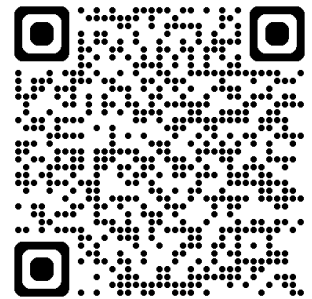


JR East 'Suica' to go beyond touch payment



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20250702063255562/>

The introduction of East Japan Railway's touch payment seemed revolutionary at the time as Suica cards let riders navigate the company's vast rail network without buying a ticket each time. The head of JR East recently spoke about what may come next for the iconic commuter pass.

President Kise Yoichi says the rail operator has even been countering the perception that Suica's touch system is inconvenient.

Since it started in 2001, the Suica has not changed much in terms of convenience. It was very advanced then, but now some may see it as inconvenient. For example, if you are carrying heavy luggage or pushing a stroller, you must stop to take your card out and touch the ticket gate.

Credit card companies, meanwhile, have been making a push into transportation payments. A total of 28 rail operators in Japan had compatible ticket gates by the end of March, a move accelerated by the influx of foreign tourists. The aim of the credit card firms is more than just offering convenience to their users. They want access to so-called mobility data. An area that had been a virtual monopoly for transfer card providers. Kise says JR East is investing management resources to maintain the edge that Suica has gained with more than 110 million cards issued.

I believe that the information being collected from Suica use is a valuable marketing resource. It's providing data on both where customers go and their shopping habits.

To address the issue of user convenience, the company is developing contactless ticket gates. The system will use advanced communication technology to authenticate payments. Trials are to start in two years.

A walkthrough gate would be very convenient. We could make this possible by exchanging communication signals from the gates. For rural areas we could use GPS and satellite functions to achieve this, even if there are no turnstiles at the station.

Another initiative is to integrate the Suica platform into local community services. The company is developing an app for each region that would let users do such things as receive online medical consultations or monitor the welfare of family members. The company set up a 160-person task force for the project in March. It aims to double the profits from Suica in 10 years.

Making Suica part of a lifestyle infrastructure and not just a simple transportation or payment system will be a pillar of our management strategy. We will enhance Suica's convenience at a rapid pace and provide services that our rivals cannot offer. We aim to win in this sector.

The company sees the next decade as transformational. It hopes Suica's impact will be felt far beyond the rail network, and it will become an integral part of daily lives.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Do you use Suica? Why or why not?
2. What do you feel is convenient about Suica? What do you feel is inconvenient?
3. What other services would you like to use with Suica in your daily life?
4. Do you feel comfortable with companies collecting data on your travel and shopping habits? Why or why not?
5. What do you think about using a credit card instead of a Suica to ride the train? Would you switch?