

2 Overview of Current Policies on Road Traffic Safety

2-1 Improvement of road traffic environment

- Improvement of people-first walking spaces offering safety and security

The national and local governments pursued the following traffic safety projects in order to actively enhance the sidewalks of school routes, residential roads, urban thoroughfares, and other areas. Designed from a “people’s perspective,” these initiatives were implemented with the cooperation of local community members.

- (1) Aggressive efforts were made to improve sidewalks in school zones, etc. in order to ensure the safety of children commuting to elementary schools, kindergartens, day care centers, and children’s cultural facilities. Furthermore, safety was enhanced in school routes through the installation of push-button traffic signals and pedestrian signals, the construction of pedestrian overpasses, and the establishment of additional crosswalks.
- (2) Sidewalk construction and other preventive measures against traffic accidents were comprehensively applied on an areawide basis to “Safe Pedestrian Areas” (designated zones in residential/commercial districts that have a high incidence of casualty-producing accidents and are bordered by thoroughfares) with the cooperation of prefectural public safety commissions and road management agencies.

Sidewalks were also proactively built in residential areas not designated for the Safe Pedestrian Area program. In addition, prefectural public safety commissions and road management agencies concertedly implemented accident prevention measures using the “Accident Prevention Manual for Residential Roads”^{*} and other resources. Those measures included efforts to create safe, secure road spaces for both pedestrians and drivers through such improvements as control of vehicle speeds, clear identification of road shapes and intersections to drivers, and clear demarcation of pedestrian and vehicle pathways.

- (3) Further endeavors were made to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicycle riders through concentrated projects in areas with a high risk for accidents involving these road users. The projects included renovation and other improvements of roads, as well as construction of sidewalks and bicycle paths. Wide sidewalks were built where possible in order to provide a comfortable traveling space. In places where sidewalk construction was not feasible, such alternatives as pedestrian and bicycle lanes were created alongside the roads. In order to help the elderly and disabled people to lead independent, socially active lives, wide, even sidewalks based on principles of universal design were actively constructed mainly in areas near train stations, public facilities, welfare centers, and hospitals. Other improvements involved: installation of barrier-free traffic signals; construction of elevator-equipped pedestrian overpasses, pedestrian rest areas, bicycle parking lots, and parking lots with spaces for the disabled; and elimination of utility poles in road sections under renovation. Moreover, various projects, such as conversion of traffic signals to LED lighting and enhancement of road marker visibility, were implemented to ensure safe passage of seniors and disabled people, and to respond to the growing number of elderly drivers.

^{*} Accident Prevention Manual for Residential Roads The aim of this manual is to illustrate ways of effectively implementing accident prevention measures on residential roads. It systematically presents procedures, methods of improving road traffic environments, etc.

- **Application of Intelligent Transport Systems**

The nation continued to pursue the implementation of intelligent transport systems (ITS), which incorporate advanced information technology to coordinate people, roads, and vehicles under one integrated system. These systems are designed to enhance road safety and transportation efficiency and comfort, as well as to protect the environment by reducing traffic congestion and otherwise streamlining the flow of traffic. Guided by the principles established in 1996 under the Comprehensive ITS Initiative, the government spearheaded research and development projects, field tests*, infrastructure development, and other efforts that involved collaboration with industry and academia.

- (1) A key component of ongoing work on ITS has been the Universal Traffic Management Systems (UTMS), whose aim is to ensure traffic safety and comfort through a network of advanced traffic control centers. Using near-infrared beacons*, the system envisages the creation of control centers that will be able to establish two-way communications with individual vehicles on the road, thus giving the centers the ability to actively and comprehensively manage traffic flows and volumes. Via this means, the UTMS is aiming to provide advanced traffic information, manage vehicular operations, and give priority passage to public vehicles, as well as to reduce traffic pollution, support safe driving, and ensure pedestrian safety. Based on the UTMS concept, the nation took steps to improve its traffic systems and to install facilities for near-infrared beacons, which are the key infrastructural component of the UTMS.
- (2) From May 2007, Smart Way has been actively promoted on the express way in the capital. This has been done with a view to experimenting on public roads to verify the effectiveness of various safety driving support systems such as information provision of obstacles on the way and the status of traffic in front and confluence support by using image and sound from the 5.8GHz zone DSRC.

2-2 Dissemination and reinforcement of traffic safety messages

- **Promoting traffic safety education among elderly people**

In order to raise traffic safety awareness with the mutual development of elderly people, establishment of traffic safety panels in senior citizen clubs, senior citizen homes, etc., trainings by traffic safety instructors for the elderly (Silver leader) are promoted. Senior citizen clubs with related organization have developed voluntary road traffic safety activities such as the making of "Hiyari (shiver) Map" and they were given training and assistance to perform a leading role in traffic safety activities in the region and in homes.

From fiscal year 2006, the cabinet office executed "Safe Driving Promotion Project for the Elderly that Involves Participation, Experience and Practice" for the silver leaders and elderly people with influence in the regional activities in order to promote elderly people's safe driving in the region, and thus made efforts to train those who can continuously take the lead in the elderly people's traffic safety education. Moreover, "Three Generation Intercommunication Project for Children, Parents and the Elderly" in which three generations intercommunicate with the theme of traffic safety and "Visitation Project for Child-Raising and Elderly Households" designed to promote the concept of traffic safety by directly visiting child-raising and elderly households that do not have many opportunities to participate in various events or traffic safety classes were implemented.

* Field tests: Actual tests.

* Near-infrared beacons: Roadside infrared communication devices that measure traffic volume, etc., and relay information between vehicle navigation systems and traffic control centers.

2-3 Ensuring safe driving practices

- Enhancement of measures for elderly drivers

In the training for the elderly drivers, which is mandatory for drivers aged 70 or above, the necessary aptitude for driving is examined by asking them to actually drive automobiles and also by using the driving aptitude check equipment. Thus, they are encouraged to realize the physical functional changes and advice and guidance is given on the basis of that result as part of the teaching contents. Those people who have taken this course are not required to take a class when renewing their driving license. 1,354,401 received the training for the elderly drivers in 2007.

In the training at the time of renewing the license, an elderly people's class is organized for those people who are 65-year-old or more and less than 70-year-old and instructions were given on the characteristics of elderly people's driving and road traffic accident characteristics of elderly drivers.

- Enhancement of guidance for and monitoring of automobile transportation operators

Along with carrying out a thorough inspection of business operators who caused a major accident and of new business operators, joint inspection and control by the concerned authorities carried out on the taxi operators is also carried out on bus and truck operators, and thus enhancement of the inspection enforcement system and reinforcements are made. Besides promoting the establishment of the safety management system from the top management to the field site workers in accordance with the "Transport Safety Management System", which began in October 2006, the government carries out evaluation of the safety management establishment status. This has been done for a total of 142 companies by the end of March 2008 to ensure the safety of transportation.

2-4 Advancing vehicle safety

- Promotion of vehicle safety measures

Development, implementation and growth of advanced safety vehicles (ASV) that support safe driving are promoted by using advanced technology. In order to do that, the "4th Advanced Safety Vehicle (ASV) Promotion Program" was started in fiscal year 2006 and the collision safety test was enforced for 15 car models in vehicle assessment.

In order to prevent accidents caused by an imperfect service, such as a wheel breaking off accident of the large-sized vehicles or a fire on a bus, efforts have been made to be informed broadly of the points that should be taken care of at the check and maintenance, which involves the regulation contents of the Revised Motor Vehicle Checking Standard in force from the fiscal year 2007

Because automakers' wrongdoing relating to recall activities came to light, preventive measures were drawn out in fiscal year 2004. The government has reinforced its activities including gathering information about automobile defects, auditing automakers' activities and systems relating to defective vehicles, and the government's systems for technical validation. Preventive measures were enforced steadily in fiscal year 2007.

2-5 Improving rescue and emergency medical systems

- Promotion of the doctor helicopter

Regarding the Doctor Helicopter (helicopter with doctors on board for emergency) Project, which is intended to carry out Early treatment and to transport patients quickly and to promote the enhancement of medical care in the emergency site and on the way to a hospital, by the end of fiscal year 2007, these helicopters have been deployed in the medical emergency centers of 13 prefectures. While implementing this operation, coordinated efforts by related authorities and organizations were made to share information on the section or place for safe landing of the doctor helicopter and to create the "Operation Manual", and introduce the radio with the same frequency.