

Pregnant woman wants seat on Tokyo metro: there's an app for that

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Tokyo trains are notoriously busy

Pregnant women struggling to bag a seat on the famously packed Tokyo subway could find their salvation in a new app connecting them with nearby passengers willing to give up their coveted perch.

The digital match-making app being trialled this week on the metro aims to overcome two problems especially prevalent in Japan: passengers

generally have their nose buried in their phones and talking is strictly frowned upon.

The [service](#) allows a [pregnant woman](#) to send a message when she wants a seat.

The app will then look for generous pre-registered users who have said they are willing to give up their seats.

If there is a match, the pregnant [woman](#) gets a seat map on her smartphone screen showing her partner's location.

The exchange can be made without giving personal information to each other.

Dai Nippon Printing (DNP) has been testing the service this week on one of the key subway lines in conjunction with Tokyo Metro and the Line messaging app company.

"This may be particular to Japan but some people hesitate to speak to a person who may need a seat," said a spokeswoman for DNP, a printing and IT group.

"Many people are also looking at smartphone screens and do not always realise quickly that someone in need is standing nearby," said the official, who declined to be named.

"We try to take advantage of the situation."

It is yet to be decided when the service will be rolled out but the companies also hope to expand assistance to elderly and disabled people.

Japan has one of the world's lowest birth rates and authorities are trying

out several policies to encourage people to have more children.

Public officials distribute a round pink "Maternity Mark" tag to [pregnant women](#) to encourage people around them to be considerate before they start showing.

Some woman however hesitate to display the tag out of fear that they could be perceived as overly insistent on their rights or insensitive toward [people](#) on fertility treatment.

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