
Smoothly promoting urban development for transportation through collaboration between government and local organizations

1. Background and goals

For promoting urban development for transportation, there are a growing number of cases where local organizations are created and these organizations work in cooperation with the government. However, rules have not been established regarding appropriate roles for each side, leading not only to insufficient communication but also situations where the two parties fall into rivalry.

This project aims at deepening the discussion of considerations and methodologies for promoting efficient and constructive cooperation between local organizations and government in specific areas, and thereby to obtain useful general knowledge.

2. Research content

2-1. Efforts toward consensus building in the Yanaka district

The Yanaka district in Taito ward, Tokyo, has a population of approximately 10,000 people. The district is notable for containing many temples and wood houses from the Edo period and earlier. The district faces traffic problems such as narrow streets that have become shortcuts for cars traveling at excessively high speeds, as well as disaster prevention problems caused by stretches of wooden housing along narrow streets, resulting in the district being classified as a potentially dangerous area in terms of disaster prevention.



Figure 1. Motor vehicles using residential roads as a shortcut

The most pressing traffic problem is the use of the narrow residential roads of the district as shortcuts for motor vehicles. This both increases danger to pedestrians and creates traffic-related problems such as noise and vibration in houses along these roads. Time-based restrictions on automobile egress have been established for roads frequently used as shortcuts, but such regulations are often ignored. There have been other attempts at improving the situation, but through traffic is a problem affecting a wide area, and so far no definitive solution has been found.

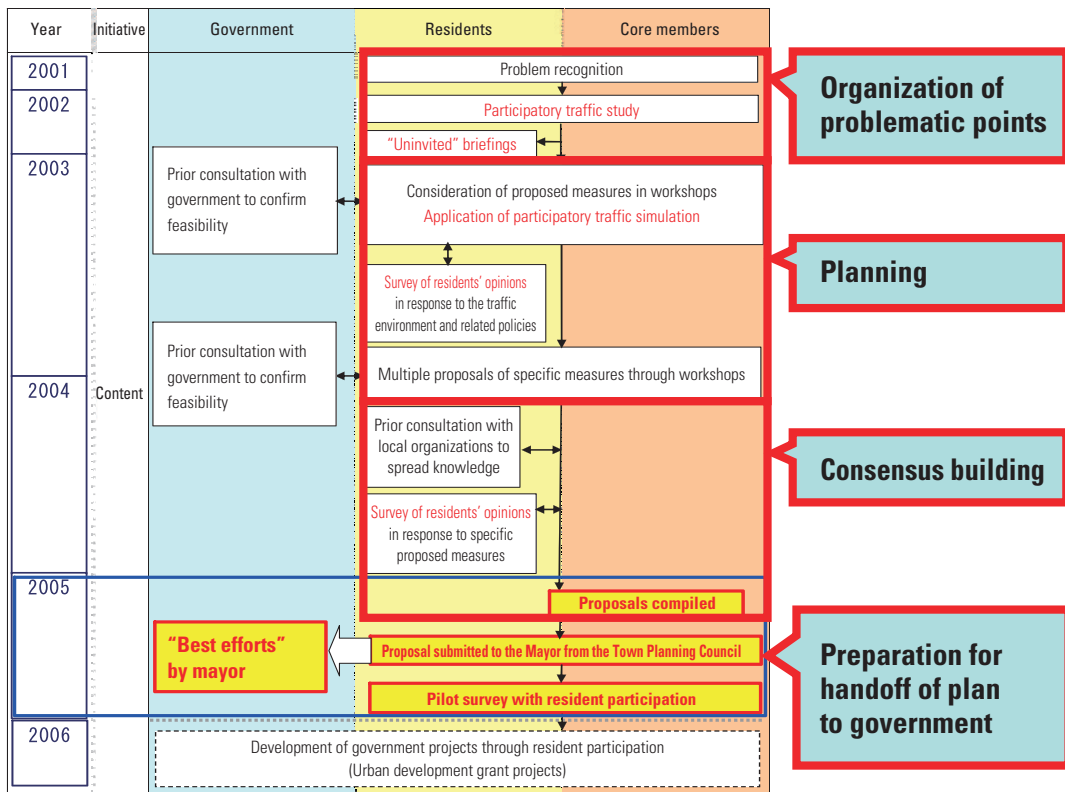


Figure 2. The consensus-building process of urban planning for transportation in the Yanaka district

The construction of large-scale apartments in the area has provided an opportunity for attempting to solve these problems. Toward that end, the Yanaka Town Planning Council was formed with the goal of constructing a cooperative framework between government and residents.

(1) Proposed plan

To investigate each theme concretely in urban planning, in the summer of 2003 the Yanaka Town Planning Council established three groups: the Disaster Prevention Subcommittee, the Environment Subcommittee, and the Traffic Subcommittee. The Traffic Subcommittee was formed with the goal of investigating strategies for dealing with important traffic problems in consideration of the overall urban development plan for the Yanaka district. The Traffic Subcommittee created a Yanaka district urban planning workshop as a way of involving all district residents in considering methods for improving local traffic problems.

The workshop was held 19 times between September 2003 and February 2006, providing a forum for participants to learn about traffic problems and to discuss potential solutions. At the 14th and 15th workshops, held in 2005, the results were presented of a survey that will be described below. Proposals for solutions to local traffic problems were summarized into a document, and based on the results of the workshops and surveys, the residents of the Yanaka district requested cooperation from the mayor of Taito ward in improving the traffic problems.

(2) Consensus building

For the purpose of consensus building between the government and residents regarding solutions to the traffic problems, two questionnaire surveys were performed in 2004 and 2005. All residents of junior high school age and older in the Yanaka district were included. A follow-up questionnaire survey was also conducted, targeting a sampling of households that did not respond to the initial survey. The questionnaire investigated awareness of traffic problems among residents in the Yanaka district.

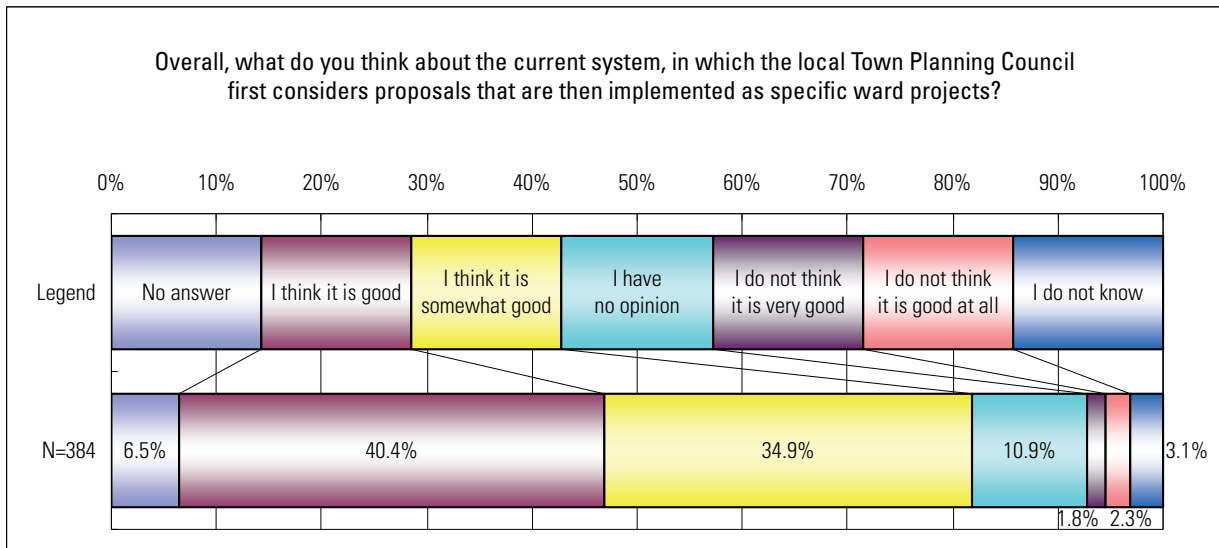


Figure 3. Resident survey results

(3) Handoff to government

The workshops and resident questionnaires resulted in two proposals for methods to take the first step toward improving traffic: installing physical devices on roads to lower vehicle speeds, and finding ways to improve enforcement of current traffic restrictions.

From this, a pilot survey with resident participation was performed, in which speed humps were



Figure 4. An experimentally installed rubber speed hump. Such experiments allow area residents to experience and evaluate impacts and effects. Noise and vibration is suppressed by the speed hump’s sinusoidal shape.

installed along two residential roads in the district between February 17 and March 3, 2007. Speed humps are humps intentionally installed on roads to lower automobile speeds.

At the same time, handmade mobile bollards (barricades such as those used during road construction) were installed to prevent the entrance of automobiles into residential streets. The handmade bollards were installed between February 20 and 23, 2007, and the mobile bollards were installed between February 20 and 22.

Resident questionnaires indicated a 70% approval rate for speed hump installation. Only 30% of

residents responded “I think it is good” or “I think it is somewhat good” regarding the bollards, but this does not necessarily indicate dissent; most responses were “no response,” “no opinion,” or “I don’t know.”



Figure 5. A traffic bollard produced based on ideas from children

3. Conclusions

Obtained knowledge includes the importance of specific acknowledgment by residents themselves regarding place-setting for discussions, information sharing, barrier-free participation, and resident organization activities; the desirability of government and resident organizations coexisting for as long as possible for a smooth handoff to government; and the fact that organizations for discussion do not function as organizations for building consensus.

4. Future outlook

The implemented residential street safety features have spread nationwide; one example is the “Zone 30” initiative, which establishes zones within which the speed limit for all roads is 30 km/h or less. New devices are also being tested including “rising bollards,” which were installed in 2013 as a social experiment in Niigata City and also considered in the Yanaka district. Residential streets are an important target for further promotion of traffic safety in Japan, and as such require further safety measures and research.