

The History of Seibu in Photos (Part 2)

Ⅳ The Rebuilding Period (2004–2016)

30000 Series Trains

Symbol of the reborn Seibu. Women take an active part in creating the “Smile Train”

2005

A train entrusted with a comeback

In December 2005, one year after the delisting of Seibu Railway, the Seibu Group launched a project team to develop a new train, one on which the Group would stake its comeback. More than 20 male employees were brought together from Seibu Railway's various departments, and to gather a broad range of opinions from employees, requests were solicited from each department.

What changed the entire direction of the project was a comment by Takashi Goto, the Seibu Group president, who said, “How about adding some women to the project team?” That brought 11 female employees onto the project, and in February 2006, the team was re-launched. What stood out was the women's opinion that the team needed to come up with “something that would startle people.” Given Seibu Railway's corporate culture, where many of the men had come up entirely from the front lines with the basics pounded into them, this was certainly a fresh perspective.

11 women

After numerous discussions, the team decided on a concept for the 30000 series train: “The ‘Smile Train,’ designed to be people-friendly and to make everyone smile.”

The project team's mission was to create a train that would become the face of the new Seibu Railway. Debate was always heated, and arriving at the final design selection was a particularly steep climb. So many opinions needed to be brought together that it proved difficult to narrow the options

down to just one. Ultimately what saved the day was the original “Smile Train” concept. This offered a bridge between the manufacturer and the project team, and unified their opinions.

Following many review meetings, in April 2008 the 30000 series train made its debut. The rounded, friendly design clearly distinguished it from existing trains of the time.

The basic interior design was the responsibility of the project team, both men and women. To gather difficult-to-quantify data on factors such as seat comfort, strap usability and the actual level of light inside the cars, project team members made repeated trips on existing trains to compare their features. This effort generated a great many new ideas, which led the team to make a number of passenger-focused improvements extending down to the finest detail.

The work focused particularly on a shift to universal design. For example, they lowered the floors from a height of 1,150 mm, standard on the 20000 series, to 1,135 mm, reducing the difference in height with the platform. By also lowering the luggage racks by about 50 mm, they made it easier for passengers to store and retrieve their baggage.

The Smile Train is also distinctly eco-friendly, with a front section and body made of lighter-weight aluminum alloy, reducing overall weight. Because many of the train's parts are made of a single alloy, they are highly recyclable.

The 30000 series train has since left the hands of its original project team, and has come to be known, even by ordinary passengers, as the “Smile Train.”



Outspoken arguments continued even after the concept for the new train had been decided.



The presentation to determine a manufacturer was notable for the number of women present.



In January 2008, the development team members were introduced to the 30000 series for the first time.

The Smile Train —Designed to be people-friendly and to make everyone smile

DATA Length: 20 m
Width: 2,930 mm
Height: 4,060 mm
Body material: Aluminum alloy
Maximum operating speed: 105 km/h
Maximum designed speed: 120 km/h



Straps



Straps are an egg shape original to Seibu Railway. The surface of the grip portion is given an antibacterial treatment. As part of universal design, the straps hanging from the luggage racks at either end of each car, and those in front of priority seating sections, are installed at a lower height than the straps above general seating.

Seibu Railway's original egg-shaped straps

Seatbacks feature a heart-shaped decoration, making it look from a distance as though the entire seat is "smiling." This also reflects the input of the women who were primarily responsible for the train's interior. Straps in the priority seating area are a bright orange color, making it easy to identify the priority seats even from a distance. Their rounded shape makes them easy for both standing and seated passengers to grip, and the straps are shaped to provide the strength needed when pulling oneself up.

Priority Seats



The priority seats seem to be smiling.

Transparent Glass



Large sheets of reinforced glass were used for the gangway doors between train cars. Long, vertical pieces of reinforced glass were also installed in the spaces on either side of the doors, greatly improving visibility between cars, and the use of large glass connecting doors has the effect of brightening the interior of the cars. Better visibility also plays a role in crime prevention.

Glass connecting doors brighten up the entire car.

I The Early Days of Seibu Railway

II Initial Period of Seibu Group Real Estate Development

III Business Expansion and Renewal Period

IV The Rebuilding Period