

(4) Living Environment

- With regard to the measures for ensuring stable housing and improving housing quality, the “Bill for the Basic Law for Housing” was submitted to the 164th Diet session. The bill aims to provide for the basic concepts of the measures, responsibilities of the government and local governments, and formulation of basic plans by the government and prefectures.

- In order to create a society that allows all elderly to participate in social activities, play a social role, take social responsibility, and live happily with confidence and pride, the government has been making a united effort to promote a barrier-free society based on the “Outline of Promotion of Barrier-free Environments,” decided by the ministerial meeting held in relation to barrier-free environments in June 2004.

- Under the “Law for Promoting Easily Accessible Public Transportation Infrastructure for the Aged and the Disabled (Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law)” (Law No. 68, 2000), the Basic Policy for Promoting Transportation Accessibility (Public Notice No. 1 of the National Public Safety Commission, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Construction, and Ministry of Home Affairs, 2000) has been formulated. The basic policy aims to provide the goals for barrier-free environments, measures to be taken by the employers of transportation companies, and guidelines for fundamental barrier-free plans. In October 2004, in order to pursue comprehensive barrier-free measures for the top-priority development areas, including buildings situated in these areas, the government made amendments to the basic policy, especially to the matters that would serve as the guidelines for fundamental barrier-free plans prepared by municipalities.

- In order to ensure better accessibility for the elderly, the government has promoted the introduction of non-step buses as well as the installation of elevators and other elderly-friendly facilities in stations, airports, and other public transport terminals. (Table 2-3-41)

Table 2-3-41. Status of Transportation Accessibility Improvement for the Elderly

(1) Status of Making Passenger Facilities Barrier-Free (*Note 1)

	Number of facilities used by 5,000 or more passengers per day on average	End of FY2004		Number of facilities used by 5,000 or more passengers per day on average with toilets	End of FY2004 Facilities with toilets for the handicapped
		Barrier-free facilities	Barriers for guidance of the visually impaired		
Railway stations	2,758	1,343 (48.7%)	2,222 (80.6%)	2,631	858 (32.6%)
Bus terminals	43	33 (76.7%)	28 (65.1%)	35	15 (42.9%)
Piers	9	7 (77.8%)	5 (55.6%)	9	4 (44.4%)
Airports	22	7 (31.8%) (100% *Note 2)	18 (81.8%)	22	16 (72.7%)

Note: 1. The above figures conform with the smooth accessibility criteria based on the Transportation Accessibility Improvement Law.

Among railway stations with 5 meters or more height difference which are used by 5,000 or more passengers per day, the ratio of those equipped with one or more elevators is 64.0% and those equipped with one or more escalators is 70.3%.

2. Elevators, escalators, and slopes had already been installed at all airports by the end of March 2001.

(2) Status of making vehicles barrier-free

	Total number of vehicles, etc.	Vehicles, etc. conforming to the smooth accessibility criteria at the end of FY2004
Railway vehicles	51,593	14,383 (27.9%)
Low-floor buses	58,197	13,144 (22.6%)
Non-step buses		6,974 (12.0%)
Passenger boats	1,129	79 (7.0%)
Airplanes	474	193 (40.7%)

Note: "Vehicles, etc. conforming with the smooth accessibility criteria" are counted based on each vehicle's conformance to the smooth accessibility criteria.

(3) Introduction of "welfare taxis for the disabled"

End of FY2004: 7,255 (Total number of taxis: 270,703)

Source: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport

- The "Bill for the Law Concerning Transportation Accessibility for the Aged and the Disabled" was submitted to the 164th Diet session, in order to take comprehensive measures for promoting barrier-free environments. Specifically, the bill aims to make existing public transport facilities and buildings barrier-free and to make public transport facilities, buildings, and nearby pathways in specified districts barrier-free in an integrated and sequential manner.

- In March 2006, the “Eighth Fundamental Traffic Safety Program” (Plan Period: FY2006-2010) was decided by the Traffic Safety Policy Council.

- In recent years, fraud techniques targeting the elderly have become more vicious. For example, different unscrupulous business operators work together to visit victims’ homes separately and talk them into signing contracts one after another. Given these circumstances, it is important to conduct activities for raising awareness among the elderly, commissioned welfare volunteers, home helpers, and other people concerned. In view of this, the government provided them with “On-site Seminars for Consumer Affairs” at citizens’ public halls and other establishments nationwide in order to ensure that they may be aware of consumer affairs and learn countermeasures.

- In April 2006 or thereafter, “Comprehensive Community Support Centers” will be established based on the revised Long-term Care Insurance System. In response to this, the government prepared staff manuals and provided training programs for prospective staff, in order to ensure that the support centers might protect the human rights of the elderly and provide comprehensive consulting services by clarifying the actual situation of the elderly who need support and taking appropriate actions against elderly abuse.

- The Law to Partially Amend the Fire Service Law and Law on the Prevention of Disasters in Petroleum Industrial Complexes and Other Petroleum Facilities” (Law No. 65, 2004) came into force on June 1, 2006. In view of this, the government actively publicized and disseminated residential fire alarms. The government also provided home-visit instructions for fire prevention in order to reduce the number of persons killed in residential fires, a majority of which are the elderly.

As part of the Project for the Development of Anti-disaster Infrastructures, the government also promoted the dissemination of the Emergency Telephone Call System for Persons Who Need Assistance in Disasters.

- In order to promote evacuation measures for the elderly and other people who need assistance in disasters, the government launched a committee of intellectuals. The committee developed measures to be taken mainly by municipalities through discussions on how to provide support at shelters and to cooperate among public health nurses, nurses, and people involved in the Long-term Care Insurance System.

In addition, the government revised the “Guideline of Evacuation Support Procedures for Persons who Need Assistance in Disasters” that had been formulated in the previous year, in order to incorporate additional achievements of the committee.

- In accordance with the “Basic Plan for Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas” (decided by the Cabinet in March 2005), the government promoted the activities of elderly farmers who provided support for new farmers and prospective farmers, so that elderly farmers might carry out activities with a sense of fulfillment by using their knowledge and skills. The government also promoted exchanges between elderly farmers in rural areas and people living in city areas, maintenance and management of agricultural land and water and other regional resources, and the development of facilities for supporting the activities of the elderly.