

An uninhabited island close to Yokusaka; inset, goods could be delivered to the beach by drone



“Sukamobi” to Revitalize the Region

Yokosuka City in Kanagawa Prefecture is attempting to implement sustainable urban development by soliciting ideas from private enterprises, universities, research institutes and other agencies pertaining to regional revitalization through smart mobility that utilizes AI and IoT.

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SINCE Yokosuka City in Kanagawa Prefecture is located on a mountainous peninsula looking out toward the Pacific Ocean, there are areas scattered around the city where residential access is by sloping streets or stairways. The current population of Yokosuka is approximately 400,000, but by 2040, it is expected to decrease to about 320,000, and the percentage of the population aged sixty-five or above will rise to close to forty

All photos: Courtesy of Yokosuka City

percent. Assuming that the number of elderly residents will increase not only in areas with many sloping streets, alleviating inconvenience for the elderly and securing availability of means of transport is an immediate and important issue.

Therefore, Yokosuka City is promoting urban infrastructure that will give elderly persons, children and other vulnerable road users access to transport that is safe even on sloping roads and streets with stairways, and also provide access to health care and shopping for residents without transport owing to their living conditions. The city is also building urban infrastructure that includes functional transportation networks to connect tourist attractions scattered around the area. The Yokosuka x Smart Mobility Challenge project, nicknamed “Sukamobi” (from “Yokusuka mobility”) was launched in 2018. The stated goal of Sukamobi is to establish a model



Demonstration experiment of a delivery service by drone to an uninhabited island close to Yokosuka



Demonstration experiment of a delivery service by Unmanned Ground Vehicle

that supports a high quality of life in the community by coordinating new public transportation systems that utilize AI and IoT with hospitals, commercial facilities and other services.

Specifically, the project aims to support people with restricted mobility and to sustain the local community.

Takahashi Shinichiro, head of the YRP R&D Promotion Committee at the Business Startup & New Industry Support Division at Yokosuka City, which oversees the project, comments, “Sukamobi is special in the sense that the project is led by the Start-up and New Industry Support Department, which handles collaboration with private enterprises, rather than a department with responsibility for transportation or urban development. Specifically, the point is to verify ideas and to promote implementation in collaboration with local residents and academics with expertise in transportation and urban development while approaching private enterprises that have many different ideas.”

The project is supported through a system of collaboration with the relevant central government ministries and agencies, local universities and private enterprises. Yokosuka City solicits ideas that utilize smart mobility from private enterprises, universities, and research institutes. The city also supports project designs, provides the necessary regional data, forms partnerships with participating corporations,

and conducts demonstration experiment exercises.

For example, seven demonstration experiment exercises were implemented in fiscal 2019. Several of the initiatives were a first in Japan and attracted a great deal of attention including (1) Universal MaaS, which aims to realize mobility services enabling anyone to transfer at ease by using an app. etc, (2) demonstration of delivery services to remote islands by drone, and (3) demonstration of delivery services using Unmanned Ground Vehicles from a supermarket to a residential area. In addition, events were organized to present the results of these advanced initiatives and offer test rides. The city is also working to improve social receptivity among local residents and to promote the appeal of outcomes in Japan and abroad.

Takahashi comments, “As we enter the third year of the first five-year plan for Sukamobi, we now have the ability to conduct numerous demonstration experiment exercises. In another two years, we hope to realize social implementation of at least one project that we are currently working on.

The Sukamobi vision for urban development is “to leave no one behind,” “to create new value,” and “to be full of vitality.” With smart mobility at the core, the Yokosuka City initiative enables various applications, and expectations from other local government and stakeholders nationwide are growing for future outcomes and expansion. 