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Railway Construction Plans To Link Six Central American Countries

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Dec. 2 in Panama City, government officials formally established a trilateral task force to supervise development of a 1,504 km. railway system linking the Atlantic ports of Cristobal in Panama and Limon in Costa Rica with Nicaragua's Corinto port on the Pacific coast. The "southern bloc corridor project" is part of a larger effort sponsored by the Central American Railway Commission (COCAFER), an organization set up at the behest of the region's presidents. The COCAFER mandate is promoting construction of a new railway linking the six Central American nations. Total project cost is estimated at about US\$500 million and construction is expected to be completed by the year 2000. Guillermo Calzia, a representative of the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA), told reporters that COCAFER seeks to reduce transport costs as a means to boost intra-regional trade. Regional governments expect the cost of cargo transport to decline by a factor of three once the railway system is in place. The southern corridor project, designed by SIECA and the Spanish Railways Network (RENFE), is priced at US\$200 million. (Basic data from Notimex, ACAN-EFE, 12/02/91)

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