

Introduction

Japan is undergoing major socioeconomic changes, including a falling birth rate and an aging population, as described in the ministry's 2002 white paper. Local governments, communities and businesses are increasingly required to cope with these changes.

In fact, a wide range of local governments, communities and businesses have achieved—or are in the process of achieving—positive results, despite unfavorable conditions or environments. These results made possible by their effort and ingenuity include increased exchanges among people from Japan and abroad, and the development of new markets.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT), for its part, needs to take note of these good practices and take steps to support initiatives to develop vibrant communities or business.

From this viewpoint, the White Paper on Land, Infrastructure and Transport for 2003 discusses the theme “Various Initiatives Toward Vibrant Communities or Business and MLIT Policies to Support These Initiatives” in Part I. For this part, we gather and analyze good practices and then identify factors commonly found in these initiatives. Then we discuss in what directions the MLIT should take steps to support these initiatives.

In Part II, we report developments in each of the sectors covered by the MLIT, with a focus on cross-sectoral policy issues.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank many local governments and businesses for their great help in compiling this paper.