

Research theme title	Development and application of educational and behavior change programs to realize a child-friendly transportation environment that facilitates the raising of children
Background and objectives	<p>As Japan faces a declining population, falling birthrate, and aging society, the development of a child-friendly transportation environment that facilitates the raising of children is an urgent issue. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) is promoting measures to improve the public's understanding (barrier-free mindset) toward people with children and child-rearing, as well as to promote child-rearing-friendly transportation environments, including the spread of the baby stroller mark. However, in Europe and the United States, the importance of "children's independent mobility" is recognized as an environment that allows children to travel alone without relying on their parents to drive them to and from school, thereby contributing to the development of children's abilities and reducing excessive car use.</p> <p>Against this background, this study aims to develop and apply an educational program on traffic rules and manners necessary for traveling with children and child-only travel, as well as a behavioral transformation program to control excessive vehicle transfers by parents to curb excessive car pick-ups and drop-offs by parents, to realize a safe, secure, and sustainable child-rearing and child-friendly transportation environment. We also aim to verify the effectiveness of these programs.</p>
3. Expected results	<p>In large cities in Japan, many people use strollers, public transportation, and bicycles to transport children, while in regional cities, people depend on automobiles. Motorcycles are mainstream in developing countries such as Vietnam. However, as for child-only travel, it is rare for children to be able to go to school alone, as is the case in Japan, and overseas countries rely heavily on parental transportation due to the location of schools and public safety issues. Considering the differences in urban/transport environments and culture in our metropolitan and regional cities and those in foreign countries, as well as by reviewing and systematically organizing travel with children and child-alone travel, we also contribute to the safe and secure health and skill development of children. Moreover, new knowledge on the maintenance of a transportation environment that is globally and environmentally friendly, child-raising-friendly, and child-friendly can be obtained. In addition, by developing an education and behavior modification program that fully considers the urban characteristics and social and cultural background of Japan and applying it to not only households raising children but also young people (e.g., university students) who are in the process of raising children, it may contribute to the realization of safer and more secure transportation and reduction of traffic accidents involving children traveling along with parents and children traveling alone. The program could also contribute to the development of a barrier-free mindset regarding child-rearing and as a measure to combat the declining birthrate. We believe that the introduction of programs that consider the urban characteristics as well as the sociocultural backgrounds of foreign countries entails foresight and practicality.</p>