

The Current Situation of National Land Planning and Wide-Area Projects to Drive Regional Development

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- The current system of national land planning in Japan is comprised of the two layers of national land planning of national planning and broad regional planning based on the National Spatial Planning Act. The existing “National Plan” was approved by the Cabinet in August 2015 as guidelines for formulating the direction of national land policy for roughly ten years. In addition, it divides the entire country into eight broad regional blocks, and the “Regional Plan” to promote regional strategy and broad regional projects making full use of their uniqueness was approved in the following year of 2016 by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.
- Currently, Japan is about to face dealing with the dwindling birthrate and aging of society. Many developed nations also have similar issues, but the trend for Japan is faster to progress and more rapid than for other countries, and dealing with it is required ahead of other countries. In addition, regionally also, while there is a trend of concentration in the Tokyo Area, in the country as a whole the reduction in population density and regional ubiquity are proceeding simultaneously, and in particular the direction of industrial rejuvenation and regional management in rural areas is being questioned.
- On the one hand, there is the major challenge of Japan constantly having the pressure of major disasters. It is necessary to continue steadily addressing an earthquake in the immediate vicinity of the capital or a massive earthquake in the Nankai Trough.
- On the other hand, as a basis for promoting national land planning as well as continuing to conceive broader regional projects, the high-speed transportation network is also a key theme. With the pioneering projects such as the Tokaido Shinkansen which was opened at the same time as the Tokyo Olympics approximately 50 years ago, the development of the network has evolved greatly. In recent years also, the extension of the sections in service has grown at an accelerating pace, and it can be said to be the harvest time for infrastructure.
- In the light of such modern trends and challenges surrounding the country, in the Second National Spatial Plan (nationwide plan) which was determined as a national plan to tackle head-on the full-fledged depopulation of society, the formation of a “Convection Promotion Nation” as a national basic concept was raised. “Convection” denotes active moves for bi-directional flows of people, goods, money and information between regions, which various regions with diverse characteristics bring about by coordinating with one another, and shows a “compact and network” direction for the national land and regional structures for realizing that.
- Further, within the Tohoku Regional Plan which was formulated after taking this basic concept on board, there was the Global Gateway Functional Enhancement Project, making use of both the Japan Sea and Pacific sides to drive development of the Tohoku Region. This makes full use of the region’s characteristic of facing both the Japan Sea and the Pacific Ocean, and is an initiative for continuing to realize the heightening and raising of efficiency of international logistical and exchange functions.
- Moreover, for a project targeting the nation as a whole, discussions have commenced by the Super-Mega Region Concept Review Committee in order to continue conceiving national and

regional design to bring out the efficiency of the development of the linear Chuo Shinkansen, which will open between Tokyo and Nagoya in ten years' time.

[Translated by ERINA]