# JR West sets up a council to rebuild Geibi Line, which continues to be in the red, making first request to the government

October 3, 2023 16:48

Based on the law that went into effect in October, JR West held a council meeting to discuss the continuation of the line and conversion to buses for some sections of the Geibi Line connecting Hiroshima and Okayama prefectures, where ridership continues to decline. We requested that the country establish one. This is the first time in the country that a request has been made to the government based on this law.

Many local railway lines across the country continue to be in the red, and on October 1st, a revised law was passed that allows the national government to establish councils to discuss the restructuring of transportation means at the request of local governments and railway operators. It has been enforced.  
In response to this, JR West requested the government to establish a council for some sections of the Geibi Line on the morning of the 3rd. This is the first time in the country that a request has been made to the government to establish a council based on this law.  
The target section is  
▼ Bingo-Shobara Station in Shobara City, Hiroshima Prefecture  
▼It is 68.5 km between Bitchu Jindai Station in Niimi City, Okayama Prefecture.  
Upon receiving the request, the national government determines whether it is necessary to establish a council, and once the council is established, it will collect the opinions of multiple local governments and work towards promoting the use of local railways and switching to buses. The state of public transportation will be examined in a way that is in line with the actual circumstances of the region, including through demonstration experiments.

JR West “We want to build an optimal transportation system”

In response to a request to the government to establish a council for some sections of the Geibi Line, Akihiko Okui, vice president of JR West's Hiroshima branch, told reporters, ``The trend of declining ridership has not stopped.'' However, it was difficult to proceed with discussions on rebuilding the line with the local governments involved.The line section was not able to take advantage of the railway's characteristics of mass transportation, but it was difficult to proceed with discussions on rebuilding it with the local governments involved. We would like to build an optimal transportation system that is easy for local people to use."

High school student who uses the line to commute to school: ``Think about reducing the deficit by not abolishing the line''

Nochie Station, one of the stations in the target section, is about 15 kilometers from the center of Niimi City and is the westernmost station on the Geibi Line in Okayama Prefecture. Currently, approximately 20 high school students use the Geibi Line to commute to high schools in the city center. High school students said, ``I'm grateful that the Geibi Line reduces the burden on my parents of picking up and dropping off the line,'' and ``I want them to think about how to reduce the deficit by not discontinuing the line.''

A man who lives near the station says, ``I want it to continue''

Kazutoshi Taguchi (82), who lives near Nochie Station, attended high school on the Geibi Line until the spring of 1950. It is said that at that time, steam locomotives pulled passenger cars and filled them with people commuting to work or school.  
Taguchi says, ``At that time, there weren't many vehicles other than trains, so they were used a lot and a lot of people rode on them. Areas with railways were more lively than areas without railways, and the power of railways was great.'' I look back. The area in front of the station was bustling with shops selling daily necessities and restaurants, and at the time when the forestry industry was flourishing, there was also a platform for freight transporting lumber. Looking at the current state of the station, Taguchi said, ``I feel a bit lonely because it's so overgrown.I think it's a good thing that the train is still running, even though the frequency has decreased.'' On top of that, he said, ``I want the Geibi Line to continue because trains have been running there for a long time.I want the national council to think about it from the perspective of public interest, rather than just cutting off areas that are not profitable.'' I'm talking to you.

Hiroshima Governor Yuzaki “Consults with cities along the line to consider responses”

In response to JR West's request to the government to establish a council, Governor Yuzaki of Hiroshima Prefecture told reporters, ``If the government asks for opinions, we will consider the purpose of the council and the content to be considered. We would like to discuss measures with the cities along the route.It would be a heavy burden for the cities along the route, which have small budgets, to continue to provide subsidies for the maintenance of public transportation into the future.If we were to switch to buses, etc. We would like to ask the government for reliable cooperation from JR in order to ensure smooth operation and convenience."

Okayama Governor Ibaraki "Consults with Niimi City, Hiroshima Prefecture, etc."

In response to JR West's request to the national government to establish a council, Okayama Prefecture Governor Ryuta Ibaraki told reporters, ``As of now, a reconstruction council has been established, and all relevant local governments and others are participating.'' "It's not 100% decided what we will do. We would like to respond to the national government's hearing while consulting with Niimi City, Hiroshima Prefecture, etc." In addition, he expressed his intention to continue working to promote the use of the Geibi Line.

Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Saito: ``Don't leave it to business operators, don't leave it to the regions''

In response to the enactment of a law on October 1st that allows the government to establish a council to discuss the continuation of railway lines and the conversion of buses to struggling railways, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Saito said after a cabinet meeting on the 3rd. At the press conference, he said, ``I hope that as many local railways as possible will be rebuilt.The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism must do away with regional public transportation, rather than leaving it up to operators or local communities.'' , I would like to take responsibility for and support the idea of ​​what kind of local public transportation is most convenient for people living in the local area, sustainable, and long-lasting.Business operators, the region, and the country should work together to improve local public transportation. I want to protect it," he said.