Suica

The Functions and Convenience of Suica Evolve Rapidly
JR East introduced Suica as a next-generation fare collection system based on IC cards on November 18, 2001. Further, in order to capitalize on the potential of Suica as a means of settling transactions for small sums, JR East began Suica electronic money services from March 22, 2004.

In addition to the usability of Suica on railways within the JR East service area—the Tokyo metropolitan area, Sendai, and Niigata—the beginning of mutual use with PASMO in 2007 made Suica usable on most railways and bus services in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Moreover, as of March 31, 2010, Suica is usable in all of Japan’s major cities thanks to mutual use with West Japan Railway Company’s ICOCA, Central Japan Railway Company’s TOICA, Hokkaido Railway Company’s Kitaca, Kyushu Railway Company’s SUG-OCA, Nishinippon Railroad’s nimoca, and Fukuoka Transportation Bureau’s HAYAKKEN. Further, JR East is planning mutual use with manaca, which Nagoya Transportation Bureau, Nagoya Railroad, and so on plan to introduce. JR East intends to continue increasing the areas in which customers can use IC passenger tickets.

At the same time, JR East has been expanding the usage area for Suica electronic money by extending the usability of Suica beyond stores in railway stations to encompass convenience stores and shopping centers. Also, in the same way that it has done with railways, JR East has been steadily extending the mutual use of Suica as electronic money. As a result of those efforts, Suica electronic money is usable at approximately 89,350 locations and accounts for approximately 1.74 million transactions daily as of March 31, 2010.

Also, JR East provides the Mobile Suica service, which enables customers to use IC-enabled mobile phones compatible with Suica not only to charge Suica but also to purchase and use commuter passes and Shinkansen limited express tickets. Further, JR East is developing a lineup of Suica services that cater to a wide range of customer needs, such as the View Card with Suica, which integrates Suica and View Card functions, and multifunctional Suica IC cards, which incorporate Suica, cash cards, and other functions. In addition, JR East expanded an automatic charging service previously only available for View Card with Suica—which automatically charges Suica if the charge balance is below a certain amount when a customer passes the IC card over an automatic ticket gate—to include other types of Suica, such as Mobile Suica, My Suica (registered type Suica), and Suica Commuter Pass.

Similarly, JR East increased the types of Suica included in the Suica Point Club, which awards users with points usable for charging Suica when they use electronic money at designated stores. Also, July 2009 saw the launch of a Suica Internet service that allows the charging and settlement of Suica via personal computers.

Going forward, JR East will take on the challenge of new businesses based on Suica information and elevate Suica business to general information technology business.