

ANA and Panasonic Partner to Test Self-Driving Electric Wheelchairs at Narita Airport



- Latest solutions offer increased mobility for travelers, making Narita Airport more accessible.

TOKYO/OSAKA, May 16, 2019 – All Nippon Airways (ANA), Japan’s largest and 5-Star airline for seven consecutive years, and Panasonic Corporation announced that they will work together to test the latest generation of personal mobility, self-driving electric wheelchairs, as part of a far-reaching plan to increase mobility and accessibility options at Tokyo Narita International Airport. Incorporating robotic elements, these wheelchairs will be capable to safely navigate through the airport independently, making them an ideal mobility solution for passengers connecting flights.

Since Narita Airport is an international hub, many travelers must walk a long distance to reach their connecting flights. The airport’s size and high volume of activity can make this inconvenient, and this difficulty is only compounded for elderly travelers with mobility issues. In order to meet these demands and keep Narita Airport operating at the highest level, ANA and Panasonic are teaming to run trials on new electric wheelchairs which boast tracking capabilities that allow them to navigate the bustling airport.



Self-driving electric wheelchair



Testing the electric wheelchair at Narita Airport

“Narita Airport is a gateway to Japan for millions of travelers every year and we seek to partner with other leading Japanese innovators to make sure that arrival, departure and making connections are all as convenient as possible,” said Juichi Hirasawa, Senior Vice President of ANA. “ANA’s partnership with Panasonic will make Narita Airport more welcoming and accessible, both of which are crucial to maintaining the airport’s status as a hub for international travel in the years to come. The robotic wheelchairs are just the latest element in ANA’s multi-faceted approach to improving hospitality in the air and on the ground.”

The self-driving electric wheelchair jointly developed by Panasonic and WHILL Co., Ltd., is capable of

independently detecting and avoid people and obstacles on the way to their destinations. The wheelchairs function by following a predetermined leader to a common destination, and ANA staff will be on hand to serve as guides. The smart elements and adaptability make the wheelchairs a perfect fit for Narita Airport, particularly in helping passengers reach their connections on time.

Through this test, ANA will work to raise the bar on customer service and seek to implement the latest technology in ways that allow it to meet emerging consumer needs, as well as Panasonic actively working and introducing the latest technologies, and developing next-generation personal mobility that achieves unprecedented mobility experiences. By modernizing accessibility at Narita Airport, ANA and Panasonic are looking for ways to offer practical innovation for travelers.

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About ANA

Following the "Inspiration of Japan" high quality of service, ANA has been awarded the respected 5-Star rating every year since 2013 from SKYTRAX. ANA is the only Japanese airline to win this prestigious designation seven years in a row. Additionally, ANA has been recognized by *Air Transport World* as "Airline of the Year" three times in the past 10 years - 2007, 2013 and 2018, becoming one of the few airlines winning this prestigious award for multiple times.

ANA was founded in 1952 with two helicopters and has become the largest airline in Japan, as well as one of the most significant airlines in Asia, operating 80 international routes and 118 domestic routes. ANA offers a unique dual hub model which enables passengers to travel to Tokyo and connect through the two airports in the metropolitan Tokyo, NARITA and HANEDA, to various destinations throughout Japan, and also offers same day connections between various North American, Asian and Chinese cities.

ANA has been a member of Star Alliance since 1999 and has joint venture partnerships with United Airlines, Lufthansa German Airlines, Swiss International Airlines and Austrian Airlines.

Besides the full service and award winner carrier ANA, the ANA Group has two LCCs as consolidated subsidiaries, Vanilla Air Inc. and Peach Aviation Limited. The ANA Group carried 53.8 million passengers in FY2017, has approximately 39,000 employees and a fleet of 260 aircraft. ANA is a proud launch customer and the biggest operator of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

For more information, please refer to the following link.

<https://www.ana.co.jp/group/en/>

About Panasonic

Panasonic Corporation is a worldwide leader in the development of diverse electronics technologies and solutions for customers in the consumer electronics, housing, automotive, and B2B businesses. The company, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2018, has expanded globally and now operates 582 subsidiaries and 87 associated companies worldwide, recording consolidated net sales of 8.003 trillion yen for the year ended March 31, 2019. Committed to pursuing new value through innovation across divisional lines, the company uses its technologies to create a better life and a better world for its customers. To learn more about Panasonic: <http://www.panasonic.com/global>.