

Traffic congestion in the City of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

1. The urban transport infrastructure project

In August, 2021, I get the opportunity to visit Mongolia for the first time. The project aim was to investigate the existing traffic situations and propose possible solution to address the problems. Because of Covid- 19 restrictions, we were able to visit Mongolia right after the Nadaam festival when the situation became better. It was late August and already quiet cold compared to Tokyo and it rained a few days. According to the locals, rain in Ulaanbaatar is unusual and is considered a sign of good luck as many Mongolians depend on farming.

2. Traffic congestion in the city of Ulaanbaatar

There was two weeks mandatory quarantine in the hotel before our team could go out for field survey. It's been reported by many locals that the traffic congestion in Ulaanbaatar City is pretty intense and is one of the sources of air pollution, the use of coal for cooking and heating being the primary reason. The field survey took about 7 hours from 9am to 4pm on a Saturday. There traffic on the city center was very intense unlike the sub- urbs. At one point, we were stuck in the traffic for about an hour. The major roads in Ulaanbaatar are aligned horizontally and vertically like a plus sign, and the infamous Peace Avenue and the Narnii Road is always jam- packed with private cars.



Figure: Major roads in the city of Ulaanbaatar



Figure: Traffic congestion in the city of Ulaanbaatar

3. Reasons of traffic jam

From the preliminary field visit, several reasons of traffic congestion in Ulaanbaatar were identified, such as heightened use of private vehicles such as cars. There is no specific taxi service in Ulaanbaatar City, often private car owners use their cars for ride hailing services adding more cars private vehicle fleets on the roads. Besides that, there is a priority bus lane in the Peace Avenue. However, because of reduced capacity at some points, due to illegal on- road parking and due to the driving behavior of the car drivers, often the priority lane is occupied by the private vehicles causing more congestion.

4. Motorcycles in the Ulaanbaatar City

There are very few motorcycle users in the Ulaanbaatar City. Interestingly, during the field visit we get to observe a huge fleet of motorcycle riders. According to our local representative, these motorcycle riders are because of an event organized by the people whose hobby is to ride motorcycles.



Figure: Motorcycle riders in the city of Ulaanbaatar