

China's 'smart cities' to number 500 before end of 2017

More than 500 Chinese cities have started or are expected to start their "smart-city" transformations during 2017, according to the Economic Information Daily.

Currently, a total of 290 cities have initiated smart-city pilot projects, and more than 300 cities have signed smart-city construction agreements with IT companies, including the three major Chinese telecommunications companies, Ant Financial and Tencent.

By the end of March, more than 500 cities, including 95 percent of provincial capitals and 83 percent of prefecture-level cities, had proposed transitioning into smart cities. As construction of smart cities accelerates, the scale of related markets is expected to hit 100 billion RMB. This figure shoots up to 1 trillion when upstream and downstream industries are included.

The Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Highway has become China's first "internet highway," based on its cooperation with mobile payment service provider Alipay and China Guangfa Bank. With more than 40,000 vehicles streaming across the highway every day, it takes a long time for drivers to pay tolls. Through smart-city applications like mobile payments, the time consumed paying toll fees has been greatly reduced.

Another benefit of smart cities can be found in hospitals. According to Cai Xiujun, president of Sir Run Run Shaw Hospital of the School of Medicine at Zhejiang University, patients will soon be able to take care of preliminary processes using their mobile phones, reducing the average time patients spend waiting in the hospital.

With the construction of smart cities, smart-city applications will be increasingly embraced, said Wu Hequan, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Wu believes that more and more enterprises will get involved, which will substantially promote the IT industrial chain.