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Mitaka, Tokyo, (JP)

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Facility:

This facility is one of the newest in west Tokyo and features some of the most advanced developments of vending machines and tier racks. The facility has been retrofitting the north side of the old station building.

Provider:

Mitaka ward transport planning office

Designer/ Architect:

Mitaka ward transport planning office

Cost of Provision:

Undisclosed information



General Description:

Regenerating public space and public infrastructure has had a key role in the upturn of the construction business in Japan during this decade since this improves quality of life and maintains stable land prices. Mitaka has been one of the more proactive and competitive wards and has incorporated new technologies in their bicycle parking areas. The tier racks of this facility are probably the easiest to operate among the ones visited for this research. They are the latest generation of tier racks and handling and lifting bicycles onto the upper tier rack is assisted by a hydraulic system that helps pushing the rack and the bike up with little effort. The racks' higher rise of the wheel holders makes them more adaptable to different types of bicycles (not only shoppers but MTB, folding bikes, BMX and others). The lock system seems more solid than others visited on other sites; finally the vending machine is fitted with a "Suica" card reader. Suica is a rechargeable smart card used as a fare card on train lines in Japan and is the Tokyo equivalent to the London Oyster card. The vending machines can also operate with Mobile Suica, which is the Suica prepaid system incorporated into mobile wallet phones. This system includes Java applications to manage the Suica function in the mobile phone. Also to recharge the Suica card stored in the mobile phone, review the stored value and perform other functions via the mobile phone. Charges can be added directly to the phone bill, eliminating the requirement to constantly add to and monitor the remaining balance. The site has been retrofitted on the rather small station building so it mixes outdoor and covered bicycle spaces.



Location of Facility

Mitaka Station, North Exit (20m away from train gates) West Tokyo

Scale (capacity):

260 bikes, distributed on 240 bicycle spaces on double deck tier rack (120 high and 120 on ground level) and 10 single tier racks and 10 bicycle spaces on the freestanding bicycle parking spaces (station building staff spaces).

Length of Stay:

24 hours, but typically intended to serve a working day or day-trip, made by train.

Charges (cost to user):

The service is charged on pay as you use basis (no subscriptions). Ground level racks have higher demand so the first 30 minutes are free of charge; 8 hours cost 100 yen (£0.50), after that every 4 hours ¥50 (£0.25) are charged. To promote the use of the upper level racks special prices have been set: the first hour is free of charge, then 11 hours cost ¥100 (£0.50), after than every 4 hours ¥50 (£0.25) are charged.

Access:

The facility is open access.

Signage:

There is signage for the bicycle parking but the distinctive appearance, prominent location, compact size and its open, corridor-like structure all serve to communicate the facility's functions and make the parking simple to locate.

Furniture:



The latest generation of double deck tier racks. Equipped with a hydraulic suspension and high-rise wheel holders. Suica (smart card) vending machines, that can be used with enabled mobile phones, coins and banknotes are also accepted.

Technical Requirements:

The Suica vending machine is part of a national network of electronic currency available especially at transport terminals. The racks are made by Cycle Techno, they are the model SE TG fitted with electronic assisted locks that secures the front wheel of the bicycle.

Security, Guardianship and Lighting:

The station has no appointed guardians. Cycle theft is very low in the area and it is more likely to happen at street level rather than inside a parking area like this. There are CCTV cameras in operation monitored by the station staff. The place is lit by natural light during the day time and by fluorescent tubes at night.

Maintenance and Servicing:

All maintenance is managed from within the rail authority. The racks and vending machines are new and have had no failures; however JR (Japan Railways) supports the maintenance of the Suica networks and machines. Racks are serviced by a contractor (the maker Cycle-Techno)

Service Period (how long facility meant to last):

Unspecified, but finished components suggest potential of 10-15 years for the outdoor racks and 20-25 years for the covered racks.

Strenghts:

It is in a very convenient location. It is really easy to use and easy to pay. The design of the tier rack is a clear result of a process of research and development since it addresses several issues to do with balance, weight, handling and effort normally found on double deck tier racks. The locking system seems more secure than others, the design of the rack allows the use of other locks

Weaknesses:

It is a small facility for a densely-populated area of 10,000 inhabitants per km².

Useful References:



Narrative description and further photographs (Japanese):

<http://www.jreast.co.jp/suica/>

Description, User Assessment and Jury Comments:

<http://www.mwkdesign.com/kbda-archive/1998-008/98008.htm>