

Foreword

During the period from the first half of the 1950s to around 1970, Japan had suffered from significant increases in the number of road traffic accident casualties. This was partly because of insufficient development and deployment of traffic safety facilities against the rapid progress of motorization in that period and underdeveloped vehicle safety technologies.

As a result, traffic safety emerged as a highly important social issue. In June 1970, the government of Japan responded to this by enacting the Traffic Safety Policies Act (Act No.110 of 1970) with the aim of promoting traffic safety measures nationwide in a total and systematic manner.

Under this Act, the government has drawn up seven consecutive Fundamental Traffic Safety Programs since 1971, and has been working together with local governments and relevant private organizations to vigorously implement traffic safety measures in each of the fields of land, maritime and air transport.

As a result, compared with 16,765 fatalities in 1970, in the middle of the traffic war period, the number of road traffic accident fatalities were reduced by almost half, to 8,326 persons in 2002, and the number further decreased to 6,871 fatalities in 2005.

This achievement can be appreciated to be the result of the efforts made over many years by the national and local governments, by the relevant private organizations, and particularly by citizens.

However, it is still not satisfactory. Given the annual number of road traffic accident fatalities still exceeding 6,000 and the recent trend of a high number of road traffic accidents, it is the time to start renewed efforts to reduce accidents themselves. Moreover, with regard to other modes of transportation, including railways (including streetcars; hereinafter the same) and maritime and air transports, there is always the possibility of serious accidents, especially with mass rapid transit systems.

Above all, the prevention of traffic accidents is an urgent and critical task that the national and local governments, relevant private organizations and individual citizens must take part in and do their best. In this light, we need to establish a master plan of comprehensive, long-term measures that cover the full spectrum of traffic safety issues under the firm principle of respect for the preciousness of human life. Then, these measures must be vigorously promoted, aiming to achieve a society with no traffic accidents.

This Eighth Fundamental Traffic Safety Program is formulated to serve as such a master plan, and defines the fundamental principles for traffic safety measures to be implemented over a period of five years, from FY 2006 to FY 2010, in accordance with Article 22 (1) of the Traffic Safety Policies Act.

Based on this Fundamental Traffic Safety Program, the relevant ministries and agencies and local governments are required to establish specific traffic safety measures, taking into consideration the present situation of traffic and special needs in local communities, and vigorously and determinedly promote the measures.