Japan and equipping harbours (ridiculed as glorified fishing ponds) have been prioritized. Moreover, the recent populist and vote-winning move of lowering or removing charges on toll motorways is seriously weakening both railways and other public transport modes as people move to transport by private vehicles. It may be just a fanciful dream to hope that an overall transport policy can be established by politicians who have forgotten about measures for the environment, preferring instead to latch onto policies prioritizing the automobile industry.

K. Aoki

Note: Shinkansen distances in Japan are expressed as operation-km not track-km.

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