

Efforts to Improve Japan's Motorcycle Parking Environment

Japan has lagged noticeably behind in making improvements aimed at providing parking spaces for motorcycles, with that situation particularly visible in the big cities. At the same time, crackdowns on motorcycle parking violations have grown more severe in recent years, prompting motorcycle users to complain that there is nowhere to park their vehicles, even when they have the best intentions of parking legally.



Riders find it difficult to find parking lots in big cities.

Actual situation

The Nippon Motor Cycle Association (NMCA), one of the leading motorcycle industry bodies in Japan, in 2002 conducted the Survey of Motorcycle Acceptance in Public Parking Lots. The study targeted Tokyo and other major cities nationwide. Of the 194 automobile parking lots surveyed, it was found that 140 facilities (72.2 percent) refused to accept motorcycles. Also examined in the survey were 109 public facilities at government offices, department stores, hotels, hospitals, large-size buildings and other locations selected randomly for the report. Of these, only 38 facilities (34.9 percent) accepted motorcycles, further underscoring the difficulties that motorcyclists find in parking their vehicles in lots around town.

For its part, JAMA has recognized the seriousness of this problem from many years ago, and in 1992-93 sponsored a study panel of experts to probe the issue. The results of that research included indications that motorcycles were not targeted under Japan's Parking Lot Law or other related legislation. This prompted moves by JAMA to appeal to local public bodies, the media and other influential targets about the pressing need to improve the motorcycle parking lot situation.



Motorcycle-reserved curbside parking spaces in Europe.

JAMA approaches

Then, on April 12 of this year, members of the JAMA Motorcycle Committee visited the Traffic Bureau of the National Policy Agency, as well as the City and Regional Development Bureau of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, to submit a written demand outlining the following requests:

1. Improvements in the laws, to require that set quotas for motorcycles be included at automobile and bicycle parking lots supplied for use by the general public.
2. Effective measures to expand motorcycle parking facilities in districts characterized by particularly high parking demands, including the introduction of curbside parking spaces.

A JAMA member in charge of traffic affairs offered the following explanation of the purpose of this request paper: "Wherever there is demand to park automobiles or bicycles, there will also be demand to park motorcycles. As a very real, everyday

problem, there are cases of motorcycles being parked in disorderly fashion on roadways and sidewalks. To resolve this situation, the government needs to review the current laws, revise them when necessary, and otherwise devise effectual countermeasures to secure parking spaces for motorcycles.”

Reactions from public sector

Recently, the level of interest and concern is also growing among local governments, which are responsible for promoting effective parking countermeasures on a regional basis, to help resolve the motorcycle parking dilemma. The Tokyo Metropolitan Public Corporation for Road Improvement and Management, an affiliated organization of the Tokyo Metropolitan government, for the first time has included “motorcycle parking countermeasures” as one part of its regular parking action plan. This includes identifying the circumstances behind motorcycle illegal parking, support for carrying out parking lot improvements and other steps. As one phase of this effort, a parking lot exclusively devoted to motorcycles was scheduled to open in the trendy Roppongi district of downtown Tokyo this June.

According to Director Hiroki Furukawa of the Tokyo Metropolitan Public Corporation: “There is extremely high awareness among the mayors of Tokyo’s core wards, the police and other key sectors that something must be done about the motorcycle parking situation here. We also receive a steady stream of requests from the general public to build motorcycle parking lots.”

Shibuya Ward, for example, is channeling renewed strength into motorcycle countermeasures from the current fiscal year, along with other constructive steps to target the problem. Overall, it now appears that the both the industry and the government are poised to take action, raising hopes that this will lead to positive changes in the motorcycle parking environment in Japan.



This motorcycle parking lot was newly built in Yokohama, a major metropolis near Tokyo.