

# Chapter 4

## Promoting Regional Revitalization

### Section 1 Approaches to Regional Revitalization

The government recognizes regional revitalization as a key issue and pursues a policy of achieving regional revitalization from cross-ministerial and cross-measure perspectives under a scheme of integrated governance (Integrated Headquarters for Regional Revitalization).

As part of this effort, a third international forum was held in Kitakyushu City in October 2013 to publicize the “Environmental Future City” initiative to the world.

According to the comprehensive special zone program, 48 special zones have been specified and deliberations on exceptions to the governing regulations to help these special zones fulfill their own endeavors are in progress. Under the special structural reform zone program, preferential deregulation measures tailored to regional characteristics, such as an easing of use categorizations in reclaimed land in public waters. Under the regional revitalization program, financial and banking aids have been extended to the voluntary, self-reliant efforts being made by local governments to provide an integrated, effective impetus to the goals of rejuvenating local economies, creating job opportunities locally and so on. The selection of additional “Environmental Model Cities” for the 3rd time has also been commenced to proceed with the goal of low-carbon city development.

Because more of the local residents’ voices need to be heeded in promoting the endeavors for regional revitalization, the governmental system of consultation has been molded into a one-stop sequence to follow up the endeavors for regional renovation in a fully integrated flow for each regional block.

The MLIT promotes the implementation of comprehensive and strategic transport policies, such as revitalizing and renovating the means of regional public transport, such as local railroads, buses and sea routes to remote islands and improving on transport nodes, supports original and ingenious local endeavors, such as revitalizing central urban areas, renovating cities, migrating to an intensive urban structure and promoting tourism and encourages construction industries by promoting contracting at fair prices and supporting the growth of integrated regional industries with a view to realizing a regional economic society offering the ease of living with buoyancy and vitality.

For regions or elsewhere where the population is rapidly shrinking or aged, the Ministry works to help develop a community in which living is made easy from the local residents’ standpoints, by supporting the work of community planning activities undertaken by various entities, including NPOs, securing the availability of vital day-to-day living services, such as medical care and shopping, by revitalizing the village functions and consolidating the means of daily regional transport by supporting the introduction of community bus services.

Regarding the issues of urban reconstruction, the MLIT pursues to:

- a. Promote urban reconstruction projects, as by developing international airports and disaster prevention centers;
- b. Promote urban development by private sectors pursuant to the “Act on Special Measures concerning Urban Reconstruction”; and
- c. Promote nationwide urban reconstruction based on the urban reconstruction and development plans, etc. prepared by municipalities.

### Section 2 Promoting Measures Supporting Regional Revitalization

#### 1 Efforts Directed at Augment Regional and Private Self-reliance and Discretion

##### (1) Expanding and improving on administration on various subsidies

The “Regional Renovation Infrastructures Reinforcement Subsidies” are a cross-ministerial package of subsidies that

are granted to help develop functionally similar facilities in clusters in accordance with a regional renovation plan. The package comprises the “Road Development Subsidy” (municipal roads, wide-area agricultural roads or forest roads), the “Sewage Treatment Facility Development Subsidy” (public sewerage, village drainage or septic tanks) and the “Harbor Development Subsidy” (local harbor facilities or Category 1 or 2 fishing port facilities). As of the end of March 2014, 1,666 regional renovation plans were accredited. The “Regional Renovation Infrastructures Reinforcement Subsidies” are used to finance facilities development in the projects based on 1,030 of these regional renovation plans.

### (2) Supporting local regional revitalization efforts

The MLIT supports local efforts aimed at revitalizing regions, as by dispatching regional revitalization task forces consisting of private experts and others to those regions. It also awards “Handmade Hometown Prizes” <sup>Note 1</sup> to promote further approaches to individualistic and charming regional planning. In FY2013, 20 activities were chosen, including those aimed at adding to the festivity of urban centers and for reconstructing ancient trails. In addition, information that aids in regional planning, such as examples of regional planning construction works, has been disseminated <sup>Note 2</sup>. As of the end of FY2013, there are 1,188 subscriptions to the newsletter service.

### (3) Promoting use of know-how and funds originating from private sectors

The MLIT provides support not only to excellent private urban development projects, such as those coordinated with urban reconstruction and improvement planning projects undertaken by local governments and accredited by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, through investment by the Organization for Promoting Urban Development, a general incorporated organization, through joint implementation or the like, but also to the funds for resident participation type of community planning activities by subsidization.

In addition, the MLIT supports experimental efforts, such as sponsoring events in parks and other public spaces, and putting outdoor advertisements, to realize the regional participation type of sustainable community planning and to get it consolidated by keeping up and elevating the charms and vitality of communities.

The MLIT also seeks to upgrade the existing Tokyo Metropolitan Expressways in an integrated manner with the ongoing urban renaissance plan. To this end, the Ministry has revised the legal system behind the vertical use of street space by roads and buildings and started talking with other concerned organizations to put the plan into practice, using the Tsukiji River section as a model case.

Further, the MLIT promotes openness of road spaces to help develop and manage infrastructures in a new initiative of partnership between public and private sectors financed by private funds and to create new business opportunities that exploit urban road spaces. One example of such efforts in order to introduce exceptions to road occupancy regulations is to inaugurate a program opening a way to create chances of festivity and human exchange (such as installing open cafes) through the amendments made to the Act on Special Measures Concerning Urban Renaissance in FY2011. Another example is also an inauguration of a program for consolidating the international competitiveness of the nation’s industries and forming sites of global economic activities (such as sponsoring international events) in FY2013 under the Act on National Strategic Special Districts.

#### Example of a private urban development project accredited by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Sendai Aquarium (provisional name) Project

Customer attraction and human exchange businesses had been badly damaged by the earthquake in this area. An aquarium is then built as a new core of customer attraction to augment the charms of the area as sites of customer attraction and human exchange to regain and expand the nonresident population, thereby expediting the pace of restoration from the earthquake.



Source) MLIT

**Note 1** A system of official commendation by the MLIT in recognition of satisfactory social infrastructures that creates regional charms and individualities and the associated regional activities as a whole.

**Note 2** Regional Planning Information System - Repis:<http://www.mlit.go.jp/sogoseisaku/region/chiiki-joho/index.html>

## 2 General Endeavors to Realize an Intensive Urban Structure

While regional cities have so far expanded their sphere of urban areas gaining primary impetus from population influx into them, diminishing population now threatens a degradation of the livelihood facilities in the upsized urban areas, with regional economies and vitality decaying. Realizing an intensive urban structure in which a certain population density is maintained and in which urban facilities, such as medical care, welfare, schooling and commerce, are laid out on a planned basis, would be essential to assure the residents of sound and comfortable living and maintain economic activities and sustainable urban management.

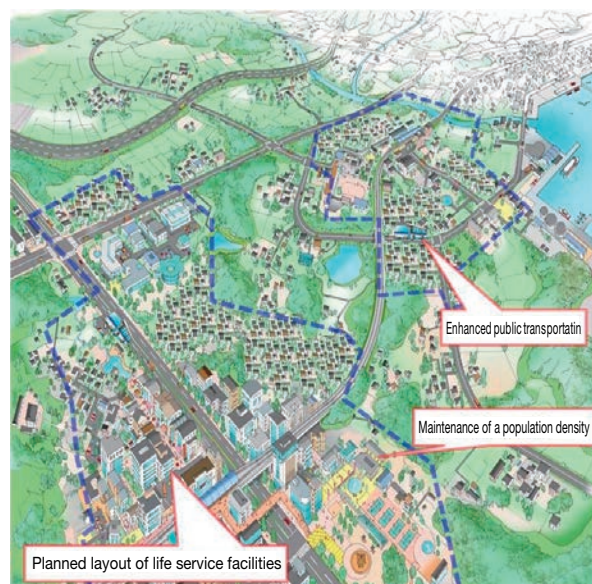
In the meantime, as large cities house a rapidly growing population of elderly people, with the resultant rises in the demand for medical care and nursing care, they call for properly laid out urban facilities, availability to public transport and so on to assure elderly people of efficient access to medical and welfare services. Accelerated community planning with charms and walkability to encourage the outing of elderly people would also be important.

To drive these measures in an integrated fashion, a bill for making amendments to the “Act on Special Measures concerning Urban Reconstruction” was submitted to the 186th ordinary session of the Diet to pass on May 14, 2014.

Efforts are also under way to concentrate urban functions, such as medical care and welfare, into core community zones by leveraging private funds and public real-estate properties, such as schools, community centers and public domains, and enhance urban transport to maintain access to these urban functions.

Figure II-4-2-1

Schematic of an Intensive Urban Structure



Source) MLIT

## 3 Urban Planning and Infrastructures Development Taking Advantage of Regional Characteristics

### (1) Emergency development of urban planning roads instrumental in encouraging private investment

The development of urban planning roads is significantly instrumental in facilitating urban renewal because it encourages the reconstruction, etc. of roadside buildings. For those routes under construction whose completion is bottlenecked because of only a small lot of land yet to be purchased, the local governments (project implementing entities) announce their pledges to complete the construction within a certain period of time (completion time declaration routes; as of April, 2013, 104 routes were declared by 48 project implementing entities) to speed up the development of the project benefits.

### (2) Developing transport nodes

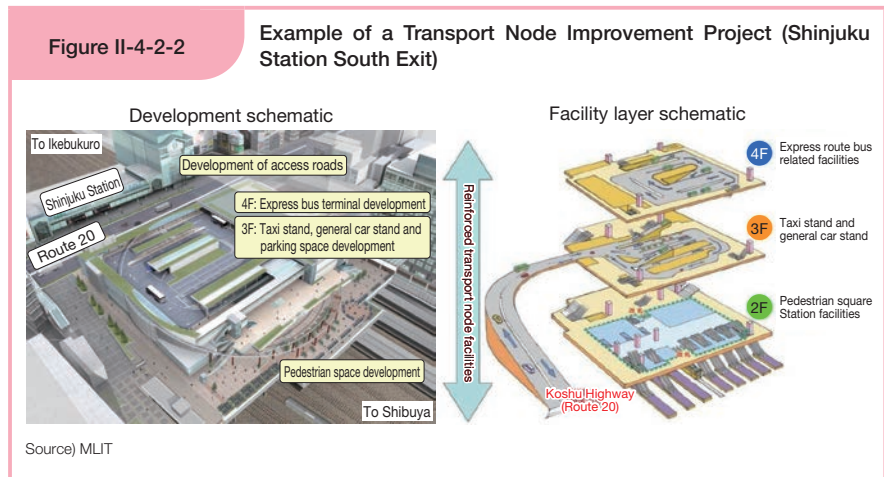
Transport nodes, such as railway stations and bus terminals, hold a high degree of convenience and potentials as a core of urban reconstruction, because they attract numerous people to use the various kinds of transport facilities that converge on them.

The MLIT leverages the implementation of transport node improvement projects, urban and regional transport strategy promotion projects, General Improvement of Railway Stations and so on at the transport nodes, such as the Shinjuku St. South Exit District, and in the surrounding areas to improve the ease with which passengers transfer from one means of transport to another, to consolidate the urban areas disrupted by railways, etc., to improve the station functions and so on and thus to streamline urban traffic and build up the functions of these transport nodes.

Further, the MLIT subsidizes the implementation of the Station-Town Partnership Project in progress in the Sannomiya

Station Front South District (Kobe City), a project based on a comprehensive plan formulated by a conference composed of local governments, railway operators and so on to keep the project moving efficiently. Coupled with a project for facilitating use for the Hanshin Sannomiya Station facilities, the project aims to renovate the station area in an integrated fashion.

The MLIT also encourages upgrading of the station facilities as a general core of safe and comfortable regional living, as by building child-support and medical facilities in the premises of existing railway stations, from viewpoints of regional concentration by bringing medicine, work and living into closer vicinities.



### (3) Wide-area development of infrastructures to induce firm location

Competition, collaboration and regional buoyancy in East Asia should benefit greatly by inviting and accumulating internationally competitive growing industries in the individual regions. Motivated by this recognition, measures have been promoted to support expanding regional employment and more buoyant economy by concentrating investment on the development of those infrastructures, such as airports, ports and harbors, railroads, and wide-area expressway networks, that are truly needed to carry out unique regional approaches.

#### a. Enhancing the functions of airport facilities

Air transportation networks connecting various locations at home and abroad contribute greatly to the revitalization of local communities by promoting regional tourism and supporting economic activities. Particularly, with the increasing globalization of the world economy due to the growing international division of labor, air transportation that can provide express delivery services is becoming increasingly important in recent years. To keep pace with such trends, MLIT is making efforts to reinforce airport functions, for instance, by promoting renovation projects in terminal areas, including aprons.

#### b. Port and harbor development

Amid globally tight supply-demand balances for resources, energies and so on, assuring Japan of stable, low-cost imports of these substances to build up industrial competitiveness of the nation's industries and to maintain and even create employment and revenues should be one of the tasks of foremost importance as the nation depends on imports for virtually 100% of its requirements. The MLIT seeks to build stable and efficient networks of marine transportation for resources, energies and so on by developing large ship-ready port and harbor facilities as key locations, promoting inter-business partnership and so on.

#### c. Railway development

The nationwide network of trunk railways is the lifeblood of passenger and freight transport, accelerating interaction between blocks and between regions, encouraging industrial location and activating regional economies to energize regional living. Rail freight transport, in particular, plays a dominant role in moving industrial commodities, etc. that support regional economies.

#### d. Road development

Most of the newly built plants are located within 10 km from an expressway interchange from viewpoints of simplified logistic flow, ready access to distribution and so on. The formation of highway networks, including arterial high-standard

highways, are being promoted to strengthen international competitiveness and to further regional independence and industrial growth, as by realizing speedy and smooth logistics.

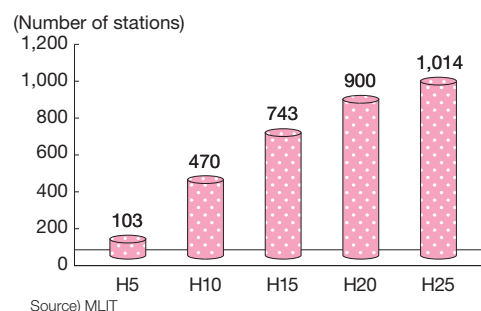
#### (4) Promoting community-conscious projects and programs

##### a. Michi-no-Eki

Located roadside, Michi-no-Eki is a facility with three functions; roadside amenities, including parking spaces and restrooms, a source of information, including highway and regional information, and a forum of regional partnership, which encourages interaction between a region and users of the roads in that region and between regions. As of March 2014, 1,014 Michi-no-Eki are registered. Support will be extended to renewing existing facilities, developing disaster preparedness facilities, responding to evolving needs in conjunction with the ministers and agencies concerned and so on to upgrade Michi-no-Eki from a mere source of roadside amenities to a forum for addressing local tasks.

Figure II-4-2-3

Changes in the Number of Michi-no-Eki Registered



##### b. Promoting river town development

The MLIT is keen to exploit the regional resources, or charms, of rivers, such as scenery, history and culture, that could help revitalize local industries, such as tourism, etc., and the wisdom, or ingenuities, of the locals. It is committed to expediting spatial planning to merge excellent concepts of community development with the waterside, through implementation of the highly practicable plans worked out in conjunction with local governments and local residents to develop and utilize rivers and the waterside.

##### c. Managing rivers with resident participation to suit regional characteristics

Those individuals who possess an expert knowledge of river environments and who are zealous for the idea of affluent river development are appointed “river environment preservation monitors” to help create and preserve river environments and carry out meticulous activities aimed at ensuring and promoting orderly river usage. “River environment protection monitors” are also appointed, and work at collecting information about river management, such as locating cases of illegal garbage dumping into rivers and detecting flaws in the river facilities, and promoting the philosophy of river preservation.

Further, with the inauguration of a river cooperation organization designation program, the MLIT designates those private organizations, etc. that pursue activities voluntary relevant to the development, maintenance, etc. of river environments as “river cooperation organizations” and legally accredits them as an organization working in conjunction with a river administrator, with a view to promoting their organized voluntary activities and driving diverse modes of river management tailored to specific regional conditions.

##### d. Supporting efforts to take advantage of the regional features of the seaside

The implementation of seaside environment development projects, which formulate seaside usage revitalization plans and develop seaside preservation facilities according to those plans, are supported by granting General Social Infrastructures Development Subsidies to them to revitalize the usage of the seaside and add to its charms as a tourist resource.

##### e. Regional promotion built around ports

Efforts made to help Japan grow into a tourism nation and grab more inbound foreign tourism include constructing passenger ship terminals, a gate to Japan’s tourism, and opening a one-stop desk for foreign cruise shipping companies inaugurate in the MLIT Ports and Harbors Bureau. Efforts have also been directed at driving the development of hardware and software environments for encouraging ocean-going cruise ships to call in at Japan in a bid to approach regional revitalization through activated cruising, such as setting up the website as a source of visitors’ information in the vicinity of way port.

Further, Minato Oases have been deployed nationwide to use port and seaside facilities as the sources of information and centers of interaction with local people, tourists and so on. As of the end of FY2013, 76 ports are registered across

Japan. The National Council on Minato Oases, which is committed to making these Minato Oases a forum of information or human interaction, jointly implementing projects that help promote Minato Oases nationwide, sponsors events, such as “All Japan Sea-kyu Gourmet Competition,” joint promotional activities and so on.

Figure II-4-2-4

National Map of Minato Oases



#### f. Building centers of marine leisure

The MLIT not only drives the construction of Umi-no-Eki Stations as marine leisure sites that leverage existing port facilities, marinas, Fisharena (fishing + arena) and the like (as of the end of December 2013, 146 Umi-no-eki available) but also provides support, etc. to diverse, regionally distinctive efforts in progress at Umi-no-eki, such as cruising by rental boats, sale of marine products, a hands-on experience with fishing and sponsoring of events. The MLIT also collaborates with the Fisheries Agency to respond to pleasure boat users' needs by preparing and distributing access guides for pleasure boat users to use fishing ports having enough capacities to host them, promote the registration of such fishing ports as Umi-no-eki and so on.

Figure II-4-2-5

Schematic of an Umi-no-eki Station

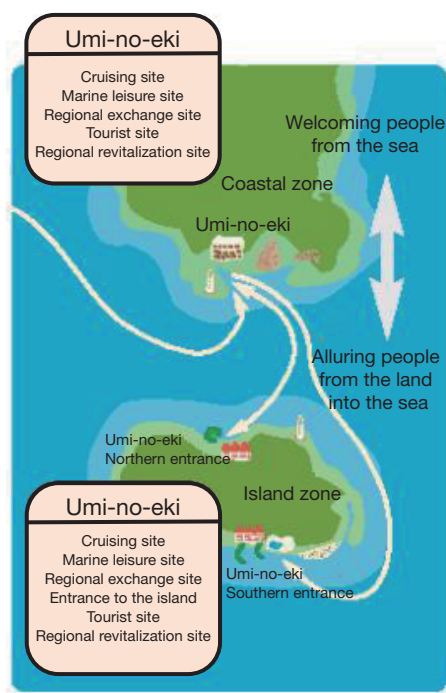
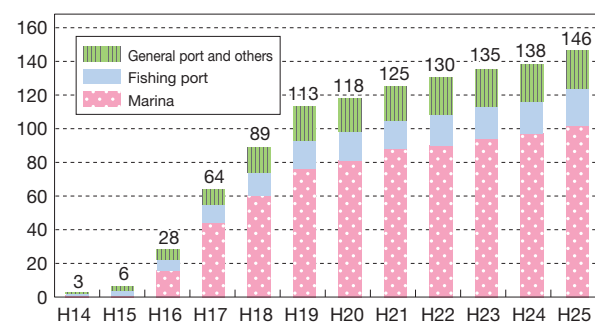


Figure II-4-2-6

Changes in the Number of Umi-no-eki Registered



# Column

## Inaugurating a One-stop desk for Cruise Promotion – Efforts Directed at Encouraging More Cruise Ships to Call in –

With the recent drastically growing population of cruise fans worldwide, the economically leaping Asia is seen no exception to this trend. As the number of cruise ships calling in at Japan, bringing in numerous passengers aboard to the ports of call, the resultant potentials of huge economic effects, among other things, might promise a clue to the advancement of tourism and regional revitalization.

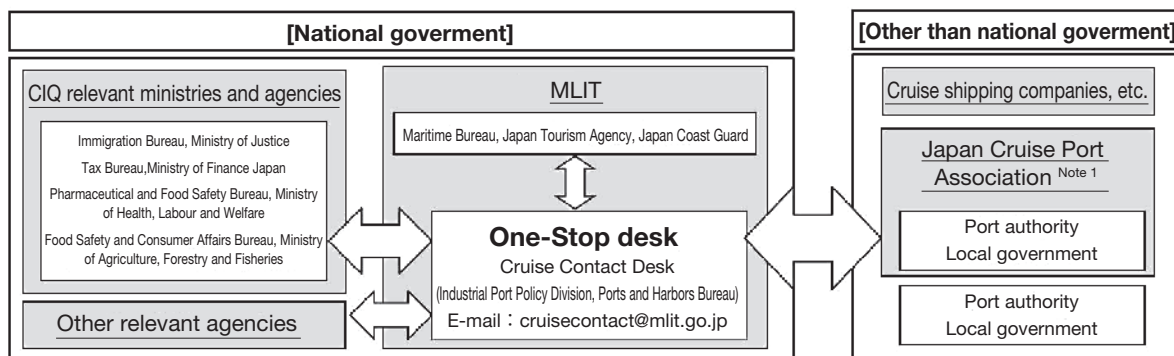
While efforts are currently under way at various locations in Japan to encourage cruise ships to call in, it had been pointed out that Japan did not have a unified point of contact for overseas cruise shipping companies to consult as they sought to call in at Japan or that enough information was not available about the ports of call accessible in Japan. As a solution to these problems, a one-stop desk was opened in the MLIT Ports and Harbors Bureau

in June 2013 in collaboration with the ministers and agencies concerned to encourage more foreign cruise ships to call in at Japan, so it could come up with unified responses to the queries from cruise shipping companies and the like. The one-stop desk shares information with, or works jointly with, associated administrative agencies to respond to incoming queries either on its own or by way of such administrative agencies.

Since the promotion of cruising has been declared in the “Action Program for Forging a Tourism Nation” (approved on June 11, 2013 at a meeting of the Ministerial Conference on the Promotion of a Tourism Nation), the MLIT will carry on its efforts to accelerate the calling-in of cruise ships, such as disseminating information about the inauguration of the one-stop desk.

### One-stop desk for cruise shipping companies

The one-stop desk inaugurated in the MLIT Ports and Harbors Bureau shares information with, or works jointly with, associated administrative agencies, to respond to incoming queries from cruise shipping companies, etc. either on its own or by way of such administrative agencies.



\*1 An association of 99 entities, including nationwide port authorities, formed to contribute to regional revitalization, etc. through the promotion of cruise shipping.

Source) MLIT

### (5) Promoting the maintenance of cadastral maps positively

Cadastral surveys are conducted by municipalities with regard to the boundaries of each individual parcel of land. The MLIT is keen to promote the maintenance of cadastral maps positively through the acceleration of cadastral surveys in the urban areas where such surveys lag behind, the implementation of public-private boundary surveys by the government in preparation for cadastral surveys, the implementation of boundary information maintenance surveys in the mountainous villages, review of the ways to utilize survey findings other than cadastral surveys and so on.

In the Great East Japan Earthquake-stricken areas, the clarification of the boundaries of land is promoted through the implementation of public-private boundary surveys by the government to speed up the pace of reconstruction.

As a lesson learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake, the maintenance of cadastral maps is also promoted mainly in those areas that are predicted to fall victim to massive disasters in the future, to help enhance the regional power to

defend against quake damages in coordination with the efforts to prepare for and reduce the effects of natural disasters.

#### (6) Deep underground utilization

Technological studies on smoother reviews are in progress to facilitate the implementation of highly public projects in the three major metropolitan areas based on the “Act on Special Measures concerning Public Use of Deep Underground.” In addition, information about deep underground is exchanged by means of the “Deep Underground Utilization Council” that has been formed of national administrative agencies and prefectures concerned for each of the target areas (Tokyo Metropolitan, Kinki Metropolitan and Chubu Metropolitan Areas).

## 4 Self-Reliance and Revitalization of Wide-Area Blocks, and Formation of National Land

### (1) Self-reliance and revitalization of wide-area blocks

To achieve regional revitalization and sustainable growth, it is important to deploy measures in an integrated manner while drawing out regional wisdom and devices. To this end, the deployment of measures tailored to characteristics of the diverse wide-area blocks has been pursued with a view to shaping a national land in which the wide-area blocks can grow in a self-reliant manner in line with the National Spatial Strategies and Regional Plans. The MLIT also pursues measures to promote the formulation and implementation of strategies by public-private partnership organizations to allow various regional entities to step up the revitalization of their regions by taking advantage of their specific characteristics, to provide governmental aid to these entities and to proceed with community planning by the leaders of a “new standard of publicness.”

#### a. Promoting regional self-reliance and revitalization

To implement hardware-software mixes of efforts designed to form self-reliant wide-area blocks and to revitalize the regions through buoyant human or material traffic, the MLIT has granted subsidies to 119 plans on the basis of wide-area regional revitalization infrastructures development plans prepared by prefectures. Of these plans, 44 have been worked out by multiple prefectures working in accord and cooperation in a bid to revitalize even wide areas.

#### b. Promoting the development of infrastructures for regional revitalization with partnership between the public and private sectors

To facilitate smooth migration of those projects that have been worked out in a partnership between the public and private sectors to contribute to the implementation of wide-area regional strategies for target regions, from the stage of infrastructures development planning into the stage of project implementation smoothly and speedily at the timing of private decision making, a system was inaugurated in FY2011. In FY2013, 6 surveys were supported, including those into the issues of feasibility of introducing renewable energies into public civil-engineering facilities.

#### c. Promoting regional planning with diverse entities interworking

To promote self-reliant and sustainable regional planning with diverse entities interworking, the MLIT has compiled:

- (a) a scheme of supporting the local circulation of “meaningful funds” to provide regional planners with funds and resources, and
- (b) know-how on excellent approaches to be taken by intermediate support groups, etc. and considerations in their implementation into sharable content.

### (2) Promotion, etc. of regional center formation

#### a. Developing centers of self-reliant growth of diverse wide-area blocks

The MLIT has promoted development of regional centers as a foothold for the concentration of unique local industrial, cultural and other features in accordance with the “Multi-Polar Patterns National Land Formation Promotion Act.” In addition, the development of Business Core Cities <sup>Note</sup> as defined in the National Capital Region Development Plan

**Note** A core city is a city located outside the wards of Tokyo that should serve as the core of a reasonably wide area that surrounds its location. (There are 14 core cities.)

continues, by relocating business facilities and concentrating various other functions in the core cities, helping ease excessive concentration in downtown Tokyo to some extent. The development of Business Core Cities will continue further. In addition, the MLIT has driven the construction of Tsukuba Academic City to pursue urban revitalization by taking advantage of an accumulation of science and technology in accordance with the “Act on Construction of Tsukuba Science City.” Further, environmentally friendly cities are being built along the Tsukuba Express railroad line by leveraging the characteristics of Tsukuba Science City as the pace of urban development accelerates. The Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of Founding of the Tsukuba Science City was held in Tsukuba City on November 12, 2013. In the Kinki Metropolitan area, on the other hand, the construction of Kansai Science City is underway to form a new foothold for the deployment of cultural, academic and research activity in accordance with the “Act on Promotion of construction of Cultural and Academic Cities in Kansai Area.” Further efforts to promote the science city continue in a partnership among the ministries concerned, local governments, economic circles and so on pursuant to the “Basic Policy for the Construction of Kansai Science City” that reflects the “Third Stage Plan.” In addition, the MLIT promotes the implementation of a development plan based on the “Act on Development of Osaka Bay Areas” to make a district that is complete with the facilities of a global city, good living amenities and more.

#### b. Promoting “small community” making within a village area

To sustain and rejuvenate underpopulated villages, etc. that suffer from a progressively diminishing or aging population, the MLIT drives “small community” making in a multi-village area, such as a elementary school district, by relocating the facilities and functions essential to daily livelihood, such as stores and medical clinics, and the places of regional activities within a walking distance, with access to neighboring villages.

#### c. Reviews of the relocation of the Diet and other central government offices

The MLIT aids the Diet in its reviews of the planned relocation of the Diet and other central government offices, by conducting surveys, disseminating information to the nation and so on.

## 5 Promoting Regional Partnerships and Interaction

### (1) Forming a trunk-line network to support regions

To realize the safe, comfortable relocation in the central part of an area having urban functions, such as medical care and education, the MLIT supports the elimination of bottlenecks, as by widening the existing roads, and development of road networks supporting daily life. Further, in order to promote the integration of merged municipalities, the development of roads that connect the central area of a municipality to each of its centers, such as public facilities, bridges and so on is being promoted by implementing municipal merger support road development projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.

### (2) Promoting human interaction between cities and farming, mountain and fishing villages

The MLIT implements projects for promoting the revitalization of villages to support the renovation of the existing public facilities, such as closed school buildings, located in handicapped areas (depopulated areas, mountain villages, remote islands, peninsulas and heavy-snowfall areas) to turn them into human interaction facilities, forms axes of human wide-area interaction and partnership through the development of trunk road networks, supplies housing and housing lands to help realize a country life, develops ports and harbors to serve as centers of human interaction and more. It also promotes the creation of new breeds of tourism, such as green tourism, and the activities of “All Right! Nippon Conference” and so on in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and other ministries concerned to promote human interaction between cities and farming, mountain and fishing villages.

### (3) Promoting regional settlement, etc.

Information on the municipalities that implement projects regarding U-, J- and I-turns and settlement in localities, such as mutual interactions between city dwellers and local residents through participation in community planning activities and exposure to agricultural or forestry experiences is being disseminated from a MLITI Website. In addition, information

about the support measures and approaches taken by the national and local governments with regard to dual habitation has also been disseminated <sup>Note</sup>.

The MLIT also supports the appropriation of General Social Infrastructures Development Subsidies for the utilization of vacant houses and buildings and disseminates information about the measures taken by local governments in connection with house replacement and dual-area residence, information about nationwide banks of vacant houses and to address the issues of a wide range of regional issues.

#### (4) Introduction of local license plate numbers

In August 2013, the areas in which local license plate numbers are introduced were decided for the second time (10 areas: Morioka, Hiraizumi, Kooriyama, Maebashi, Kawaguchi, Koshigaya, Suginami, Setagaya, Kasukabe and Amami) so that the regional names appearing in the license plates can be used as an aid to regional revitalization, etc. License plates carrying the new regional names are scheduled to be released during FY2014.

## 6 Securing Means of Regional Transport

### (1) Securing, maintaining and improving means of regional transport

Maintaining day-to-day means of regional transport is of vital importance to the revitalization of regional communities. Out of this recognition, the MLIT supports efforts directed at forming comfortable and safe public transport, as by securing and maintaining community transport, such as regional bus routes and sea and air routes to remote islands, in collaboration with diverse stakeholders and developing facilities that help add to the safety of local railways.

Figure II-4-2-7 The Program for Ensuring, Maintenance and Improvement of Local Public Transportation Systems



Source) MLIT

### (2) Activating regional railways and supporting safety assurance, etc.

While regional railways not only support the livelihood of the local residents living along the railways as a means of their daily transport but also play an important role in providing them with public transport of critical importance in supporting regional interaction between tourist resorts. However, their management is in an extremely tough situation. For this reason, the MLIT supports not only the maintenance, etc. of safety facilities by implementing regional public

**Note** [http://www.mlit.go.jp/kokudoseisaku/chisei/kokudoseisaku\\_chisei\\_mn\\_000016.html](http://www.mlit.go.jp/kokudoseisaku/chisei/kokudoseisaku_chisei_mn_000016.html)

transport securing, management and improvement projects or offering tax incentives but also the construction, etc. of new stations on those local routes that have high potential needs for railway use by implementing projects designed to activate trunk railways, etc.

### (3) Subsidizing regional bus routes

Securing and maintaining means of regional public transport, such as public buses, for the benefit of local residents, particularly those with limited access to transport, such as elderly people and schoolchildren, is of critical importance. To help secure and maintain optimal networks of regional transport tailored to specific regional characteristics and conditions, the government has a policy of providing integrated support to the availability of regional transport services (such as inter-regional bus transport networks<sup>Note</sup> or bus, demand-responsive and other forms of regional transport closely related to trunk transport networks) under a scheme of shared responsibility with local governments. For other routes, relevant financial measures are taken to enable local governments to maintain them at their own discretion.

### (4) Supporting transport to and from remote islands

To secure air transport to and from remote islands, the MLIT subsidizes aircraft purchase costs, running costs and MTSAT Satellite-based Augmentation System (MSAS) receiver purchase costs and eases landing fees and aviation fuel and fixed property taxes for common air carriers serving as far as remote islands. Running costs have been subsidized since FY2011 by regional public transport securing, management and improvement projects. Passenger fares for islanders have been newly subsidized to extend the scope of support from FY2012 onward.

Remote island sea routes, a vital means of transport to support islanders' daily living, are now extremely tough to economically manage. The running costs of those sea routes that are anticipated in the red and for which no alternative routes are available are subsidized by regional public transport securing, management and improvement projects. In addition, discounted passenger fares for islanders have been subsidized and port facilities have been developed to close gaps with other regions and to add convenience to the islanders' lives.

In FY2013, 56 remote island air routes were in service, and 297 sea routes were in service at the end of FY2012 (120 of which are government-subsided sea routes).

## Section 3 Promoting Urban Reconstruction Projects, etc.

### 1 Promoting Urban Reconstruction Projects

An urban reconstruction project is an action plan that combats a variety of urban issues that need to be solved in an all-out effort in cooperation and collaboration with the ministries concerned, local governments, private entities and so on. An action plan is selected if it:

- Combats a basic issue relevant to an urban structure or requires in an all-out effort of the ministries concerned to combat one, with resort to a totally new method, or
- Helps draw power from the private sector or makes for greater land mobility from a viewpoint of leading to an economic structural reform.

By the end of March 2014, 23 urban reconstruction projects had been accredited by the Urban Reconstruction Headquarters.

### 2 Promoting Urban Development by Private Sectors

#### (1) Promoting urban development by private sectors based on the Specific Urban Reconstruction Emergency Development Area program

While rapidly growing Asian nations have resulted in a proportionate decline in Japan's international competitiveness,

**Note** Broad-area trunk bus routes whose maintenance has been justified at a conference and that meets government-established criteria (spanning multiple municipalities, with at least three runs of service a day).

it has become an essential task to provide a powerful boost to the development of the urban areas in the nation's major cities, a source of impetus to the national growth, in a partnership between the public and private sectors to turn them into attractive urban centers that lure businesses, human resources and more from overseas. To this end, the MLIT singled out 11 areas nationwide as "Specific Urban Reconstruction Emergency Development Areas" in January 2012 to enhance urban international competitiveness. In eight of them (as of the end of March, 2014), development plans were formulated by councils formed in a partnership between the public and private sector.

In Specific Urban Reconstruction

Emergency Development Areas, the MLIT supports urban development by private sectors by deregulating the private use of untapped sewage energy sources and the use of road airspaces, offering tax incentives and so on, in addition to the support measures already available to an Urban Reconstruction Emergency Development Area. The International Competition Base City Development Project has also been launched to provide prioritized, concentrated support to the development of urban center infrastructures in accordance with development plans.

As of the end of March 2014, a total of 62 Urban Reconstruction Emergency Development Areas were registered in government-ordinance-designated cities and prefectural capitals, including Tokyo and Osaka, hosting a variety of urban development projects by private sectors in steady progress. In addition, a mezzanine financing service<sup>Note</sup> is implemented by the Organization for Promoting Urban Development to support the raising of middle-risk funds.

## (2) Status of application of the measures to support urban reconstruction projects

### a. Zoning for Special Urban Reconstruction Districts

A Special Urban Reconstruction District is a new concept of urban district, with greater latitude of zoning, that is exempt from existing zoning restrictions. A total of 66 Special Urban Reconstruction Districts were zoned as of the end of March 2014, 44 of which had been proposed by private entrepreneurs, etc.

### b. Accreditation of private urban reconstruction project plan

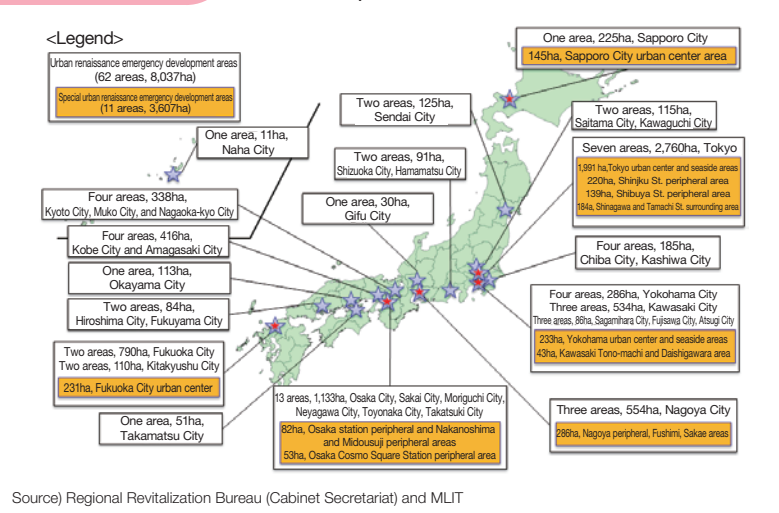
Private urban reconstruction project plans accredited by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (67 plans as of the end of March 2014) are financially supported by the Organization for Promoting Urban Development or granted tax incentives.

## (3) Promoting the formation of larger blocks

Since many of the central areas of Japan's major cities have been organized into blocks through the implementation of postwar reconstruction land adjustment projects, etc., the scales of these blocks, with the structure of the local streets, are not fully responsive to the prevailing needs, etc. for land usage, transport infrastructures and disaster preparedness. To reinforce the international competitiveness of the big cities, revitalize local cities and seek advanced and effective land usage to fill present-day needs, the MLIT promotes the aggregation of land that has been segmented into multiple blocks, the consolidated usage of sites and restructuring of public facilities in accordance with Guidelines for Formation of Larger

Figure II-4-3-1

Status of Designation of Special Urban Renaissance Emergency Development Areas and Urban Renaissance Emergency Development Areas (as of the end of March 2014)



**Note** Mezzanine financing is a service that supports the financing of a middle-risk fund (such as a fund for loans provided with a clause for subordinated principal and interest payment) by the Organization for Promoting Urban Development, a general incorporated foundation, to cover the implementation of a project, accredited by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, that develops public facilities along with environmentally conscious buildings and their sites.

Blocks and also with References on Formation of Larger Blocks for Promoting Urban Development.

### 3 Approaching National Strategic Special Districts

Since the “Act on National Strategic Special Districts” came into effect in December 2013, the MLIT has been committed to comprehensively and intensively driving drastic regulatory reforms and other measures, including special measures under the Building Standards Law, Road Act and City Planning Act, to target the projects that are pursued by the national and local governments and private sectors working in a united effort in a state-designated National Strategic Special District.

## Section 4 Promoting Localized Promotion Measures

### 1 Measures Directed at Heavy Snowfall Areas

The MLIT not only promotes the availability of transport and the development of the living environment and national land management facilities under the “Act on Special Measures concerning Countermeasures for Heavy Snowfall Areas” but also conducts surveys for safe, comfortable community planning. As of April 2013, 532 municipalities were specified as heavy-snowfall areas (201 of which were designated as special heavy-snowfall areas).

### 2 Promoting Remote Islands Development

The MLIT has supported remote islands development pursuant to the remote islands development plans worked out by the prefectures in accordance with the Amended Remote Islands Development Act, which came into full effect in April 2013 not only by appropriating lump-sum budgets for the implementation of public works projects, but also extending Remote Islands Rejuvenation Grants, inaugurated since FY2013, to encourage settlement in remote islands, as by fostering industries and increasing employment, accelerating the scope of exchanges, as by promoting tourism, improve and consolidate safe and secure settlement conditions and so on.

### 3 Promoting and Developing the Amami Islands and Ogasawara Islands

The MLIT accelerates improvement on the underlying conditions, promotion of industries and tourisms, etc. through the implementation of promotion and development and other projects based on the Act on Special Measures for Promotion and Development of the Amami Islands and the Act on Special Measures for Promotion and Development of the Ogasawara Islands. On March 28, 2014, a bill for extending and making amendments to these two Acts on Special Measures was approved to foster industries and increase employment to suit regional characteristics and better the settlement environment for accelerated settlement in a bid to achieve self-reliant and sustainable growth.

### 4 Promoting Peninsulas

The MLIT supports development of peninsular loop roads, etc. and the promotion, etc. of industries in the peninsular areas under development (as of April 2013, 23 areas spanning 194 municipalities in 22 prefectures) based on the peninsular areas development plans prepared by municipalities in accordance with the “Peninsular Areas Development Act.”

In addition to surveys on collecting and analyzing information necessary to enforce the Peninsular Areas Development Act, experimental surveys relevant to the formation of infrastructures that allow various stakeholders in the peninsular areas to approach regional revitalization and also to the advancement of inter-peninsular collaboration to consolidate required knowledge and disseminate it locally with a view to driving the self-reliant growth of the peninsular areas.

## Section 5 Promoting Integrated Development of Hokkaido

### 1 Promoting the New Hokkaido Comprehensive Development Plan to Lead the Era of the Global Environment

#### (1) Promoting the Hokkaido Comprehensive Development Plan

Japan has followed an active policy of developing Hokkaido to help resolve the problems then facing the nation and to achieve powerful regional growth by taking advantage of the excellent resources and characteristics of Hokkaido.

The implementation of measures focusing on reinforcement of food supply capacities, promotion of inbound tourism, formation of a safe, secure national land and active regional planning activities is under way to approach the attainment of the three strategic goals of open and competitive Hokkaido, sustainable and beautiful Hokkaido and Hokkaido consisting of diverse, individualistic areas pursuant to the seventh phase of the New Hokkaido Comprehensive Development Plan That Users in an Era of Global Environment, on the basis of the results of an intermediate check on the plan implemented in FY2012, recent changes in the socioeconomic conditions and so on.

#### (2) Working to realize the Plan

##### a. Strengthening the total food supply capacities

To strengthen the food supply capacities of Hokkaido that command 25% of the nation's farmland area, the farmland in Hokkaido has been consolidated in larger lots, etc. to augment the productive capacities. The MLIT also supports efforts to create higher added values through the implementation of more advanced expertise of quality control, collaboration with tourism and so on. In addition, the MLIT promotes the development of the infrastructures relevant to tougher logistics. Approaches to fostering food industries include the construction of HOP (Hokkaido export Platform) to facilitate direct, stable export of Hokkaido-made products.

##### b. Creating internationally competitive, appealing tourist sites

Efforts are underway to improve the tourist reception environment in Hokkaido by trimming travel time and easing round-trips through infrastructures development, working on the Scenic Byway Hokkaido campaign and so on to take advantage of the potentials of Hokkaido with its appealing tourist resources, such as scenic beauty and food. Further, multi-language editions of a drive handbook are distributed for the sake of better tourist convenience. Regional efforts aimed at promoting Hokkaido as a host to international conferences (MICE) in Hokkaido are also supported.

##### c. Forming a sustainable regional community that lives symbiotically with the nature

The MLIT has driven the conservation and regeneration of moorland environments, the construction of breakwaters conscious of the habitat of aquatic organisms, purification of rivers and lakes and so on to help form a community that lives together with the rich nature of Hokkaido. Further, since Hokkaido is rich in renewable energy resources, efforts to exploit them are being deployed across Hokkaido.

##### d. Enhancing network and mobility to support internal and external interactions

To achieve the three strategic goals of the Hokkaido Comprehensive Development Plan, the MLIT has driven the development of key transport infrastructures, such as high-standard highways, airports and harbors, the reinforcement of logistic network facilities, etc. effectively in collaboration

Roller coaster track in the town of Kamifurano



(Source) The Federation of Hokkaido Chamber of Commerce and Industry

with various entities. The MLIT also carries on active efforts to improve the safety and reliability of winter-time transportation.

#### e. Building a safe, secure land

Japan has recently been hit by a chain of major natural disasters, including the Great East Japan Earthquake. Hokkaido, too, has suffered heavy snowfalls, severe snowstorms, landslide disasters and wind and flood damages and remains largely open to massive earthquakes, such as those stemming from the Japan and Kuril Trenches, and tsunami, posing a number of tasks that need to be solved before a safe, secure regional community can be formed. Hence, the MLIT has been working on infrastructure development including enhancing seismic capacity of infrastructures, adopting integrated packages of flood control and landslide control measures, and building highly reliable networks of roads, reinforcement of the crisis management systems and local disaster preparedness efforts in conjunction with local governments, residents, etc. At the same time, looming concerns over the maintenance and management of aging facilities step up efforts to get the jobs done effectively and efficiently, including ways to combat aging, make the facilities longer-lived and perform preventive management on them.

## 2 Promoting Distinctive Regions and Cultures

### (1) Promoting the regions neighboring the Northern Territories

The MLIT has driven the implementation of those measures necessary to promote the regions neighboring the Northern Territories in which the desirable growth of a local community has been impeded because of pending territorial issues and to stabilize the living of the local residents in these regions in an integrated manner. More specifically, the MLIT pursues a mix of hardware and software measures necessary to take advantage of the hardware measures to build appealing regional communities in these neighboring regions pursuant to the Seventh Northern Territories Neighboring Regions Promotion Plan (FY2013 to FY2017) commencing from FY2013 as the first year, including the promotion of agricultural and fishery industries, development of transportation systems, implementation of public-works projects designed to preserve the national land, etc. supporting the implementation of software measures with funding from grants for the expenditures for promoting project implementations, such as Northern Territory neighboring region revitalization.

### (2) Promoting the Ainu Culture, etc.

The concepts of the tradition and culture of the Ainu, a source of the pride the Ainu people take, is being disseminated pursuant to the “Act on the Promotion of Ainu Culture, and Dissemination and Enlightenment of Knowledge about Ainu Tradition, etc.”

In FY2013, a campaign was launched to help people previously indifferent to Ainu culture to develop greater interest in it by getting the Ainu phrase “i ran karap te” (which means “how are you”) consolidated on the minds of a greater proportion of the general public, including residents of Hokkaido, as a keyword of Hokkaido hospitality, on the basis of a report by the Policy Promotion Workgroup, Council for Ainu Policy Promotion (July 2012) and reviews of the concept of the future promotional and enlightenment activities partnering with various entities conducted discussed in FY2012. As part of the campaign, Ainu articles were exhibited at Kushiro Airport, as well as New Chitose Airport, in a quest for further promotion and enhancement.

Campaign kickoff ceremony held at New Chitose Airport



Source) MLIT

# Column

## An Approach to Advancing Tourism Built around Bird Watching in Nemuro City

The Nemuro Subprefecture of Hokkaido is known as one of the nation's most popular sanctuaries for wild birds, allowing you to watch about 360 of the 630 species of wild birds that can be seen in Japan. Nemuro City works on promoting round tourism focusing on bird-watching in its bid to attract more tourists from both inside and outside of Nemuro to take round trips and help revitalize regional economies.

Integrated activities carried out during FY2013 with funding from grants for the expenditures for promoting project implementations, such as Northern Territory neighboring region revitalization, include installation of a hide, or a hut that allows watching birds without stressing them, sheltered from cold, winds and rain, preparation of wild-bird

touring leaflets in Chinese and English editions, which serve as a guide to tour planning, construction of pier decks as part of Michi-no-Eki station or a tourist location and repair of wooden bridges at the Shunkunitai Bar, a bird-watching spot.

At Nemuro Birdland Festival 2014, which was held from January 27 to February 2, 2014 to augment an ability to attract customers in the winter time, focus was placed on information, environments and hospitality. It met with grand success, attracting a total of 2,200 visitors (up 20% from the previous year) from inside and out to enjoy bird watching at various spots.

Further efforts will continue to advance tourism built around bird watching.

Constructed hide (bird-watching hut)



Source) Nemuro City

Watching wild birds from the hide

