
TRANSPORT, ROADS AND TRAFFIC

This article presents an overview of the main trends and outlook in Japan between January and December 2021, focusing on the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure Transport and Tourism (MLIT).

1 Cabinet Decision to Promulgate Bills Partially Revising the Act on Promotion of Railway Crossings, etc.

Recognizing the necessity for improving railway crossings that are a cause of accidents and congestion, the minister is issuing directives from a flexible standpoint unconstrained by specific deadlines. In addition to promoting countermeasures that incorporate a wide range of different approaches, such as factoring in local knowledge and addressing the environment around railway crossings, a system for promoting the appropriate management of railway crossings after a natural disaster has been established. This was accompanied by the establishment of a system designed to utilize *michi-no-eki* roadside stations as natural disaster hubs (based on the results of recent natural disaster training exercises), and a system that enables the felling of plants obstructing railway facilities by railway business operators. These measures to strengthen the functions of roads and railways after a natural disaster and the like were promulgated by the Cabinet on January 29, 2021 in bills partially revising the Act on Promotion of Railway Crossings, etc.

1. 1. Further Improvement of Railway Crossings and Promotion of Appropriate Management after Natural Disasters

(1) With respect to directives regarding railway crossings requiring improvement, it was decided to abolish the existing five-year deadline and enable directives to be made flexibly in synchronization with the national five-year plan. In addition to allowing the submission of instructions from the municipal level, the maintenance of detours around railway crossings and the securement of waiting areas were defined as methods of improvement.

(2) To enable appropriate management in the event of a natural disaster, it was decided that certain management methods should be defined, such as the preparation of emergency procedures (procedures for leaving railway crossings open after a natural disaster and the like) for road administrators and railway business operators at railway crossings specified by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

1. 2. Strengthening of Functions of Roads after Natural Disasters

(1) After a natural disaster, it was decided to enable restrictions on the use of car parks at *michi-no-eki* roadside stations and the like specified by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism for purposes other than as a natural disaster hub by the road administrator.

(2) To prevent the blockage of roads and the like used for emergency transportation after a natural disaster, it was decided to require applications to install structures within roadside areas specified by road administrators, and to enable road administrators to recommend necessary measures such as changing installation locations or the like.

(3) In the event of a natural disaster, it was decided to enable the opening and recovery work of roads managed on a municipal level to be carried out by proxy on a prefectural level.

1. 3. Strengthening of Functions of Railways after Natural Disasters

It was decided to allow, upon receiving permission from the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, railway business operators to fell plants and the like that might obstruct railway facilities, and to allow the temporary use of land by other parties for natural disaster recovery.

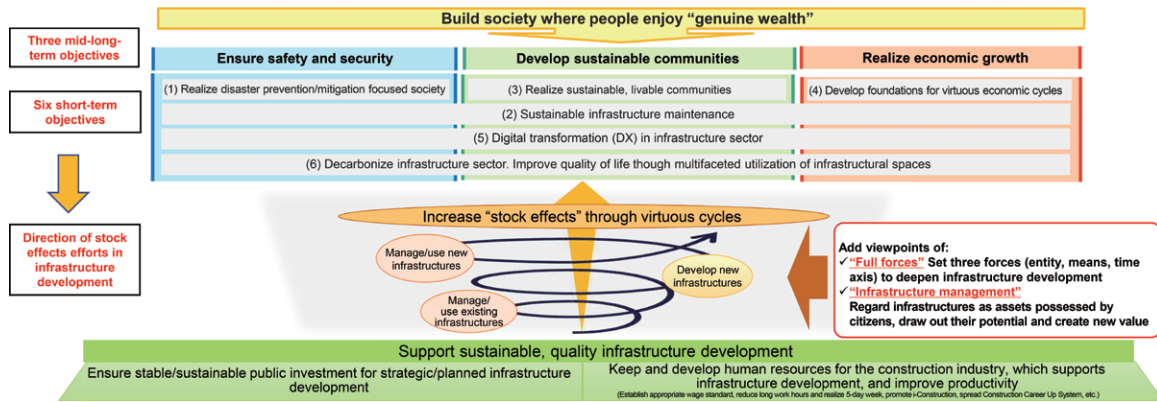


Fig. 1 Direction of Infrastructure Development Initiatives in the 5th Priority Plan for Infrastructure Development

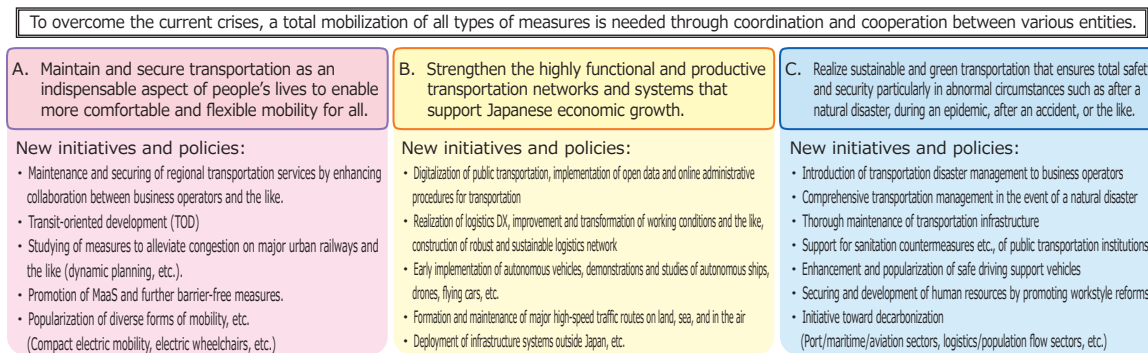


Fig. 2 Three Basic Transportation Policies of the Future

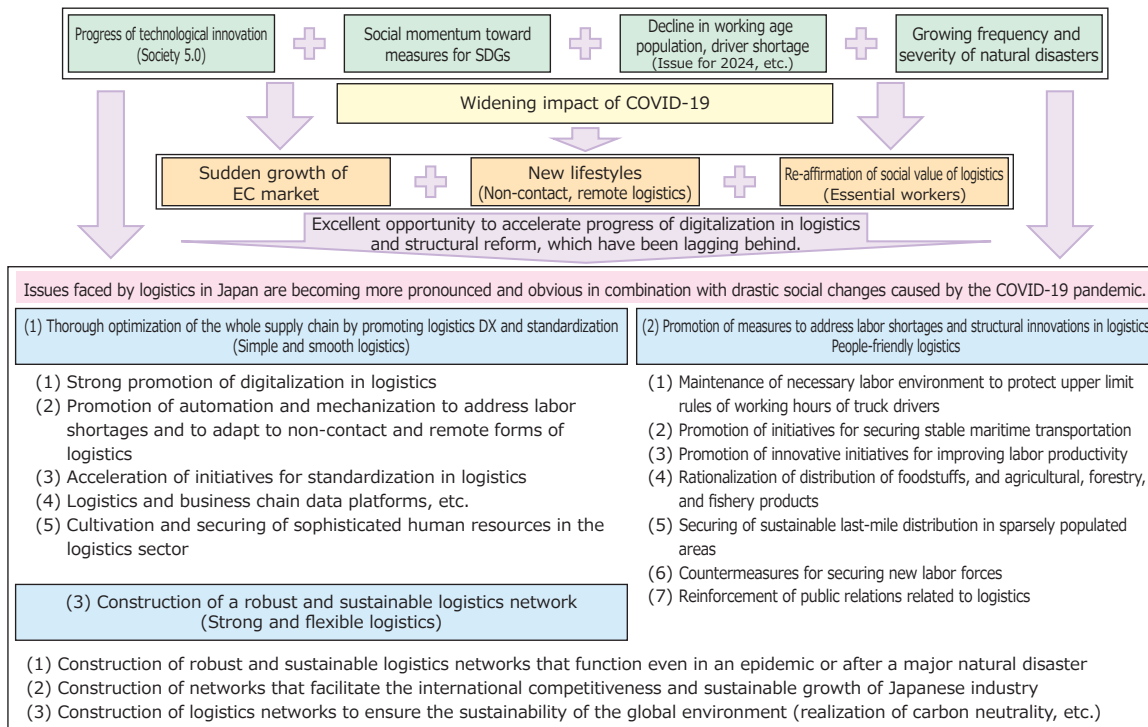


Fig. 3 Outline of Comprehensive Logistics Policy

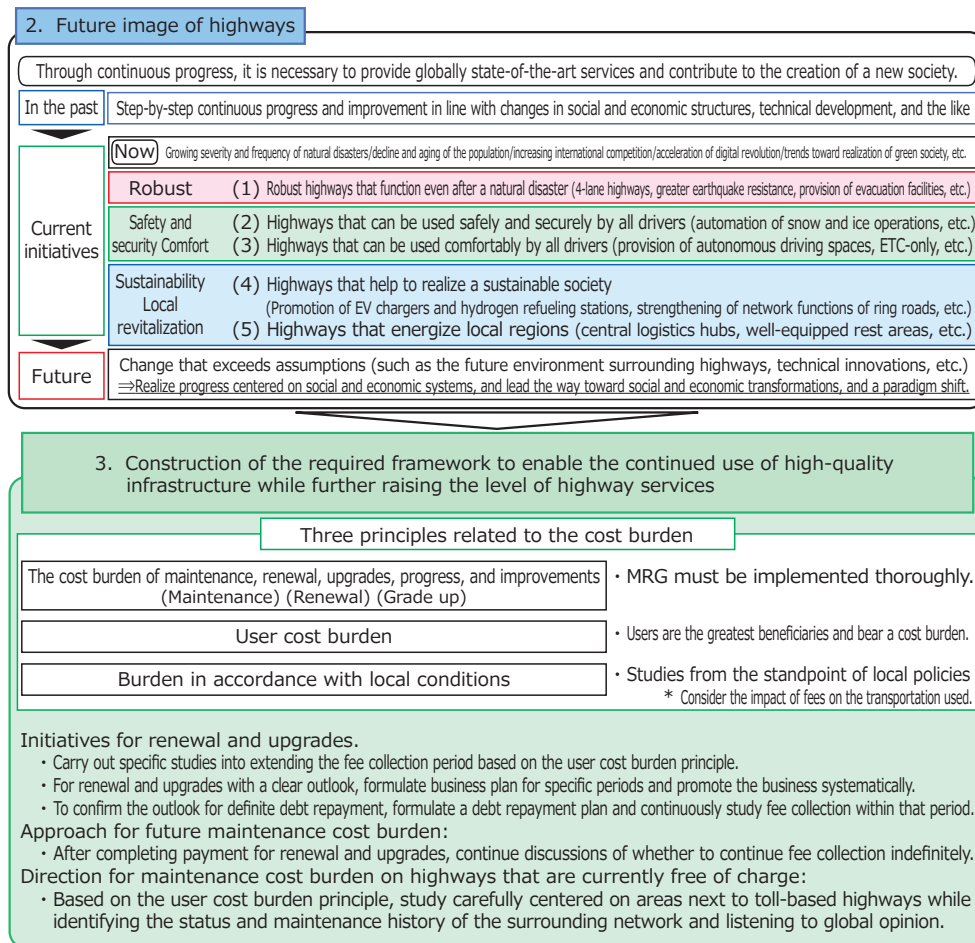


Fig. 4 Key Points of Interim Findings (Framework for Future Image and Continued Use of Highways)

2 Formulation of 5th Priority Plan for Infrastructure Development

On May 28, 2021, the 5th Priority Plan for Infrastructure Development (period of plan: FY 2021 to FY 2025) was promulgated by the Cabinet based on the Act on Priority Plan for Infrastructure Development (Act No. 20 of 2003).

This plan established three mid-long-term objectives (ensure safety and security, develop sustainable communities, and realize economic growth) and, based on changes in social conditions, six short-term objectives to be achieved in five years (objectives (1) to (6) in Fig. 1). In particular, this plan includes two new objectives related to the digital transformation (DX) and decarbonization of the infrastructure sector factoring in the “New Normal” concept based on changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and measures to realize carbon neutrality by 2050. In addition, toward the realization of these objectives,

two new viewpoints were added to maximize the stock effects of infrastructure development. These are the setting of three forces (entity, means, and time axis) to deepen infrastructure development, and the idea of infrastructure management (which means to regard infrastructure as assets possessed by citizens, and implement ingenious new initiatives at each of the development, maintenance, and utilization phases) to draw out the potential of infrastructure.

3 Formulation of 2nd Basic Plan on Transport Policy

On May 28, 2021, the 2nd Basic Plan on Transport Policy (period of plan: FY 2021 to FY 2025) was promulgated by the Cabinet based on the Basic Act on Transport Policy (Act No. 92 of 2013).

To help the transportation sector overcome the crises it is facing, such as the worsening of the business situation of the transportation sector due to the declining

population and the coronavirus pandemic, three basic policies (A, B, and C in Fig. 2) were defined as the pillars of future government-led measures related to transportation. Then, through coordination and cooperation between various entities, the aim is to implement these policies through the total mobilization of all types of measures.

4 Formulation of Comprehensive Logistics Policy

On June 15, 2021, the Comprehensive Logistics Policy (FY 2021 to FY 2025) was promulgated by the Cabinet to outline guidelines for governmental logistics policies and to promote comprehensive and integrated logistics policies coordinated between the relevant ministries.

Factoring in changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this policy presents the following directions that the logistics sector needs to take in the future as a focused issue-based approach: (1) thorough optimization of the whole supply chain by promoting logistics DX and standardization (realization of simple and smooth logistics), (2) promotion of measures to address labor shortages and structural innovations in logistics (realization of people-friendly logistics), and (3) construction of a robust and sustainable logistics network (realization of strong

and flexible logistics (Fig. 3). In addition, the policy defines key performance indices (KPIs) to quantitatively identify related policies and policy progress.

5 Interim Findings of National Arterial Road Sub-committee of the Road Committee of the Panel on Infrastructure Development

On August 4, 2021, the National Arterial Road Sub-committee of the Road Committee of the Panel on Infrastructure Development issued its interim findings about approaches and the like for the construction of sustainable highway systems.

These findings focused on the following five items: 1) initiatives to maintain, upgrade, and renew highways, 2) a future image for highways, 3) construction of the required framework to enable the continued use of high-quality infrastructure while further raising the level of highway services, 4) an ideal fee scheme that can be implemented rapidly, and 5) other items (such as the ideal roles for highway companies, highway agencies, and the government). These findings summarized the future target role of highways and made proposals for new approaches to the necessary cost burden to realize this role, and the direction for system studies (Fig. 4).