

[Between the central governments and local entities]

It is important that community development is led by local communities, businesses and municipalities with their ingenuity and on their own initiative. In other words, their ownership is the key. The central government supports their initiatives in light of their implications for other areas, Japan as a whole, or even other countries.

The central government provides major support if community development initiatives are in line with its policies. When it works with local governments and others, the central government is required to put their innovative initiatives to good use.

Community development and business activities are greatly affected by national rules and regulations on such aspects as safety, the environment and convenience, as well as those on the development of key transport networks—including expressways, Shinkansen lines, airports and key ports—on the national or even international levels. The future of flows of people and goods among metropolitan areas, other countries, and areas and regions of the country, as well as the future of markets in Japan and abroad, holds a key to the success of local communities, municipalities and businesses. For these reasons, the central government is required to play an important role in two major tasks. One is to ensure a level playing field for local communities, businesses and municipalities to compete in creativity, ingenuity and wisdom. The other is to develop physical and social infrastructure conducive to business even from an international point of view, including a safe and high-quality environment for living.

The central government encourages cooperation and partnership among municipalities and other entities. Such cooperation and partnership may be bolstered by appropriate role-sharing at the regional or even national level.

Efforts to build cooperation and partnership at the international level should be led by the central government, which should also play a leading role in creating internationally competitive environments and making necessary arrangements regarding international standards.

At any rate, the central government is committed to working with local entities to create a social environment conducive to initiatives aimed at developing vibrant communities or businesses.

Section 2. Building partnership with municipalities, local communities, businesses and NPOs

[Partnership with local communities, businesses and NPOs]

MLIT believes that community development should be based on partnership between the public sector and the community, private and NPO sectors. Based on this belief, the ministry encourages these three sectors to participate in—and provide input to—the processes of developing and implementing all kinds of policies regarding community development.

Open café on the pavement



A meeting of “public transport advisors”



MLIT is committed to reflecting the views and comments of the private sector and the people in the processes of policy formulation and market monitoring to promote innovation and fair competition by the private sector. In fields that cannot be fully addressed by the market, MLIT establishes appropriate rules and regulations, provides necessary support, and solves problems in partnership with other stakeholders concerned.

[Sharing the goals of local entities]

In a community development initiative, sharing its goals among the stakeholders concerned is a key to achieving maximum synergy effects of the initiative. That way, each stakeholder can clearly understand its own role in the initiative.

[Providing more open and interactive services]

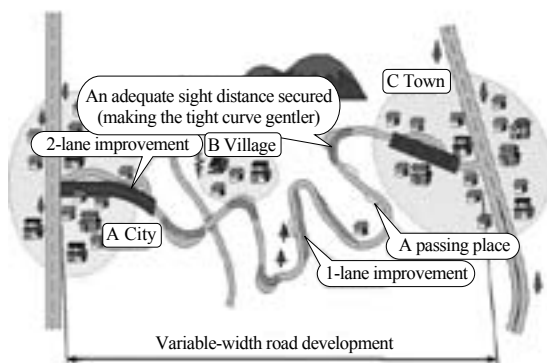
MILT aims to provide more open and interactive services. The following means; i) better use of The Regional Block Strategy Meeting ii) enhancing its accountability iii) improving transparency in the entire process of public works projects.

Section 3. Flexible and integrated approaches to making good use of innovative initiatives

[Flexible standards in response to local characteristics]

It is increasingly important to support and work with community development initiatives that demonstrate local ingenuity, characteristics and qualities. To that end, flexible standards should be established so that infrastructure and its services can accommodate local characteristics and goals. In other words, local rules should be introduced. In fact, MLIT put in place a rule in 2003 that allows for variable-width road development. MLIT also plans to diversify methods for improving the combined sewer system and conduct R&D of free gauge trains.

A conceptual rendering of a variable-width road development plan



Gauge Change Train in a running test



[Flexible approaches to promote community and regional development]

MLIT needs to promote an approach for trial-basis impact assessment before full-fledged implementation. It also needs to study policy responses to ensure appropriate urban redevelopment and reasonable land use.

[Support measures that fully respect local autonomy and discretion]

Support measures should be designed to: (i) ensure that local entities can exercise discretion and initiative to accommodate local conditions; (ii) allow for flexibility to reflect progress; (iii) respect intangible resources that constitutes the charm of the area concerned; and (iv) pursue efficiency and effectiveness with the introduction of methods and indexes for performance assessment.

MLIT is increasingly required to extend cross-sectoral support. The ministry should ensure that support recipients can enjoy latitude in deciding what approach to take, while calling for positive results from them.