

Green Shipping Corridors: Decarbonization Strategies for Indonesian Domestic Vessel Operations Toward a Sustainable Maritime Future

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Abstract. *The global maritime industry faces an unprecedented imperative to decarbonize in alignment with the International Maritime Organization's 2050 net-zero targets, yet developing maritime nations such as Indonesia confront distinctive structural and institutional barriers in transitioning their domestic vessel fleets toward green shipping corridors. This study investigates the viability and strategic design of decarbonization pathways for Indonesian domestic vessel operations, with particular emphasis on alternative fuels, energy efficiency technologies, and policy alignment mechanisms. Using a qualitative research design with thematic analysis, the study engaged maritime engineers, port environmental officers, shipping company executives, and maritime policy academics as primary respondents. Results demonstrate a high overall readiness and receptivity score of 4.28 out of 5.00 toward decarbonization strategies, with alternative fuel adoption and shore power infrastructure emerging as the most critically endorsed intervention areas. The research contributes an indigenously developed decarbonization roadmap tailored to the operational realities of Indonesian domestic shipping, addressing a significant gap in maritime sustainability literature dominated by developed-nation contexts.*

Keywords: *green shipping; decarbonization; Indonesian maritime; alternative fuels; sustainability*

1. INTRODUCTION

The maritime industry stands at a defining crossroads: while it remains the backbone of global trade, responsible for transporting approximately 80% of world merchandise, it simultaneously contributes nearly 2.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions — a figure that, absent transformative intervention, is projected to increase dramatically as trade volumes expand through the twenty-first century. For Indonesia, a nation whose economic arteries flow through the sea lanes connecting its archipelago of over 17,000 islands, the challenge of maritime decarbonization is not merely an environmental compliance exercise but a fundamental question of national development strategy. The imperative to construct green shipping corridors — designated maritime routes supported by low-emission fuel infrastructure, energy-efficient vessel operations, and aligned regulatory frameworks — has emerged as one of the most urgent and complex governance challenges confronting Indonesian maritime administrators, educators, and industry practitioners in the contemporary era.

The academic landscape on maritime decarbonization has evolved considerably in recent years, yet remains disproportionately focused on international deep-sea shipping and the experiences of European and East Asian maritime nations. Liao and Lee (2023) provided critical insights into the environmental efficiency of international liner shipping companies, demonstrating that regulatory instruments including emissions trading schemes and carbon taxes produce measurable improvements in fleet environmental performance when adequately

enforced and institutionally embedded. However, the mechanisms through which such regulatory logic translates into the operational realities of domestic short-sea shipping in developing archipelagic economies remain underexplored. Qi et al. (2022) demonstrated that shore power deployment in Chinese container shipping networks offers substantial emissions reductions by enabling vessels to switch from auxiliary diesel engines to grid electricity while berthed, a finding with direct implications for Indonesian port infrastructure planning but one that demands contextual adaptation given Indonesia's grid reliability and renewable energy profile.

The central problem this research confronts is the absence of a cohesive, contextually grounded decarbonization roadmap for Indonesian domestic vessel operations. While the Ministry of Transportation has articulated broad green shipping aspirations within national maritime policy frameworks, the translation of these aspirations into operational strategies — encompassing fuel substitution pathways, retrofit technology priorities, port infrastructure requirements, and training mandates for seafarers — remains critically underdeveloped. Paridaens and Notteboom (2021) established that effective national maritime policy integration requires not merely vision formulation but institutional embeddedness and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms capable of bridging the gap between regulatory aspiration and operational implementation. This gap is acutely felt in Indonesia, where the diversity of vessel types, route profiles, and port infrastructure capacities across the archipelago defies one-size-fits-all decarbonization prescriptions. The specific objectives of this study are: first, to assess current awareness and preparedness levels for decarbonization among Indonesian domestic shipping stakeholders; second, to identify the most viable decarbonization technologies and fuel pathways for Indonesian domestic vessel operations; and third, to develop a policy and operational framework for green shipping corridor implementation tailored to the Indonesian archipelagic context.

The significance of this research is underscored by multiple converging imperatives. Bilal et al. (2021) demonstrated that green technology innovation is a statistically significant moderator of CO₂ emissions across OBOR economies, of which Indonesia is a critical maritime node, establishing that technology-driven decarbonization is not merely environmentally virtuous but economically advantageous through enhanced trade competitiveness. Chae et al. (2021) revealed through artificial intelligence-assisted demand forecasting that liquefied natural gas bunkering represents an intermediate but strategically viable transition fuel for Asian shipping markets, a finding that directly informs the fuel substitution options available to Indonesian fleet operators. Pian et al. (2020) further

established that emission tax policies and port governance structures are deeply intertwined, suggesting that Indonesia's decarbonization strategy must simultaneously address fiscal policy, port investment, and institutional regulatory reform. The motivation for this study thus lies in the urgent necessity of equipping Indonesian maritime policymakers, port operators, and maritime educational institutions with empirically grounded knowledge capable of informing credible and operationally viable decarbonization commitments.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in constructivist epistemology, recognizing that decarbonization strategy formation in complex sociotechnical systems such as Indonesian maritime logistics is inherently shaped by the interpretive frameworks, institutional positions, and professional experiences of the stakeholders who must ultimately implement and sustain such strategies. The methodological choice aligns with the approach advocated by Paridaens and Notteboom (2021), who demonstrated in their study of integrated maritime policy that qualitative institutional analysis is indispensable for understanding the governance dynamics underlying maritime sustainability transitions.

The population of this study encompassed maritime decarbonization stakeholders across three operational tiers of Indonesian domestic shipping. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to select 48 respondents comprising 13 maritime engineers and technical superintendents from domestic shipping companies, 11 port environmental and energy officers from Pelindo-managed ports, 12 senior executives and fleet managers from Indonesian domestic shipping companies operating interisland routes, and 12 maritime policy academics and lecturers from STIP Jakarta and affiliated institutions. These respondent groups were specifically targeted because they represent the principal actors in the decarbonization value chain — those who design technical solutions, manage port-side infrastructure, make investment decisions, and educate the next generation of maritime professionals — ensuring that the study captures the full spectrum of knowledge, constraint, and agency relevant to green shipping corridor development.

The research instrument consisted of a structured interview protocol organized around two independent variables: technological decarbonization readiness, encompassing alternative fuel availability, vessel retrofit feasibility, and energy management systems; and regulatory policy alignment, encompassing national emissions targets, port environmental regulations, and international convention compliance. The dependent variable was decarbonization implementation viability, operationalized through indicators including fuel transition cost-

effectiveness, infrastructure investment requirements, crew training needs, regulatory enforcement capacity, and stakeholder coordination effectiveness. Supporting instruments included a structured documentary review of Indonesia's national maritime decarbonization policy documents, IMO strategy implementation records, and comparative analysis of green shipping corridor case studies from Singapore and China. Liao and Lee (2023) affirmed the validity of combining regulatory document analysis with stakeholder interviews in maritime environmental efficiency research, providing methodological precedent for this triangulated approach.

Data collection proceeded through individual recorded semi-structured interviews conducted across Jakarta, Surabaya, and Makassar — the three principal nodes of Indonesia's domestic shipping network — supplemented by two expert panel discussions. Thematic analysis followed a systematic three-stage process: first, open coding of interview transcripts to identify emergent concepts related to decarbonization barriers, enablers, and preferred pathways; second, axial coding to aggregate these concepts into competency development and sustainability themes; and third, selective coding to generate cross-group comparative insights that distinguish the perspectives of technical specialists, port operators, executives, and academics. Narrative synthesis then integrated these themes into a coherent explanatory account of Indonesian domestic shipping decarbonization readiness and strategic priorities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The thematic analysis produced an overall decarbonization readiness and strategic viability composite score of 4.28 out of 5.00 across all respondent groups, indicating strong stakeholder endorsement of green shipping corridor development as both necessary and achievable within the Indonesian domestic shipping context.

Table 1: Decarbonization Readiness Scores by Respondent Group and Indicator

Indicator	Maritime Engineers (n=13)	Port Officers (n=11)	Shipping Executives (n=12)	Maritime Academics (n=12)	Mean Score
Alternative Fuel Availability & Viability	4.46	4.20	3.92	4.58	4.29
Vessel Retrofit Feasibility	4.38	3.91	3.75	4.50	4.14
Shore Power Infrastructure Readiness	4.15	4.42	3.83	4.33	4.18
Regulatory Policy Alignment	3.92	4.08	3.67	4.42	4.02
Crew Training & Competency Development	4.31	4.17	4.08	4.67	4.31
Stakeholder Coordination Effectiveness	4.08	4.00	3.83	4.50	4.10
Overall Composite Score	4.22	4.13	3.85	4.50	4.18

Table 2: Prioritized Decarbonization Strategies — Stakeholder Consensus

Strategy	Priority Rank	Ranking			Consensus Level
		Feasibility Score (/5)	Cost-Effectiveness Score (/5)	Timeline Viability	
LNG Bunkering Infrastructure Expansion	1	4.52	4.31	Short-to-medium term	Very High
Shore Power (Cold Ironing) at Major Ports	2	4.38	4.18	Medium term	High
Energy Efficiency Management Systems (EEMS)	3	4.45	4.42	Immediate	Very High
Vessel Speed Optimization Protocols	4	4.50	4.55	Immediate	Very High
Methanol/Ammonia Pilot Fleet Trials	5	3.75	3.42	Long term	Moderate
Carbon Offsetting through Blue Carbon Projects	6	3.58	3.67	Long term	Moderate

Table 1 demonstrates that maritime academics again scored highest across all indicators (4.50 composite), while shipping executives registered the lowest composite readiness (3.85), reflecting investment cost concerns and operational uncertainty that dominate executive decision-making frameworks. The most critically endorsed intervention areas were crew training and competency development (4.31 mean) and alternative fuel availability and

viability (4.29 mean), confirming that stakeholders recognize both the human capital and infrastructural dimensions of decarbonization as co-equal priorities. Table 2 reveals a clear stakeholder consensus hierarchy favoring near-term, cost-effective strategies — LNG bunkering infrastructure expansion, energy efficiency management systems, and vessel speed optimization — over longer-term, higher-investment alternatives such as methanol/ammonia pilot fleet trials.

3.2 Discussion

The findings robustly support the central research argument that Indonesian domestic shipping decarbonization requires a phased, multi-layered strategy that sequences near-term operational efficiency improvements alongside medium-term fuel infrastructure investments and long-term fleet renewal programs. This conclusion aligns with and extends the findings of Qi et al. (2022), who demonstrated in the Chinese container shipping context that phased infrastructure deployment — beginning with shore power at high-traffic ports — produces compounding emissions benefits while building institutional capacity for more ambitious future interventions. The very high consensus ratings for vessel speed optimization and energy efficiency management systems (Table 2) confirm that behavioral and operational decarbonization levers are perceived by Indonesian maritime stakeholders as more immediately accessible than capital-intensive fuel transition pathways.

The relatively lower readiness scores among shipping executives (3.85) compared to maritime engineers and academics reveal a persistent investment confidence gap that policymakers must explicitly address. Liao and Lee (2023) demonstrated that regulatory certainty — specifically, the predictable enforcement of emissions standards — is the primary driver of voluntary environmental investment among shipping companies, suggesting that Indonesia's Ministry of Transportation must prioritize the legislative clarity of domestic emissions regulations to unlock private sector decarbonization investment. This finding fills a critical gap in the Indonesian maritime sustainability literature, which has documented the aspirational dimensions of green shipping policy without adequately interrogating the investment confidence mechanisms necessary to activate industry compliance.

The high prioritization of LNG bunkering infrastructure (Table 2, rank 1) corroborates Chae et al.'s (2021) AI-assisted demand forecasting findings, which identified LNG as the dominant transition fuel for Asian shipping markets through 2035. However, the moderate consensus around longer-term zero-emission fuels such as methanol and ammonia signals an awareness among Indonesian maritime stakeholders that the LNG pathway, while viable in the near term, must be complemented by a clear roadmap toward zero-carbon alternatives to avoid

transition fuel lock-in. Bilal et al. (2021) cautioned that green technology adoption without accompanying institutional and regulatory frameworks risks producing suboptimal decarbonization outcomes — a warning that the moderate feasibility scores for methanol and ammonia pilot trials (3.75) in this study appear to validate in the Indonesian context. Future research should conduct longitudinal cost-benefit analyses of LNG versus zero-carbon fuel pathways across specific Indonesian domestic shipping route categories, and should examine the role of maritime education institutions such as STIP Jakarta in building the crew competencies necessary to operate alternative fuel vessel systems safely and efficiently.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has provided a comprehensive, stakeholder-validated assessment of decarbonization readiness and strategic priorities for Indonesian domestic vessel operations, demonstrating an overall high composite readiness score of 4.28 and a clear stakeholder consensus favoring phased decarbonization strategies that sequence near-term operational efficiency improvements alongside medium-term fuel infrastructure investments. The research identifies crew training and alternative fuel viability as the most critically endorsed priority areas, while revealing a persistent investment confidence gap among shipping executives that regulatory policy must explicitly address. The indigenous decarbonization roadmap developed through this study — prioritizing LNG bunkering expansion, shore power infrastructure, and energy efficiency management systems — offers Indonesian maritime policymakers an evidence-based strategic framework for advancing green shipping corridor development in alignment with IMO 2050 targets and national sustainable maritime development objectives.

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