

New regional mobility utilising ICT

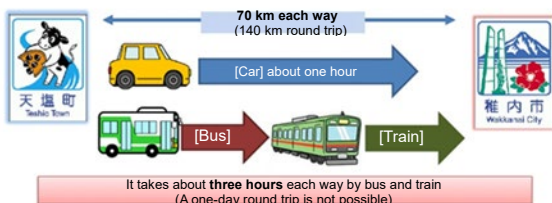
Ride-share traffic project between Teshio and Wakkanai

Teshio Town, Hokkaido



Background

Teshio town is a town with a population of about 3,200 and is close to the northernmost part of Japan, situated about 70 kilometres from Wakkanai City, which has the nearest general hospital and large-scale commercial facilities. However, since there is no direct public transport, and it takes about three hours each way by bus or train, which makes a round trip in one day impossible, the elderly and other people who cannot drive or do not have a car have had trouble travelling to the hospital and other places. Accordingly, it has been a pressing issue to secure a convenient method of everyday travel for those who suffer from such restrictions in travelling, and it has been necessary to establish regional mobility as a new means of transport.



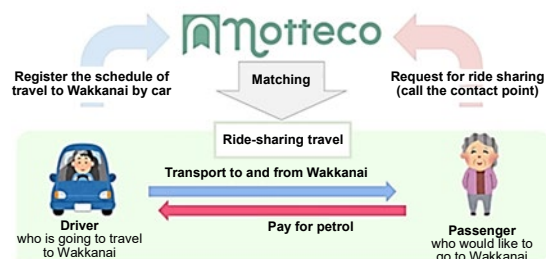
Project Aims

In a lightly-populated area, where existing public transport is poor (inconvenient), most people must travel by car. The project aims to secure mobility for those who have no access to a car on their own, such as the elderly, while imposing minimal initial investment and maintenance cost on the local government. Therefore, the local government has decided to solve the issues within the framework of a shared economy, which makes use of the tangible and intangible assets of private individuals.

Consequently, a new traffic infrastructure system has been established by displaying the availability of private cars already use privately on a daily basis through ICT to realise ride-sharing travel.

Project Outline

New mobility that compliments public transport has been established by ride sharing with private cars through ICT in accordance with the following procedures in order to provide the elderly with a means of transport to access hospitals, etc.



- (1) A volunteer driver registers by using the biggest ride-sharing matching platform in Japan, notteco, operated by notteco Co., Ltd., which displays vehicles' availability online.
- (2) A resident who needs a ride selects a driver

through the online travel schedule and completes matching (matching and arranging cars is done by phone).

- (3) The resident travels in the matched vehicle and pays the cost of fuel for the journey to the driver (legitimate under Japanese laws).

Strengths and Innovations

- Conventionally, in a lightly-populated area, where public transport is difficult to access, the local government bears appropriate expenses to provide a means of transport such as a dedicated bus. However, this approach aims to restructure the mutual assistance system in the local community based on a new concept (sharing economy), which utilises empty seats of an already travelling vehicle.
- As most residents with a high need for ride sharing, such as the elderly, have no access to the internet, rides can be made by phone. This measure eases the digital divide.
- Since this approach is unprecedented in Japan, it was difficult to build an understanding of the service among residents. Thus, information sessions were held to promote the system and provide demonstrations at places where elderly residents gather. Additionally, a ride-sharing gathering was held to work on eradicating concerns about riding with strangers.
- An operational model accepted within the framework of Japanese laws has been established by making use of the System to Eliminate Regulatory Grey Zones under the Industrial Competitiveness Reinforcement Act of Japan (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) (*Under Japanese laws, it is prohibited to give a ride in an individually owned car without any registration or permission to receive a reward for passenger transport).

Results of the Project

- A total of 173 passengers used the service during the first year after the start of operation (257 as of October 2018).
- Compared to additional conventional transport such as municipal buses, this method reduces annual costs by an estimated 25 million yen.
- One-way travel time for the residents who had used the public transport has been cut from three hours with no possibility of a one-day round trip to about one hour each way.
- The efforts of the ride-sharing scheme received

recognition from the national government as an example of best practices and appeared on the 2018 Annual Report on the Environment in Japan (Ministry of the Environment) and the Government CIO's Portal (case having solved regional issues by making use of a shared economy).

Problems and Responses

Although the need for ride sharing is consistently growing, participation by volunteer drivers is limited to only a few (the number of registered drivers is about 30).

◇ Causes and measures

- Psychological factor: Not wanting to give a ride to a stranger when travelling with an empty seat.
→ Inform and raise awareness of residents concerning helping those who need assistance in the local community.
- Poor planning: Most car travel is not pre-planned with a concrete travelling date and time.
→ Consideration of displaying fluid or flexible travel schedules by making use of social media.
- Low incentive for offering rides (Under Japanese laws, only the actual cost required for the travel is allowed to be received from the passenger of an individually-owned car).
→ Lobby the government to call for consideration such as a special legal measure for lightly-populated areas, where the situations and circumstances are different from urban areas.

Future Developments

In order to maintain the sustainability and infrastructure of the municipality with limited financial, human, and material resources due to population decline caused in part by the declining birth rate and aging population in Japanese communities in the future, policies to solve regional issues related to the utilisation of the resources and assets (productivity) in the region are to be taken by making use of the mutual help system that has existed in the local community through information technology based on the shared economy system in areas other than ride sharing as well.

Reference URL

- Ride-sharing traffic project between Teshio and Wakkanai: [notteco](http://lp.notteco.jp/teshio/about.html)
<http://lp.notteco.jp/teshio/about.html>

- **Cabinet Secretariat Sharing Economy**

Promotion Office

Share Nippon 100 - Regional vitality for the future -

Examples of shared economy (FY2017)

https://cio.go.jp/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/share_nippon_100_H29.pdf

- **Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism [25 June 2018] General traffic e-mail newsletter No. 114**

<http://www.mlit.go.jp/sogoseisaku/soukou/soukou-magazine/1806teshio.pdf>

Contact

Teshio Town Office, General Coordination Division,
Regional Revitalisation Section

Phone: +81-1632-2-1001

(* Telephone enquiries can only be handled in
Japanese.)

E-mail: ouentai@teshiotown.com

Send English enquiries to this e-mail address.

Definitions of Technical Terms etc.

- **Shared economy**

A social system to use objects, services, or places by sharing them with a collection of people. There have been various shared services that utilise social media to mediate borrowing between individuals such as car sharing among individuals and companies.