



Japanese Railway Scenery 5

A single-car DMU local train running in the middle of the plain between Ochiai and Shintoku Stations on the Nemuro Trunk Line in Hokkaido. This line was built to link eastern Hokkaido with Sapporo, the prefectural capital, and on to the main island of Honshu. The line used to cross the Karikachi Pass and was regarded as one of the most scenic railway journeys in Japan, although railway workers suffered from the long and steep gradients with many sharp curves and from severe weather in winter. The New Karikachi Tunnel (opened in 1966) and the Sekisho Line (opened in 1981) eased steep gradients and reduced the distance to Sapporo. The abandoned track near the Karikachi Pass was used in the 1970s to investigate the derailment dynamics of two-axle freight wagons.

(Photo: M. Mashima Photo Office)

