

Plans for Chumpon-Ranong double-track rail route stall



Source: Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning BANGKOK POST GRAPHICS

SRT eyes rethink in 'two to three years'

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The Comptroller General's Department has put the double-track rail project from Chumpon to Ranong on hold due to concerns about its economic viability, according to a source at the State Railway of Thailand (SRT).

The 40-billion-baht project was originally driven by Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak, who envisaged the rail development linking the Gulf of Thailand to the Andaman Sea in a boost to the Southern Economic Corridor scheme.

Construction of the project was originally planned for this year, according to a cabinet decision in August last year.

The SRT source said it is likely that the project will be brought back for consideration again sometime in the next "two or three years".

The source, however, said an SRT study found that the rail route would be beneficial for development as there is still no rail link with Ranong, which is one of the country's second-tier tourist

provinces. The SRT remains keen on the project, the source stressed.

Although being eagerly pushed by the government, a study by the Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning (OTP) cast doubts on it.

The OTP pointed out that the project is only likely to be economically viable if its opening is delayed until 2034.

Under the plan, the line would begin south of Chumphon train station.

It would pass through Muang district of Chumphon as well as Kra Buri, La-un and Muang districts of Ranong province.

Before reaching Ranong deep-sea port, the route would separate with one track going to the port and the other to Ranong station.

Meanwhile, the SRT has adjusted a plan for the 100-billion-baht high-speed train project from Bangkok to Hua Hin by extending the proposal to include Surat Thani.

The new plan, stretching 759 kilometres, requires a new study, which could take about 18 months to complete.

The high-speed rail project would be split into two phases — the Bangkok-Hua Hin section and the Hua Hin-Surat Thani stretch, according to SRT acting governor Worawut Mala yesterday.