

Use JR East Revenue from Fare Hikes for Safety, Accessibility

通勤や通学で電車を利用している人も多いのではないのでしょうか。日本では今、JRの運賃値上げが検討されており、私たちの生活への影響が注目されています。サービスの維持と利用者の負担は、どのようにバランスをとるべきでしょうか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

East Japan Railway Co (JR East) has raised its fares effective March 14. This is the first major price increase by the company since the privatization of Japanese National Railways (JNR) in 1987. Previous increases were limited to accommodating the consumption tax and other special factors.

JR East has increased its regular fares by 7.8%, and commuter passes by 12%. On March 13, the day before the increase, ticket offices at every JR East railway station were packed with passengers trying to purchase passes at the old prices.

Fares had been maintained unchanged for a remarkable 40 years, since 1986 during the JNR era. Therefore, this price increase was probably unavoidable, considering the sharp rise in labor and material costs.

Continued on next page.

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1. Article

In 1997, after the establishment of the JR network, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism introduced the "total cost method" to curb excessive fare increases.

This method is used to determine the fare cap. It adds a profit margin to expenses necessary for train operations, such as personnel and maintenance costs, and then deducts non-operating income. JR East and the other two companies operating on Japan's main island, Honshu, had been unable to revise fares for a long time. That was due to their adherence to the total cost formula with its profit margin.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of passengers transported by JR companies plummeted. JR East was particularly hard hit, recording an operating loss of ¥520 billion JPY (\$3.26 billion USD) in FY2020.

Calls to reconsider reliance on the total cost accounting method have been growing louder among railway companies. In April 2024, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism significantly revised calculation standards to enable "sustainable operations." The approval of JR East's fare changes was part of this revision. However, any ill-considered fare increases in the future should be strictly avoided.

The average increase this time is 7.1%. But the increase within the Yamanote Line is 16.4%. And the cost of travel on the section of rail between Tokyo Station and Shinjuku Station will rise from ¥210 to ¥260 (about \$1.30 to \$1.63). This is a significant increase of 23.8%.

The strategy is clearly aimed at generating substantial revenue from rail passengers in central Tokyo. This is where the number of users is significantly higher than elsewhere. In addition, there are no convenient alternatives available.

Another change was the discontinuation of the round-trip ticket option. It had offered a 10% discount for journeys of 601 kilometers or more one way. This also amounts to a service downgrade.

During the JNR era, fares were raised by more than 50% in 1976 alone due to the effects of the Oil Shock and other factors. Lessons learned in the past, when it seemed as though prices increased every year, led to a decline in passengers. Ultimately, that led to forced privatization.

Since 2024, JR East has experienced a series of serious mishaps, including trains stopping for extended periods due to human error. The increased revenue from fare hikes is estimated at ¥88 billion (\$551 million) annually. Hopefully, it will be used primarily for safety and accessibility measures.

Continued on next page.

1. Article

Returning to its core mission as a railway company will be the first step for JR East in restoring public trust.



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本教材は、一般社団法人ジャパンフワード推進機構、株式会社産経デジタルより許諾を得て、産経ヒューマンラーニング株式会社が編集しています。
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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. method 方法

Camille used a different method to solve one of her math problems.

2. fare increase 運賃の値上げ

The company announced a fare increase for bus services last month.

3. significant 重要な

There was a significant change in the weather overnight.

4. revenue 収益

The IT company's revenue grew after launching a new service.

5. accessibility 利用容易

The banking website improved accessibility for older users.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What method was used to limit fare increases in the past?
2. Why were fares not revised for many years?
3. What problem did JR East face during the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. Do you think fare increases are necessary for public transportation?
Why or why not?
5. What improvements would make you more willing to accept higher fares?

4. JR東値上げ 国鉄の二の舞い演じるな

JR東日本が3月14日から運賃を値上げした。昭和62年の国鉄民営化以降、同社では消費税率の引き上げなどを除いて初の本格的値上げである。

値上げ率は普通運賃が7・8%、通勤定期が12%で、前日の13日には、旧料金で定期券を買おうとする利用客で各駅のみどりの窓口は大混雑した。

国鉄時代の昭和61年に値上げしてから、実に40年間にわたり運賃水準を維持し続けてきた。今回の値上げは、急激な人件費や資材費高騰などを勘案すればやむを得ないだろう。

JR発足後の平成9年、国土交通省は、過度な値上げを抑える目的で総括原価方式を導入した。列車運行に必要な人件費や修繕費などの経費に利潤を上乗せした上、営業外収益を差し引いて運賃上限を決定する仕組みである。これによりJR東日本など本州3社は長く運賃改定ができなかった。

ところがコロナ禍によってJR各社の輸送量は激減し、特にJR東日本は、令和2年度に5200億円もの営業赤字を計上した。総括原価方式の見直しを求める声が鉄道各社から強まり、6年4月に国土交通省は「持続可能な運営」ができるよう算定基準を大幅に見直した。JR東日本の運賃改定が認められたのもその一環だ。

ただ、今後の安易な値上げは、厳に慎むべきである。

今回の平均値上げ率は7・1%だったが、山手線内のアップ率は16・4%で、東京―新宿間は210円から260円と23・8%も上がる。利用客が格段に多く、代替のきかない都心部で確実に収益を上げようという戦略が透けてみえる。片道601キロ以上を往復すれば10%割引していた往復乗車券が廃止されたのもサービスダウンだ。

運賃は国鉄時代の昭和51年、オイルショックなどの影響を受けて50%超も値上げされた。以来毎年のように値上げを繰り返して乗客離れを起し、民営化に追い込まれた過去の教訓を忘れてはならない。

次頁に続く

4. JR東値上げ 国鉄の二の舞い演じるな

同社では昨年から今年にかけて、人為的ミスなどで電車が長時間にわたってストップするなど重大事故が頻発している。年間880億円とみられる値上げによる増収分は、安全対策に重点的に使ってもらいたい。鉄道会社の原点に戻ることが、信頼回復の第一歩である。