

Special
Topic 4

Innovation of Service Quality

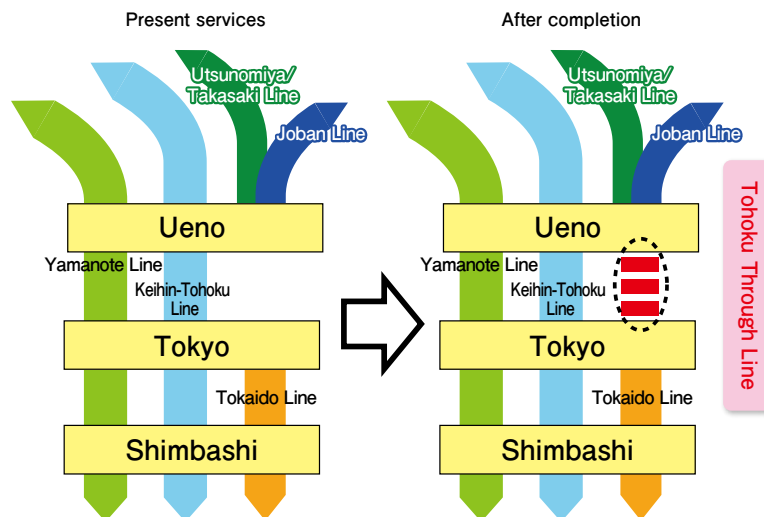
Toward Opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen

In preparation for the opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen Line, we set up “Hokuriku Sales Center,” our first domestic office outside of the JR East service area, in Kanazawa in April 2013. Here, we are mainly working on promoting development of community-based tourism and creating products for travel from the Tokyo metropolitan area to Hokuriku. Specifically, we are joining forces with local governments, JR West, other transportation business operators, business facilities along railway lines, to prepare secondary transportation services and to find and refine the region’s tourism aspects. We are also making efforts to promote the development of tourism routes covering a wide area, including Niigata, Nagano and Gifu Prefectures. By enhancing tourism and other attractive aspects of the region, we can generate more travel and exchange “from Tokyo to Hokuriku” and “from Hokuriku to Tokyo,” leading to the development of win-win relationships.

Ueno-Tokyo Line (Tohoku Through Line)

The Ueno-Tokyo Line is a project to add two tracks to the section from Ueno Station to Tokyo Station, which will allow trains from the Utsunomiya and Takasaki Lines and the Joban Line, which terminate at Ueno Station, to continue to Tokyo Station for direct service to the Tokaido Line. The level of in-train congestion between Ueno and Okachimachi on the Keihin-Tohoku and Yamanote Lines during morning commuting hours is about 200%, a level that leaves no room to move during rush hours, but the opening of the Ueno-Tokyo Line is expected to ease the congestion to 180% or lower. In addition, travel time will also be shortened because transfers at Ueno Station and Tokyo Station will no longer be necessary for many passengers. In terms of economics, enhancing the transport network connecting the Tokyo metropolitan area to the north and south will stimulate mutual exchange between the areas along the Utsunomiya, Takasaki and Joban Lines and the areas along the Tokaido Line, leading to regional revitalization. The opening of the Ueno-Tokyo Line is planned at March 2015.

■ Development of the Tohoku Through Line



VOICE

–Utilization of Tablet Computers–

Serving a Useful Purpose in Smooth Operations and Guiding Customers

Takashi Koyama

Assistant Depot Chief
Chiba Conductors Depot

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Masato Yoshino

Senior Chief Conductor (Conductor Coach)
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Yoshino Allowing train crew to carry tablet computers means regulations, emergency manuals, etc. can now all be managed on tablets, making updating and management very easy. This is a great advantage.

Koyama I think it's also a great advantage that with regulations, etc. all available via tablets, the materials are now easily portable and we can retrieve, search and browse them immediately when needed. However, from a manager's perspective, we were very careful to take measures against possible loss of the tablets because some of the information in them is confidential. As we are now preparing for their use in field operations, we are thoroughly reviewing management methods so we can instantly identify to whom tablets have been lent out.



Takashi Koyama
Assistant Depot Chief
Chiba Conductors Depot

Yoshino Among us in charge of instruction, too, we sorted out the materials to install by discussing what kind of information should be input and what kind of apps would be effective.

Koyama I would like to see that train crew are thoroughly informed, and kept up to date through training, on what kind of information is in the tablets and what kind of impact may arise in the event of loss.

Yoshino Our use of tablets is viewed positively by many in that it broadens the scope in which we can serve our customers and allows us to provide increasingly enriched services. There have already been cases where problems experienced on-the-job have been documented in a manner that is easily understood by train crew and shared on tablets, and the tablets are proving useful in serving customers.

Furthermore, based on feedback from train crew on the front lines, transfer advice, disaster information and translation are three kinds of applications that were introduced after hearing "having such apps would help." Most staff probably feel the increasing potential of using tablet computers.

Koyama Indeed. Young employees in particular are continually asking, "Can this be done?" So our intentions are to increasingly incorporate ideas from the field.

Yoshino On the day that the Kanto region was hit by heavy snowfall, there was an incident where bamboo had fallen on and partially blocked the railway tracks. If we had just told this to customers, they would still be wondering about "When will operations resume?" We found that distributing on-site photos to the tablets of conductors on stalled trains so that conductors could then show customers, "This is what's happened" gave those customers more assurance.

Koyama That is a good example of improving customer service quality in the field through quick thinking and utilizing tablets.

Yoshino I've heard there have been other cases using tablets, such as researching Tokyo Disney Resort admission restrictions and other information, alerting customers to things like this by in-train announcements, or using tablets to inform customers about connections to other railways and about the weather.

Koyama Looking ahead, our intentions are to keep improving the quality of information provided. For example, we are considering whether information can be transmitted via tablet email. On-site photos and messages, planned operations on days following major transport disruptions and rain and wind forecasts are some of the various kinds of information. We want to continue considering ways we can serve our customers more specifically by having such information mailed to tablets for viewing by the train crew in charge so that they can use the information to better serve customers.



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