

International Affairs Department

Dear Friends,

How are you? I'll send you my second Vietnam Journal as a JICA expert. The second issue concerns "Project Overview vol.2" and useful taxi dispatch software.

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW VOL.2

The project I work for is "Technical Assistance Project for Enhancing Management Capacity of Sewage Works." As I mentioned in my previous newsletter, we are due to establish the Vietnam Sewage Center (VSC), the Vietnam version of the Japan Sewage Works Agency (JS), as a procedure to achieve the project's goal. VSC shall have three functions "Training," "Project Implementation Support," and "R&D."

I mainly take care of "Project Implementation Support." Since sewage works are municipalities' operations in Vietnam, my mission is primarily to help local cities.

VSC's support has the following benefits for local governments.

1. VSC has expertise and experience in sewage works, which municipalities don't have enough. VSC's support facilitates municipalities' sewage works and provides high-quality facilities.
2. VSC can aggregate data on sewage works and share them with municipalities.

Sewage works are comprehensive series of operations, including planning, design, construction, and operation and maintenance (O&M). The Project in Vietnam focuses on project planning. The full-scale sewage works operation is just starting in the country, and we consider capacity building for project planning is mainly required.

This year, a pilot project planning is scheduled in Nam Dinh City to obtain knowledge for project execution support.

Last year's assessment demonstrates Nam Dinh City's strong interest in VSC's support. Nam Dinh is one of the largest cities that remain undeveloped sewerage services. The city has developed a "General Master Plan" for the whole public infrastructure. However, the plan has not been implemented. Today, untreated wastewater is discharged to rivers/waterways, and their downstream have intakes of clean water. The authority recognizes the city needs WWTP. Now, we are going to formulate our support system through the following activities;

- Arrange to develop a "Sector Master Plan" for wastewater facilities
- Verify a workflow of sewage works in Vietnam
- Consider the business model of the "Project Implementation Support Sector."

2. USEFUL TAXI DISPATCH APP

Hanoi, where I live, has an undeveloped public transportation system, especially trains. Many people use a taxi for traveling (I use it for work every day). Though the city has a bus service, I have not used it yet. A bus tends to be late by getting caught in a rush-hour traffic jam and has a risk of pickpockets.

You can see many taxicabs downtown Hanoi and quickly catch them if you don't care about a taxi company or type of vehicle. However, I've heard some cabs have illegally modified meters that overcharge you with unexpectedly high-speed running. So, we don't have many choices.

The local JICA office or internet provides me with information on relatively safe taxi companies. But, I still have a problem when I use a safety taxi.

My problem is language. As you know, the official language is Vietnamese in Vietnam, and people, including cab drivers, speak only Vietnamese, with some exceptions. Non-Vietnamese speaker like me always needs local staff's help when using a taxi, which gives me some stress.

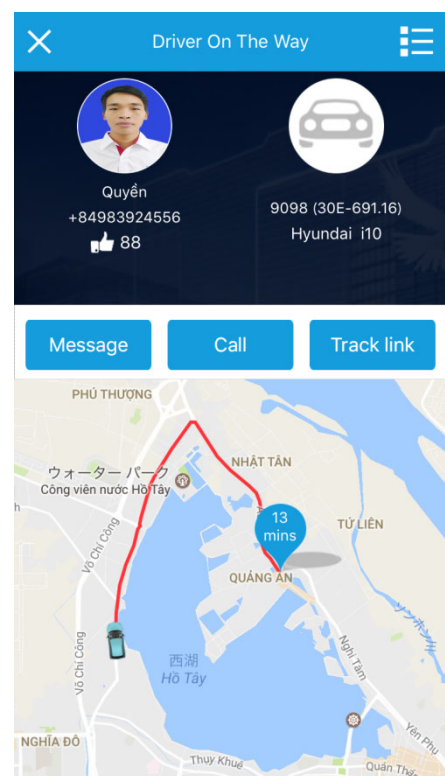


Photo 1: Display of taxi dispatch app

Recently, I found excellent app made by a company named *Taxi Group*. The app installed on my smartphone allows me to call a cab without troubling local staff.

When I need a cab, I start the app, put information, including my location, destination, and type of vehicle, and ask for a dispatch. If available, a taxi comes without a pick-up service charge.

The app provides information, including a driver who comes, their license plates, and the time until arrival (photo 1). I can see a car traveling along a route and ensure it is approaching on the map.

The app has solved my taxi problem and reduced my stress a lot.

At the end of the newsletter, I'll give you a quiz. Are you ready?

It is about 7 km from my house to the office. How much do you think the taxi fare is? Pick one.

1. 300 yen,
2. 500 yen,
3. 700yen,
4. 900 yen.

I'll give you the answer in my following newsletter. Don't miss it.