
Access fee, or railway track use charges, plays a key role in developing restructuring and reforming options for national railways, which generally have suffered substantive decline and various kinds of difficulties for decades. Tremendous efforts were made academically and practically in US, Europe and Asia, to explore institutional remedies, mostly with presence of access fee. This paper will analyze, through the lens of access fee, the existing state of Chinese Railways (CR) and a notable but unsuccessful experiment with a restructuring plan from 2000 to 2003, which intended to separate infrastructure from operation of passenger and freight services. I’ll then make recommendations with access fee as the core piece of further institutional options for Chinese Railways to address the current problems, meet multiple goals and adapt itself to the emerging railway market and intricate local context in a sustainable and efficient way.