Users’ Experience and Evaluation of New Southern Masha’er Metro Line in Makkah, Saudi Arabia

Authors:
Isam Kaysi, SETS
Baha’ Alshalalfeh, SETS
Amer Shalaby, University of Toronto
Arwa Sayegh, SETS
Mounira Sayour, SETS
Adnan Gutub, HajiCoRE, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract:
Each year during the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar, more than 2 million Muslim pilgrims from around the world travel to the Holy City of Makkah in Saudi Arabia to perform Pilgrimage. A significant milestone in the effort to improve the existing transport system in the Holy City has been the introduction of the Southern Masha’er Rail Line during the 2010 pilgrimage season. In its first year of operation, the line operated at only 35% of its full capacity, before full implementation in the following year when the line operated at full capacity of 72,000 passengers per hour. This paper presents the results of a users’ survey that aimed at assessing the performance of the rail line from the perspective of its users. The analysis revealed that the rail users faced longer access, waiting and egress times compared to regular rail operations standards. However, interestingly enough, the survey results show that the majority of pilgrims found these times to be tolerable. Moreover, the majority of users found the rail line and its stations to be of excellent quality and gave positive recommendations about using the rail line in the future. The analysis also produced some very interesting observations that may be of relevance to rail operation in similar crowded events; these are highlighted throughout the paper.

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