Effects of Low Subscription Fares and Mobility Management to Promote Public Transport Use: A Case Study of Oyama City, Japan

Authors: Tomohide Azami, Ayako Taniguchi

Abstract: Breaking away from the dependence on cars, increasing the number of public transport users, and securing operational revenues have been posing a problem for many cities worldwide. In Oyama City, Japan (population approximately 167,000), the transport share of automobiles is approximately 70% and the transport share of buses is 0.3%. Buses operated by private companies running in the city were withdrawn in 2008. To solve this problem of automobile dependence among citizens, Oyama city introduced low subscription fares (Max 70% discount on all city pass) and used branding to promote public relations (mobility management). In this study, we clarified the characteristics of the implementation process and public relations tools, and analyzed the effects of the policy from two perspectives: changing citizens' awareness and behavior, and maintaining the financial stability of the bus management. As an implementation process, the city decided to introduce low-cost citywide passes and implement mobility management for all citizens in order to break the dependence of citizens on automobiles and promote bus usage. The pass sales period was tentatively set at one year, and the service was extended and continued for two years, and converted to a permanent service due to no revenue loss. As a feature of the mobility management tool, a lifestyle information tabloid was adopted so that all citizens could read it with familiarity, and with the participation of creative directors and designers, three types of tabloids were created and distributed to all 53,000 households in the city three times. As a result of the effectiveness analysis, it was confirmed that the number of pass holders increased 4 times from 118 to 463 (as of March 2022), the number of times pass holders use the bus has increased by 11.5%, and car use has decreased by 27.5%. Those who were not in the habit of using buses are purchasing passes and developing the habit of using buses. With regard to bus management, it was observed that the total annual number of bus passengers increased by 1.1 times and the income from bus service was maintained. In addition, public relations activities have increased awareness of the pass and increased the number of citizens who have become attached to the bus and the city. These results suggest that the combination of introducing a low-cost citywide pass and public relations activities using branding can increase the number of bus users without reducing operating revenues.

Keywords: public transport, subscription fares, bus, mobility management, communication campaign

Conference Title: ICPTS 2022 : International Conference on Public Transportation Systems

Conference Location: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Conference Dates: November 10-11, 2022