



Federal Transport Authority grants approval to start commercial operations on Stage One of the Etihad Rail Network

Safety authorization allows Etihad Rail to move from trial operations to full commercial services

Dubai, UAE, 09 December, 2015: HE Dr. Abdulla Bilhaif Al-Nuaimi, Minister of Public Works, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federal Transport Authority –Land & Maritime (FTA), has today granted Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the UAE’s national rail network the official safety authorizations to commence commercial operations on Stage One of the network (Habshan – Shah – Mirfa – Ruwais).

The safety authorizations were granted during an official ceremony in Dubai, which accredited Etihad Rail’s operations partner Etihad Rail DB to commence commercial operations on the 264km route, which forms part of the wider UAE network spanning across 1,200 kilometres and the future GCC network.

Stage One will transport Sulphur from Shah and Habshan to the port of Ruwais on two daily trains, each transporting 11,000 tonnes. This will dramatically decrease the number of trucks on the road.

The event was attended by HE Nasser Alsowaidi, Chairman, Etihad Rail, and members of Etihad Rail's Board.

“We are very pleased to have granted these important safety authorizations for the first stage of the UAE's national rail network, allowing Etihad Rail to begin commercial operations,” said HE Dr. Abdulla Bilhaif Al-Nuaimi, Minister of Public Works, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of FTA.

“This is a result of the combined efforts of the FTA, Department of Transport in Abu Dhabi, the Roads and Transport Authority in Dubai, Etihad Rail and Etihad Rail DB to ensure that this important strategic project for the future of the country operates to the highest standards,” he added.



“The start of commercial operations is one of the biggest milestones we have achieved to date and it is an incredibly proud day for Etihad Rail, for the UAE and for the wider Middle East transport sector,” commented HE Nasser Alsowaidi, Chairman of Etihad Rail. “These authorizations are testament to the FTA's confidence in our company's abilities to safely operate the railway according to the highest international standards.”

“During the past year, we have already transported more than three million tonnes of Sulphur from Shah and Habshan to the port of Ruwais for our customer, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), as part of the testing and commissioning and trial operations phases,” Alsowaidi added. “We now look forward to taking our operations to full commercial capacity, which will see Etihad Rail transport as much as seven million tonnes of Sulphur every year.”

The new federal law which outlines how the UAE will govern railways requires rail companies to present evidence to the FTA that it can safely operate and maintain a railway system. The FTA led a team comprised of the Department of Transport in Abu Dhabi and the Roads and Transport Authority in Dubai (RTA) to provide evidence and assurances that Etihad Rail has designed, constructed and will operate the railway to the highest international standards.

With the safety authorizations being issued, the UAE officially joins a select group of countries that reap the rewards of having an advanced railway system.

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Notes to the editors:

About Etihad Rail (www.etihadrail.ae)

Etihad Rail was established in June 2009 under Federal Law no. 2, with a mandate to manage the development, construction and operation of the UAE's national freight and passenger railway network. Being built in three stages, the railway network will link the principal centres of population and industry of the UAE, and will form a vital part of the planned GCC railway network across the six countries of the GCC.

Construction on Stage One has been completed, with trains carrying granulated sulphur from the gas fields of Shah and Habshan to Ruwais already operational on a trial basis. Stage Two will connect the railway to Musaffah, Khalifa Port and Jebel Ali port and will see the railway extend to the Saudi and Omani borders.

In addition to the Operational & Maintenance Agreement with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) for the transport of sulphur between Habshan and Shah to Ruwais, Etihad Rail is also in advanced commercial and technical negotiations with other prospective partners, including DP World, ESI, Arkan, and others.

To date, Etihad Rail has signed more than 50 Memorandums of Understanding with a number of customers throughout the Emirates – in industries ranging from petrochemicals and agriculture to aggregates and waste – all of whom recognise rail as the preferred mode of transport for their goods.

Built to international standards, Etihad Rail's state-of-the-art network will span approximately 1,200 km, acting as a catalyst for economic growth and sustained social development. Upon completion, the railway will redefine logistics and transport in the region, providing a modern, safe, efficient and sustainable mode of transport that will connect all regions of the UAE to its neighbouring GCC countries.

Media Contact:

Etihad Rail Communications team

Tel: +971 2 4999 712

Email: communications@etihadrail.ae

Website: www.etihadrail.ae