

Chapter 4: Setting the Stage for an Independent and Vibrant Life

[Realization of a barrier-free society based on the concept of universal design]

Steady progress has been made toward barrier-free buildings, public facilities, and public transport facilities. MLIT has taken a step further to embrace the concept of universal design. Based on the concept, the ministry will continue to move forward with its barrier-free policies, including facility improvement and human assistance.

As part of these efforts, MLIT presented the “Bill Concerning the Promotion of Easier Movement for the Elderly and People with Disabilities” at the 164th session of the Diet. The bill aims to promote the integrated and progressive switchover to a barrier-free society, comprehensively developing barrier-free policies.

Percentage of barrier-free facilities in public transport

As of March 31, 2005

○ Passenger facilities (with daily average total of users being 5,000 or more)

	No. of facilities in total	No. of facilities that meet transport accessibility improvement standard (Note 1)	Percentage
Railway/tramway stations	2,758	1,343	48.7%
Bus terminals	43	33	76.7%
Passenger ship terminals	9	7	77.8%
Airport terminals	22	7	31.8% (100%) (Note 2)

Notes: 1. Transport accessibility improvement standard are defined in the Transport accessibility improvement Law article 4 (in relation to the width of passageways, slopes, escalators, elevators, etc.)

2. By the end of March 2001, all the airport terminals have installed elevators, escalators and slopes accessible to the disabled.

○ Vehicles, etc.

	No. of vehicles, etc.	No. of vehicles that meet transport accessibility improvement standard	Percentage
Railway/tramway cars	51,593	14,383	27.9%
Buses	58,197		
Low-deck buses		13,144	22.6%
Non-step buses		6,974	12.0%
Passenger ships	1,129	79	7.0%
Airplanes	474	193	40.7%

Number of accreditations under the Accessible and Usable Building Law

FY	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Annual total	11	120	229	320	382	366	332	232	280	367	386
Cumulative total	11	131	360	680	1,062	1,428	1,760	1,992	2,272	2,639	3,025

Source: MLIT

[Responding to the declining of birth]

MLIT is working to handle the dwindling birthrate in the following ways: by promoting housing acquisition and other benefits that provide the leeway to support raising children; by improving road traffic safety to support raising children; by working on safety measures for play spaces in city parks; and by improving the environment in public transportation, buildings, and elsewhere.

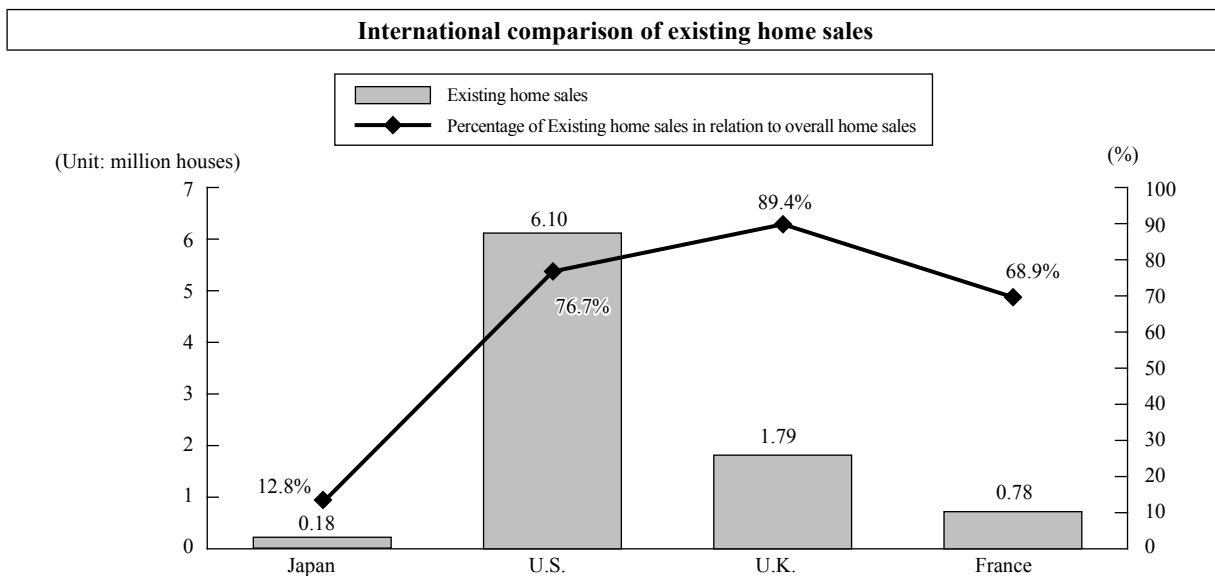
[Responding to the aging society]

MLIT is working to improve the living environment for the elderly to ensure they can live securely. The ministry is also providing transport services to cope with the aging society.

[Providing quality housing]

○ Developing and utilizing quality housing stock

MLIT is taking a number of steps to make better use of the existing housing stock. Among them are: creating environments conducive to the markets for existing homes and housing improvement; taking steps against corrupt renovations; systematically improving the stock of public rental properties; encouraging appropriate management of condominiums and facilitating their rebuilding; and promoting the conversion of office buildings to housing. The ministry is also providing tax and financial incentives for people to own quality houses. In addition, MLIT is working to maintain the quality of housing.



Notes: 1. Overall home sales represent the total of new housing starts and existing home sales.
 2. New housing starts data are for FY2004 for Japan, 2003 for the U.S. and the U.K., and 2004 for France.
 3. Existing home sales data are for 2003 for Japan and the U.S., 2004 for the U.K., and 2000 for France.
 Resources: Japan: MLIT, *New Dwellings Started* (FY2004); Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (MPHPT), 2003 Housing and Land Survey
 U.S.: *Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 2004-2005*
 U.K.: *Housing Statistics 2004*
 France: Compiled from the website of the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure, Tourism and the Sea (<http://www.equipement.gouv.fr/>)

○ Improving the framework for administrative guidance and oversight of construction activities

In light of the problem of fabricated structural calculation data sheets, MLIT is committed to improving and strengthening the framework for administrative guidance and oversight of construction activities. The ministry works to secure the safety of buildings, with special emphasis on disaster preparedness of built-up areas. MLIT has also taken appropriate measures to prevent accidents involving buildings.

○ New directions for residential land policy

MLIT is exploring new residential land policies, including promoting the supply of high quality land for housing, making effective use of fixed-term leaseholds, reviewing quantitative supply measures for land for housing, and the revitalization of “new town”.

○ Promoting residence in built-up areas

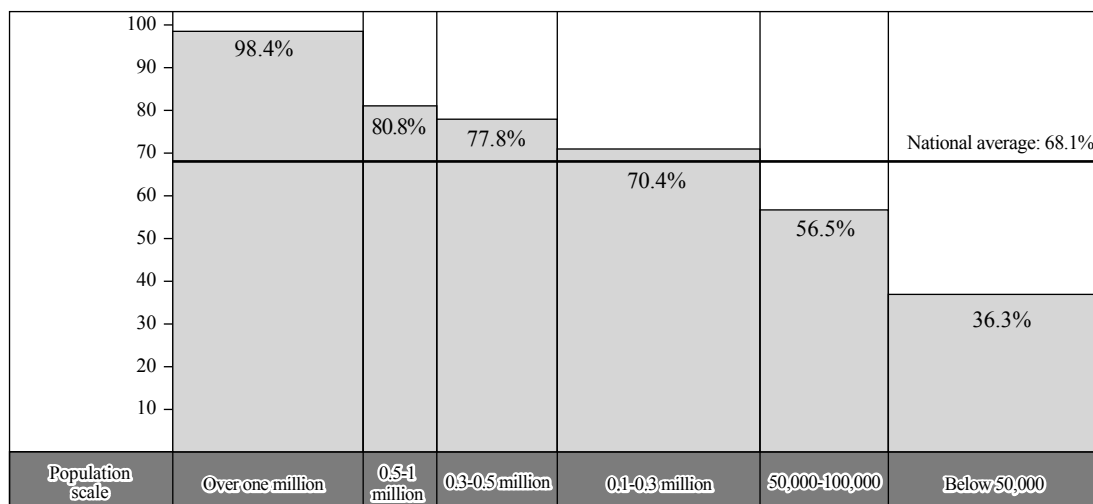
MLIT recognizes the need to transform existing urban areas into attractive areas with a highly integrated complex of various urban functions. It also recognizes the need of people in regional cities to live in built-up areas so that they can do without cars. Based on such recognition, MLIT is committed to providing quality urban housing and developing urban residential zones so that people are able to live and work in close proximity.

[Toward a comfortable life]

○ Sewerage development

There are significant gaps in sewerage coverage among regions. MLIT is working to close these gaps by encouraging sewerage development by municipalities, while ensuring overall efficiency of their efforts through such means as stepping up coordination among individual projects to develop waste water treatment facilities. The ministry is also addressing new challenges. For example, MLIT is taking steps to prevent floods in urban areas, improve combined sewer systems, and promote advanced wastewater treatment in closed water areas.

Sewerage coverage in municipalities of different population scales (as of the end of FY2004)



Source: MLIT

○ Urban park development

Urban parks constitute a basis for meeting diverse needs of the people, including an affluent living environment and fulfilling recreation activities. MLIT promotes urban park development so that such parks will also serve as a catalyst for many objectives, including: the community development that accommodates a falling birthrate and graying populations; the conservation or even creation of favorable natural environments; and tourism development and exchange and partnership among municipalities and other local entities that build on their own characters.

○ Stable supply of water resources

Climate and geographical conditions of Japan are rather unfavorable for stable use of water resources. In response, MLIT is redoubling its efforts to ensure stable use of water from both the supply and demand side. Efforts at the supply side include the construction of water resources development facilities and those at the demand side include the promotion of recycling and reuse of water.

○ Promoting road development that puts pedestrians and cyclists first

MLIT puts pedestrians and cyclists before drivers, particularly in community roads, so that such roads serve as a safe and quality living space.

[Improving convenience in daily life]

Along with promoting Traffic Demand Management (TDM), MLIT is making efforts toward stimulation of public transport at the local level and general ease of use of the facilities by formulating the Public Transport Stimulation Total Program. Furthermore, MLIT aims at achieving more comfortable and safety public transport through developing urban railway networks, urban monorails/ automated guideway transits, and light rail transit (LRT) systems as well as improving bus availability.

[Promoting IT revolution]

- Developing location information systems using ubiquitous technologies

Since FY2004, MLIT has been promoting the “Free Mobility Project,” which makes use of Japan’s advanced ubiquitous network technology, through the coordination and cooperation of industry, government, academic institutions, and citizens. The success of this project has led MLIT, in coordination with industry, government, academic institutions, and citizens, to explore the multifaceted application of ubiquitous location information systems as a new kind of social infrastructure.

Free Mobility Project

Location information can be read with a cellular handset from electronic tags and the like embedded in walkways, guidance signboards, and other objects. Information is provided in real time in a form suiting the user’s physical condition. Provided information includes: travel routes, means of transport, and destination information.

The diagram illustrates the Free Mobility Project with several key components:

- Electronic tags embedded in bumpy guidance tiles to mark the path for the blind:** A close-up shows a grid of tiles with raised bumps. Below it, an illustration shows a person with a cane navigating a path through a store with signs for 'flower' and 'BOOK'. A caption states: "Guides users as to the precise location of their destination through voice and vibration".
- Electronic tags attached to pictograms, etc.:** A close-up shows a tiny chip. A caption notes: "Extremely small IC chip measuring 0.4 millimeters" and "Photograph / Toppan Printing Co., Ltd." Below this, an illustration shows a station with a sign 'STATION' and people using mobile phones. A caption states: "Means of transport, location information, and other information provided in multiple languages".
- All information obtainable with a single cellular handset:** An illustration shows a hand holding a mobile phone displaying information.

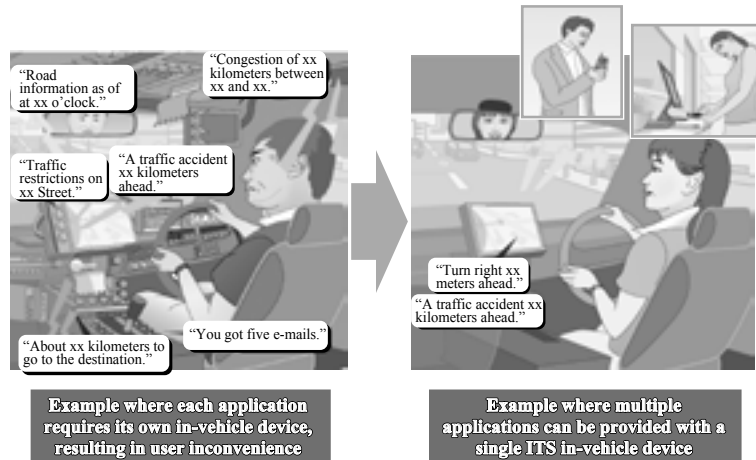
- Taking advantage of IT in public transport

With the goal of better service for public transport users, MLIT is moving forward with the “e-Airport” initiative and working toward enhanced provision of public transport information using optical communication technologies.

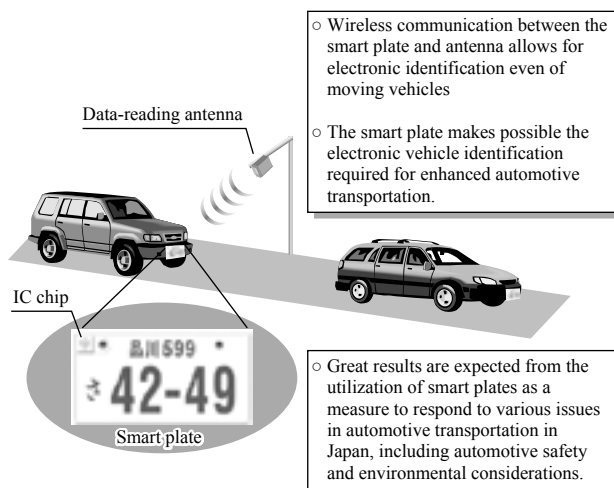
- Promoting ITS

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) are designed to link humans, roads, and vehicles using state-of-the-art information and communication technology. Among such systems MLIT is promoting the Electronic Toll Collection System (ETC), the Vehicle Information and Communication System (VICS), and ITS for bus services. The ministry is also promoting further development of ITS services, such as the Automated Highway System (AHS), Advanced Safety Vehicles (ASV), and electronic license plates called “smart plates.”

Conceptual Image of ITS Onboard Unit



SMART PLATE



○ Realization of “Digital Japan

MLIT is actively promoting the digitization and provision of geographic information as well as promoting GIS itself and high quality services utilizing GIS.

○ Realization of Electronic Government

MLIT is promoting the facilitation of online usage, the One-Stop Service for procedures related to automobile ownership, and electronic bidding and contract procedures.

○ Optical fiber networks

As well as developing networks of multipurpose ducts for optical fibers for public facility management and leasing vacant spaces in the ducts to the private sector, MLIT also allows the sector to have access to the optical fibers, which will not be used for a while, for supervising rivers and roads.

[Promoting recreation activities]

To promote recreation activities, MLIT is promoting, among others, the development of state-managed parks that meet the needs that a single local government cannot satisfy. Other measures the ministry is taking in this field include: promoting the use of and optimizing pleasure boats in an integrated way; supporting the development of marinas; promoting marine recreation by coping with growing numbers of boats moored without permission or those sunk and disused; and promoting sky leisure.