

## **III Promotion of Further Measures for Prevention of Traffic**

### **Accidents involving Elderly People**

In Japan, in the so-called highly developed economic growth period there was a large-scale population movement, mainly of young people, towards metropolitan areas. This resulted in overcrowding of metropolitan areas and depopulation of villages. Suburban housing development was promoted in the overcrowded metropolitan areas catching the momentum of motorization in the period from 1965 to 1974 and diffusion of urban area progressed in the suburban cities. On the other hand, in the rural areas there was decrease in the younger population and increase in aging population which became a serious problem, and maintenance of public transport became difficult.

Privately owned car is a highly convenient means of transportation for many of the people. It has become essential for the people who are the resident of area having less convenient public transportation.

Currently, Japan is entering in a unique super-aging society in the world. So-called "Baby boom generation" has finally reached to the generation of 70 years old people. It has been predicted that the number of elderly people having driver's license will increase in future as this generation having high license possession rate will increase.

About the road safety, annual death toll exceeded 16,000 in the period from 1965 to 1974 and it was even referred to as "Traffic war". However, the traffic accident death toll significantly decreased as a result of enforcement of Traffic Safety Policies Basic Act, and the work on comprehensive road safety measures taken by the central government, local governments, and concerned agencies in collaboration with each other, and was less than 4,000 in 2016 after an interval of 67 years. However, among them, the percentage of elderly people accounted for traffic fatalities was recorded to be the highest ever at 54.8%. Moreover, among the reduced fatal accident, the number of fatal accidents caused by the elderly drivers of age 75 years or elder has remained almost unchanged.

As traffic is most essential part of stable improvement of people's lives, the traffic accidents relevant to the elderly people is an important issue for our country in which aging continues, and further measures are requested.

As for the preventive measures against traffic accidents caused by elderly drivers which has become an urgent need, relevant ministries and agencies are working intensively for the smooth enforcement of Revised Road Traffic Act, maintenance of the system supporting the life of the elderly people in the whole society including the security of the means of transportation of the elderly people and the study of necessity of further measures as per the instructions of Prime Minister Abe in the ministerial council. These topics are deeply related to each other, and we will study the measures while working closely in cooperation through the "Working team for preventive measures against traffic accidents by elderly drivers" which was established under traffic countermeasures headquarters. It is important to move them from implementable measures to immediate implementation.

On the other hand, it is important to continue the promotion of maintenance of road traffic environment, vehicle safety measures, safety education and public awareness about the measures to prevent traffic

accidents of elderly pedestrians.

In the "Tenth Fundamental Traffic Safety Program" determined in March, 2016, a target has been set to realize "World's safest road traffic" by considering the number of traffic fatalities up to 2,500 or less till 2020. In order to realize this, it is not only necessary to deepen the traffic safety measures considered up till now but to take the measures of new generation into account in which advanced technologies that contribute to traffic safety are actively incorporated. Advanced safety vehicles (ASV) which are equipped with a system supporting safe driving of the drivers by using advanced safety technology such as automatic braking contribute to the prevention of both the traffic accidents, that is, the traffic accidents involving the elderly pedestrians and the traffic accidents caused by elderly drivers. Further performance improvement and promotion is necessary.

We must improve the traffic safety of the elderly people and realize the world's safest road traffic by promoting the efforts taken not only by the concerned government ministries and agencies but also by the relevant organizations, private enterprises, and local communities in a unified fashion.