Japanese New Policy Methods on Using Service Areas of Expressways And Their Effects on Urban Development

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1. Introduction

In Japan, some policies on the management of expressways were changed. Since these new policy methods were implemented, they have affected the urban development in many aspects, especially in the local cities and towns. In this paper, an introduction of the policy methods will be given first. The policy methods include that making use of the service areas, that renting a small place of the service areas, and that making a development plan to run a business around the service areas. Then some examples will be shown. Furthermore, the effects on the urban development will be analyzed.

2. Review of the Policy Methods on Using Service Areas of Expressways

There are three types of policy methods being relative with the urban development now although there had been more in the past.

2.1 *Senyo* (private use)

Before the reform, expressways were considered being so important as the public assets that only one corporation having special status, which was called *Sisetu-kyokai* (Japan Highway Facilities Association), was permitted to do business in the service areas of expressways. They have an exclusive right to benefit from the expressway by operating the restaurants, cafeterias, shops etc. in the service areas of expressways.

However, by applying the policy of the so-called "*Senyo* (private use)", the third-sector companies controlled by the local governments can make use the service areas instead of the *Sisetu-kyokai* for their special purposes with some limitations of supplying the minimum services required by Japan Highway Corporation (JH), the organization for constructing and managing the expressways.

2.2 *Antenna Plazas*

The so-called "Antenna Plazas" is to let the local governments or the third-sector companies partly financed by the local government to rent a small place of the service areas. The limitation of the area for renting is 30 m^2 in one Service Area. Although the small space limits the use by the local governments or the third-sector company, it makes them to take charge of less risk.

2.3 *New Projects*

The so-called "New Projects" is limited to the third-sector companies, partly financed by the local government. The another necessary condition for the companies is having made a development plan to run a business around the service areas which consists of two types: [Open Type] the customers of the "new project" can pass up and down from the "new project" area to the expressways by driving their private cars through the service areas, and [Close Type] the customers of the "new project" can only pass up and down during the "new project" area and the service area by walking.
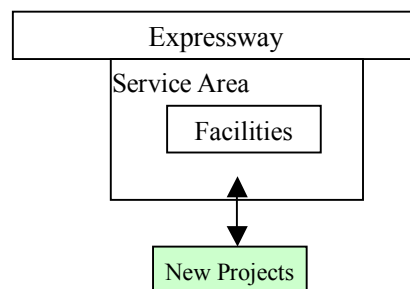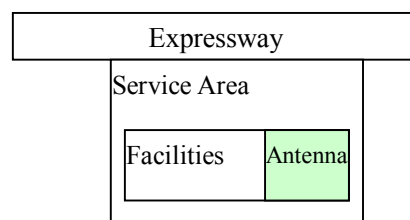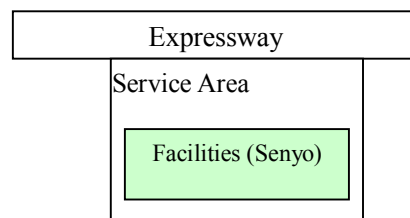
3. Examples of Making Use of the Policy Methods

Ina-chan Plaza in Ogurogawa PA (Parking Area) of Chuo Expressway is an example of "Antenna Plaza". Since the area is only 30 m^2, the information corner (see Photo-1) is designed as a very compact board with a fixed TV display to show the local information.

Fukubegadake PA (see Photo-2) located in Gifu Prefecture and is one of service areas of Tokai-hokuriku Expressway. This PA has started its service since September of 2000, and is an example of "Senyo". The PA is controlled by Neburu-Minami Company that was set up as the third-sector Company and financed by Minami Village, some companies & organizations and some local residents.

Photo-3 shows the passage between PA and Highway Oasis of Yoshiogawa SA (Service Area) located in the Tokushima Expressway, where the users of expressway can walk into the highway oasis but cannot drive into it. Highway Oasis is the forerunner of the New Projects and can be equal to the "close type" of the New Projects.

4. Effects on Urban Development

The effects of making use of the above policy methods on urban development can be summarized as the followings.

Photo-1

1) PR and information exchange: making use the service area as the place of dispatch to do the local PR,

2) culture exchange of the users and the residents: making use the service area as the place to let the users of expressways exchange ideas with the local residents,

3) promotion of commerce: sales of the local special products can be considered an effective way of the commercial promotion,

4) increase of employment opportunities: the new service may cause the increase of employments,

Photo-2

5) being a new open space: the place can be used for the events and the evacuation,

6) acceleration of regional development: it may be a priming of the regional development around the service areas,

7) control of the decrease in population: by charming the local area, the people may choose it as permanent resident,

Photo-3

8) measure of aged society: in the process appealing the special products, the elder people can play the important roles,

9) promotion of sightseeing: the information dispatched from the service area may attract more visitors for sightseeing,

10) promotion of local economy: the increase of the sales of local special products and visitors of sightseeing may bring the local economy into a new stage.

5. Conclusions

In the paper, I introduced some policy methods relative with making use of the service areas of the expressways in Japan. The policy methods have been changed some times up to now, and the introduced ones have only several year history and only several examples. Thus we cannot conclude for each one. However, in general, we can comment on the policy methods: 1) the need should be surveyed for not only the users of the expressway but also the local residents, 2) the company cannot keep its life without profit, 3) they may lead us to a new way of making use the social stocks not only in Japan but also in the other countries.