

Stakeholder Dialogue

Thinking Together—Regional Communities and the YKK Group

—Contributing to a Sustainable Society—



Participants

Naturalist: Kikuyo Matsuki (Vice Chairperson, Kurobe Gorge Naturalist Society)
Consumer representative: Rika Inagaki (Promoter of global warming prevention efforts in Toyama)
Local government: Michiko Takamoto (Manager, Living Environment Section, Citizen Affairs Department, Kurobe City)
Nature conservation group representative: Atsushi Sano (Manager of Interaction & Cooperation Promotion Department, Toyama Environment Foundation)
Local resident: Sumio Shima (Vice-Chairman, Muratsubaki Promotion Society)
Business partner: Akira Hirano (President & CEO, Hirano Komuten K.K.)
Student: Hidemitsu Asano (Department of Intelligent Systems Design Engineering, Graduate School of Engineering, Toyama Prefectural University)
Foreign exchange student: Mika Kim (Department of Social Infrastructure Engineering, Graduate School of Engineering, Toyama Prefectural University)
Facilitator: Professor Noriyasu Kunori, Ph.D.

The YKK Group has hosted stakeholder dialogues annually since 2010 to provide a forum for the exchange of opinions. At the Eighth Dialogue (held on April 21, 2017), opinions were exchanged mainly regarding the transportation field, while efforts for low-carbon city planning discussed the previous year are steadily progressing toward realization.

Session 1

During the first half of the session, all of the stakeholders took a ride on the loop line bus currently being tested to link the north and south of Kurobe, so that they could experience the possibilities offered through public transportation.

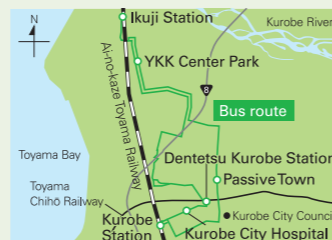
Social Experimentation through Industry-Academia-Government Cooperation

In 2016, Kurobe, Toyama Prefecture, joined forces with the University of Tokyo and YKK Corporation to launch the Public Transportation Strategy Promotion Committee, with the aim of advancing city transportation planning based on the concept of regional construction. The Committee began test operations of a loop line bus to link the city's north and south as a social experiment with the aim of using it as public transportation in the future.

The background to this joint effort was various issues faced by Kurobe and YKK Group respectively. Kurobe currently has a population of over 40,000 people, but population decline is advancing and approximately 30% of the population is aged 65 years or older. Its population is currently scattering to the suburbs, so Kurobe must aim to become a more sustainable, compact city. It was considered necessary not only to make the residential areas more integrated to reduce administrative costs, but also to provide a bus service to connect to the city core.

Meanwhile, approximately 7,000 people work at YKK's Kurobe Manufacturing Center, of whom some 90% use their cars to commute. In the process of business expansion, the company needs to increase the number of its employees, but it is difficult to provide more car parking space and traffic jams are occurring during the peak commute times, which impacts the overall plant efficiency. The YKK Group has positioned Kurobe as a Technology Headquarters, with production and development based there. The operation of public transportation service would not only improve productivity, but would also lead to improvements in employees' work lives, and also enable cuts to CO₂ emissions from commuting by car.

Through the realization of its corporate strategy, the YKK Group hopes to integrate bus transportation into the culture of Kurobe in the future, and to contribute to the creation of a sustainable city, which can also be an exemplary compact city.



Buses are run by multiple operators, and a variety of vehicles are used



Aiming for a new regional model that provides transport for citizens on the commuter bus

Session 2

In the latter part of the session, all of the stakeholders exchanged opinions with YKK Group employees in workshop-format discussions on the topic of low-carbon city planning that doesn't rely on personal automobile usage.

Building a Low-Carbon City without Reliance on Personal Automobile Usage

Aiming for an Ideal Compact City, by Creating a Donut-Shaped City, Like an Old Castle-Town

We envisage a walkable donut-shaped city, like an old castle-town, with centrally located commercial and medical facilities, with elderly residents situated with easy access to them, and the younger generations living in residential areas further out, with this being encircled by industrial areas. Other ways of reducing CO₂ emissions include transportation utilizing canals, and replacement of traffic signals with traffic circles. There are also health benefits. We would like to see a system where people could earn points for the steps they walk, which could be used towards shopping and services at participating facilities.



Promoting an Effective Combination of Restrictions on Personal Automobile Usage and Incentives

We believe one idea to reduce personal automobile usage would be to increase the taxation rate on gasoline and use this revenue towards construction of public transportation infrastructure. Also, if companies paid an allowance for commuting by bicycle or on foot, it might also reduce reliance on personal automobile usage. In addition, with the aging of society, if a system could be introduced to make it compulsory for the elderly to surrender their driving licenses, where in return they could be offered free usage of buses, it would not only increase usage of public transportation, but may even lead to better health from walking more.



Promoting the Use of Public Transportation by Creating Systems Facilitating the Choice to Not Own a Car

We believe there are means by which we can reduce the desire for personal automobile usage that would make commuting by public transportation the norm. Specifically, we believe that reducing the number of car parks, charging for car parking, changing the distance permitted for commuting by personal automobile, or using car license plate odd-even rationing for commuting, would realistically lead to increased usage of public transportation. In addition, we think that data on the movement of people could be gathered and analyzed to optimize bus routes and scheduling.



Dissemination of More Appealing Environmental Information

During the dialogue, opinions were also shared concerning dissemination of environmental information. We heard some profound opinions, including the need to actively communicate the results of efforts that we are steadily engaged in, and the need to first deliberate within the company the aims and policies regarding information dissemination, which would naturally clarify what and how to communicate. Based upon this feedback, the YKK Group will continue to bolster its efforts in transmission of environmental information.

Thoughts after Holding the Stakeholder Dialogues

Stakeholder dialogues are not a forum for companies and stakeholders to assert their respective rights and responsibilities. Rather, they are a place for cooperation, where companies can hear the frank opinions of stakeholders to introduce them into business operations. For this fiscal year, we discussed transportation in low-carbon city planning for Kurobe. Specific opinions and measures were suggested aimed at low-carbon transportation which does not rely on personal automobile usage or ownership. Suggestions were also made towards municipal policy in addition to company measures. We hope that the YKK Group can use these ideas in making the first steps in collaborative efforts with the region and local authorities.



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