

論 文 内 容 要 旨

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学位論文題目	Study on the Role of Taxi Subsidy Scheme for the Mobility of Elderly in Rural Areas (過疎地域における高齢者のモビリティ施策としてのタクシー補助制度の研究)		
<p>内容要旨</p> <p>With the development of society, transportation has become an indispensable part of our life. To find out more innovative, creative and comfortable transport tool to meet the unpredictable behavior of outings is vital. Especially, elderly mobility in rural areas with distinctive characteristics needs more attention.</p> <p>In Japan, the number of elderly is expected to increase in the future and increasing number of people are living well past eighty while maintaining active lives. Thus, it is necessary to understand their mobility needs and travel behaviors. In addition, in recent years, traffic accidents caused by the elderly have become a serious issue requiring close attention. Moreover, owing to the promotion of returning the driver's licenses of elderly people, there is often a need to secure alternative transportation means (e.g., private cars) for these groups.</p> <p>As for the characteristics of the mobility of rural areas, population is dispersed distributed, the service demand is low and infrequent. Because of these reasons, after the deregulation policy in 2002, some mass transit companies left from bus services in local areas, this caused inconvenience on the mobility of elderly especially for the people who have struggles with driving because of age or physical disability. To secure the mobility of these groups, huge financial support to cover the operation cost and available human resources for drivers form the big two challenges.</p> <p>To tackle the mobility problems, the implementation of community bus service has conventionally been focused on urban areas. This approach, however, could only a limited number of people in rural areas. To meet the increasing needs of special groups such as the elderly and disabled people in rural areas, flexible transport services have been introduced, including on-demand ride sharing taxis and private paid passenger transportation system, called "Jikayou Yushou(自家用有償)" in Japanese; these require reservations, but allow for flexible route and schedule settings, so as to support the mobility of elderly in the service area. Owing to such services, mobility support for the elderly is expanding (in certain areas).</p> <p>Among these solutions, a taxi subsidy scheme (TSS) has been widely introduced by many rural authorities. TSS subsidizes the taxi fare by distributing tickets to a limited target group according to certain conditions such as age, driving license, disability, and socio-demographic background. The local government subsidizes</p>			

part of the taxi fare by issuing a certain number of tickets to target persons annually, and users can pay part of their taxi fees with this ticket. As a welfare policy, the original target of the system, i.e., people with disabilities, has been expanded to include the elderly and poor.

However, during the implementation, many issues relating to this policy, such as subsidy amount, usage time and number of distributed tickets, settings for target persons, and target area have been encountered. Based on this fact, in this paper, we examined TSS from three perspectives: the local government that supports the policy with subsidy; small- and medium-sized taxi operators whose business management is influenced by TSS; and the elderly people with their outing status and TSS usage status. Furthermore, based on the trends of national policies, we examined the effective utilization of TSS as a public mobility service for the elderly in rural areas. As a result, for local governments, the TSS was found to be widely known as a support for vulnerable groups and for those who have returned their licenses, and the burden on residents is often not a large expense. From the viewpoint of taxi operators, TSS has considerably contributed to business management. Additionally, many business operators want to increase the usage time and number of people eligible for subsidies. The elderly survey showed that TSS users use taxi for various purposes and are less likely to be influenced by high prices compared with non-TSS users. In other words, it is suggested that the TSS should be the “ideal public transportation” by narrowing down the target users and improving the service.