



The Role of Balapan Surakarta Station as a City Gateway and Transit-Oriented Development

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Abstract. Surakarta has an important role nationally and regionally, where the area of Surakarta is constant. One area, namely Balapan Station, has essential significance for Surakarta. This station connects big cities in Indonesia, such as Semarang, Surabaya, Bandung, and Jakarta. This station was founded in 1873 during the colonial era and is the oldest in Surakarta. With better service facilities and increasing visits to tourist destinations, trains have become an option for connectivity between places because the train mode will make it more efficient in terms of time and reduce road traffic congestion. The method used in the research uses several case studies. Data was collected by conducting field observations, documentation, and in-depth interviews. The findings show that with the arrival of people with various needs, the Balapan train station can act as a city gateway and transit-oriented development because Balapan train station is a strategic place that connects modes and other essential facilities in Surakarta.

Keywords: race station, Surakarta, city gate, TOD

1 Introduction

Transit Oriented Development is an urban area designed to connect community activities, city facility buildings, public spaces, and other functions in the city with transportation. The principles of TOD development are limiting the use of motorized vehicles, providing parking for transit, and ensuring good and efficient pedestrian networks or connectivity between facilities.

Transit-oriented development (TOD) and the role of stations as city gateways are an integral part of modern urban planning. These concepts focus on creating a sustainable, efficient, and dynamic urban environment that prioritizes accessibility, connectivity, and integration of transportation and land use.

As transit hubs, train stations have developed into appealing public places, yet they are also among the busiest places in the city. Some are now directly connected to or have integrated into key business areas and airports (Sulistyani, 2022). The history of the railway network in Java and its train stations began in the nineteenth century when it was introduced by the Dutch colonial government. This gives rise to demands for

efficient connections between various facilities starting with plantations and ports that enable mass transportation. The construction of the railroad and its stations resulted in cultural and economic transformation.

The opening of inland areas to various productions in large quantities and the guarantee of free traffic is a clear shift towards entering the territory of modern imperialism. Train stations have had an enormous impact on culture and economic development, leading to new perceptions of the island's landscape and geography, new modes of transportation, and increased mobility. Ultimately this influences existing cultural and social differences and hierarchies and contributes to dynamism, change, and a new modernity that changes the way people view their way of life.

The station is an important sign that reminds us of the complexity of Indonesia's history today, a close intertwining of Javanese history, colonial history, and the history of the Indonesian nation. If these buildings are understood and maintained properly, they can serve as meaningful permanent structures, with stories and fixed points in a constantly changing environment, that the majority of the population is accustomed to in addition to moving people and goods (Sulistiyani, 2022).

The location of the city of Surakarta has a very strategic position, it meets the southern route of Java, namely the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the northern route, namely the Semarang area, and to the east the Surabaya region, so that it can be a destination, transit place with various existing facilities and transportation facilities that are well connected by train, land, and air. In a smaller scope, Surakarta has satellite cities that surround it, namely Boyolali, Sukoharjo, Sragen and Klaten, each of these areas has large functional city and destination potential that can bring in tourists and ultimately improve the economy and welfare of the people of Surakarta and its surroundings.

For this purpose, the Balapan station has an important role as the entrance gate to the area where all of them are going. The actual station does not only function as the first point of contact for visitors and passengers, in another hand it acts as a physical and symbolic gateway to the city. Design, architecture, and function can shape perceptions and convey a city's identity. As a gateway, the station facilitates easy access to various parts of the city and its surroundings. It connects different modes of transport (trains, buses, bicycles, pedestrian paths), increasing mobility and reducing dependence on cars.

Solo Balapan Station is a large type A class train station located on the border between Kestalan and Gilingan, Banjarsari, Surakarta at an altitude of +93 meters and is under the management of the Yogyakarta VI operational area. The name Balapan is taken from the name of the village located to the north of the station area. This station is the main train station in the Solo Raya area. Solo Balapan Station serves executive class intercity trains, the majority of mixed class, long series economy trains, airport trains, and Solo Yogyakarta commuters. It is the primary connection between the central and southern lines of Java Island (W, 2023).

Transit-oriented development, better known as TOD, is an urban spatial design that connects people, activities, buildings and public spaces through easy connectivity by foot or bicycle and close to superior public transportation services throughout the city.

2 Materials and Method

The research method used is field research, where this form of research aims to reveal the meaning given by community members to their behavior and the surrounding reality. In research related to architecture, field research is used when the research subject still opens up the widest possible exploration possibilities. Field research examines problems in natural settings to underline meaning, and interpret observed phenomena (WanG, 2013)

In this research, the Balapan station area is part of urban development activities. The city of Surakarta is a vehicle for social processes composed of artifacts, values, and activities. Artifacts are inanimate objects however, the values and activities of the people transform soulless architecture become living architecture. In field research, the researcher is intensively involved in the field of research, participating over a certain period of time in the activities that surround and support the architecture which can be recorded in detail and holistically by the researcher. (Martana, 2006)

Observation is the main information-gathering technique. Data and information obtained in field research are immediately analyzed on the first occasion, along with subsequent information collection. This process continues continuously, without a set of definite guidelines and more closely following developments in the field. Focusing on specific aspects was only carried out towards the end of the research. In this research, the key components are emphasizing natural settings, focusing on interpretation and meaning, focusing on how respondents interpret their situations, and use of various tactics (WanG, 2013).

3 Results and Discussion

TOD is a form of development that seeks to use (primarily) the location of future development to influence regional travel behavior. Neo-traditional development and the New Urbanist movement sought to change development design. Both approaches have been included as key land use planning interventions in a number of metropolitan strategies (Burke, 2005).

The paper will assess the performance of a Surakarta city station in transit-oriented land use development (TODs) which is also the gateway to the city of Surakarta. The use of this information as a means to assess the impact of location and development design on travel to existing facilities in the city of Surakarta. This work is undertaken to help influence the location and design of urban developments to ensure that residential travel patterns contribute to sustainability goals.

Planning the spatial pattern for the city of Surakarta for 2021-2041 and studying the RDTR for the city of Surakarta, the Balapan train station area is a transportation, trade, and housing services area so that the area can become a TOD area for the development of trade and service functions and become a city gate because the location has access directly on the activities of the city of Surakarta with the nodes of human and vehicle movement. The position of Balapan train station can be seen on the map below.

It is hoped that this area can become an area that has an image that supports TOD in the main road corridors and nodes of the area and as an entrance to the city of Surakarta. This area is expected to be able to influence future development both internally and externally, which can be seen from the existing spatial layout and regional development trends.

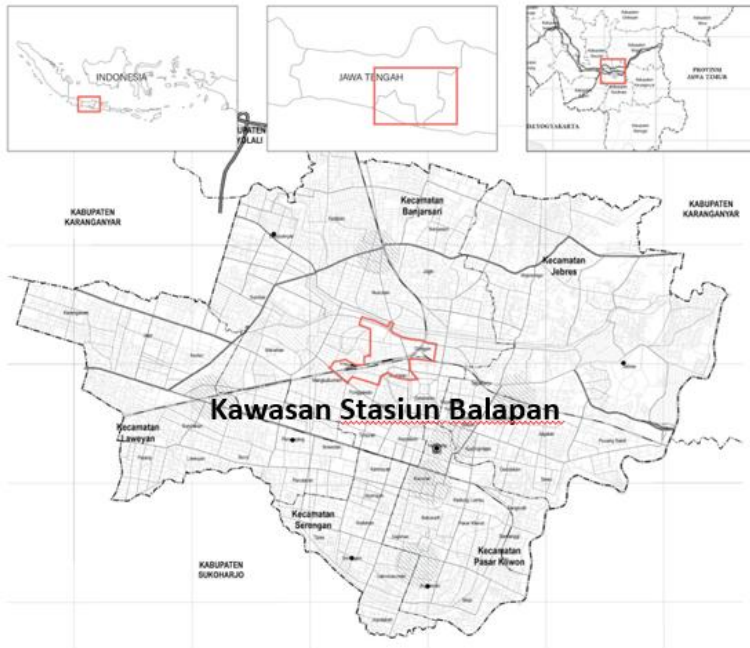


Fig. 1. Macro position of race stations in the city of Surakarta (Faisa Abrar, 2024)

The map above shows that Balapan Station is in the center of the city which connects the road network inside and outside the city. Balapan Station and the Tirtonadi bus terminal and Adisumarmo airport are currently connected although their use is not yet optimal in serving local and regional land and air transportation. In the future, the Balapan train station has the potential to be developed into a TOD and city gateway to improve the quality of space and connectivity as well as integration of activities around the Balapan train station which is developing very rapidly and to maintain areas that have not been handled well.

From a micro perspective, the area around the Balapan train station has developed into a fairly busy activity center, such as the Tirtonadi terminal, whose main function is as a bus terminal. In the future, this terminal will be created as a creative center for the people of Solo, starting with children, teenagers and the general public who can raise the prestige of this terminal. **Masjid Raya Sheikh Zayed Solo** As one of the interesting religious destinations, this mosque has become a major attraction for the

Balapan train station can be an entry point of compact area structure that will facilitate mobility by increasing accessibility. With existing mixed land functions (residential, commercial, public facilities) which can help reduce daily mobility distances, so walking and cycling become preferences in mobility. Likewise, residential locations and activity centers that are close to public transportation access will encourage the use of public transportation for long-distance mobility (beyond walking distance). Balapan train station is a place to come and go from one place to another.

Accessibility from Balapan train station as a transit station to the surrounding activity centers, and accessibility from the transit station to the intermodal interchange (feeder) is also an important consideration for the ease of reaching locations outside the TOD area (outside the walkable distance) from transit stations, the quality of connectivity (pedestrian and intermodal routes) is an important aspect in determining the quality of accessibility. Balapan train station, is connected to other stations in the Surakarta, Yogya, and Semarang city areas with KRL (commuter rail line) train services, connected to other big cities in Java by fast train, connected to the Artar city bus terminal by the sky bridge which can be reached on foot, connected to the airport by KRL and connected to solo batik trans to spread throughout all facilities in the city of Surakarta. With the potential that Balapan train station has great potential as a gateway and transit-oriented development.

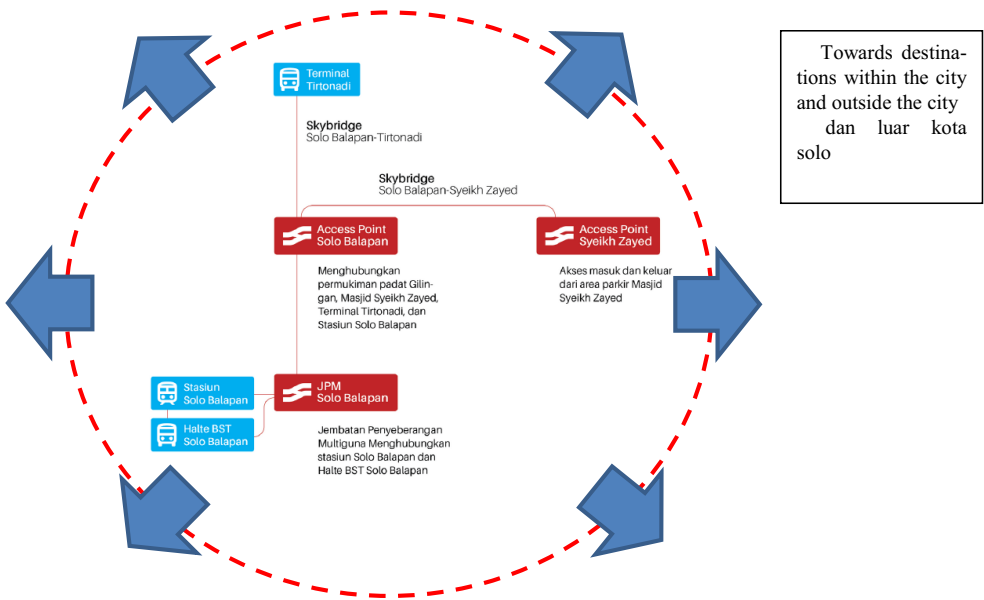


Fig. 3. Balapan Station connectivity with facilities in Surakarta and outside Surakarta

Another potential of Balapan station is that it can be a first impression and identity. The station often functions as the first point of contact for visitors and passengers, acting as a physical and symbolic gateway to the city. Design, architecture, and function can shape perceptions and convey identity in how people perceive, interpret, and act based on available information about a place in a spatial, individual mobility display through space for the performance of identity. In the field of architecture and design, building exteriors play an important role in shaping people's initial perception of a place be it a commercial property, a residential complex, or even a public space, the exterior of a building sets the tone within.

From a psychological point of view, first impressions is important. When someone approaches a new place, they instinctively pay attention to exterior visual cues and overall aesthetics. This initial visual impression can influence their expectations and emotional responses before entering. This momentary assessment highlights the profound role that building exteriors play in shaping our perceptions of the places people encounter them. In the Balapan station building, the work of Karstern Architects prioritizes Solo Balapan's function as an entry and exit point for people in Surakarta to other areas or vice versa. Balapan train stations have a long history associated with Indonesian railways. PT KAI explained that the Balapan station started in the 1800s and was built by a Dutch private train called Quoting from the official KAI Heritage page, Solo Balapan Station began in the 1800s. At that time, a Dutch private railway company called *Nederlandsch Indische Spoorweg Maatschappij* (NISM) built a railway line connecting from Kedungjati to Solo. The name of the Balapan train station is also inseparable from its location where horse racing is located, so the initial name of Solo station was Balapan station.

Balapan Station also has the role of an Economic Center and Public Space. As an economic center the race station attracts business, retail and services, creating an economic hub that stimulates the local economy. The concentration of people and activities around the station area can encourage economic growth and urban revitalization around the Balapan station, developing it into a Surakarta culinary center with all kinds of Surakarta food specialties. As a public space, train stations often provide a venue for social interaction, cultural events and community activities. These spaces contribute to the city's vibrancy and sense of community. Activities that are often seen are places to pick up and drop off relatives who come and go who pass through the Balapan station. There are also public spaces provided by PT KAI or public spaces in the form of places to eat and other shopping facilities.

From the discussion that has been carried out, the role of Surakarta Balapan Station as the City Gateway and Transit Oriented Development is very appropriate because the Balapan Station area is located and has direct access to city activity centers in Surakarta via routes and movement nodes for people and vehicles. The Balapan area is also an economic area that serves the surrounding area, it is hoped that it will be able to create economic activities that support transportation and Surakarta as a destination. The Balapan Station area is also a heritage area which has historical value and architectural characteristics that form an environment with a distinctive character in terms of socio-cultural context. Solo Balapan as a very strategic transportation base connects other transportation modes such as city transportation, terminals, airports both within the city

and outside the city. To achieve this perfection, it is necessary to continuously arrange buildings and the environment so that regional space can be utilized optimally, in order to achieve a race station area that reflects the beauty and comfort of the environment in terms of scope and time. Thinking must be based on micro, meso and macro levels based on existing potential, emerging problems and regional and city development trends.

Conclusion

Surakarta Balapan Station has great potential as a city gateway, providing a first impression for visitors through its design, architecture, and function. The exterior of the building plays an important role in shaping visitors' initial perceptions and expectations. Historically, this station was built in the 1800s by the Dutch railway company, *Nederlandsch Indische Spoorweg Maatschappij* (NISM), and its name comes from the location in the horse racing in the vicinity.

In addition to being a transportation hub, Balapan Station also plays a role in the local economy by attracting businesses, retail, and Surakarta's culinary specialties. This station also functions as a public space that supports social interaction and community activities. With its strategic location, Balapan Station supports the Transit Oriented De-velopment (TOD) concept, connecting various modes of transportation and becoming an economic and heritage area with historical and cultural values. To achieve optimal space utilization, sustainable planning that considers micro, meso, and macro aspects of city development is needed.

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