

TRANSPORT POLICY IN PERSPECTIVE: 2010

Preface

Automobiles made rapid advances in the last century, surpassing railways to take over the main role of surface transport, and contributed greatly to the advancement of global socio-economic systems. Therefore, the 20th Century is very much “the Century of Automobiles”.

Automobiles are now playing a major role in moving people and transporting goods. Our lifestyles and the economy are based upon the mobility provided by automobiles in all aspects of our society, from where we live and how we do business. Our “automobile-dependent society” has become the base for more affluent lifestyles. On the other hand, road traffic problems including traffic accidents, traffic congestion, and environmental problems such as global warming and air pollution, social problems including the transport poor, urban sprawl and the decline of city centers, are widely acknowledged as serious problems throughout the world.

Under these circumstances, we are reaching a major turning point in the movement toward a mature motorized society for the 21st Century. Fortunately, advanced road traffic systems and environmentally friendly next generation motor vehicles that are safer as well as more environmentally friendly are beginning to emerge. These include technological innovations for motor vehicle themselves, such as less polluting and more efficient hybrid and electric motor vehicles, and the development of intelligent transport systems (ITS). Since Japanese society is now facing decreasing total population together with rapid aging, we have to solve a variety of existing problems and move towards a road and motor vehicle transport systems for a vibrant and sustainable society.

The Japan Research Center for Transport Policy was founded in 1971. Since then, the Center (a private non-profit organization involving transportation specialists and researchers active in universities, private industry, government, and local governments) has been carrying out interdisciplinary academic research focused on transport policies for roads and motor vehicles, and providing educational activities and proposing policies regarding a comprehensive transport system that will contribute to the beneficial development of Japanese society. It has been formally certified as a Public Interest Incorporated Association under the new organization reform act.

Every year since the year 2000, with the full support of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, the Japan Research Center for Transport Policy has published “Research on Automobiles and Transport – Environment and Policy” annually, a booklet giving a general view of the trends in policy and research concerning motor vehicles and road traffic in Japan. This is a translation of major parts of the booklet with additional introduction.

The original work was completed mainly for Japanese interested in transport policies. Bearing in mind that the amount of information in English concerning transport policy of Japan is limited, this booklet summarizes the current problems and policies in Japan and other countries concerning transport, focusing mainly on Japan, and provides some basic statistical data. We intend this booklet to provide comprehensive information that will be useful for those interested in the transport policy of Japan. We hope that this booklet will be effectively used for a wide range of educational, research, and policy study activities in many nations.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, which has given us its full support, and to all those who have given their valuable time in writing or editing, or who have provided important data for inclusion in the booklet.

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