

Chapter 3: Promoting Regional Revitalization and Urban Renaissance

[Initiatives toward regional revitalization and urban renaissance]

It is important that the central government provide full support to the revitalization initiatives of motivated local governments that take advantage of local creativity and ingenuity, while respecting their autonomy as much as possible. Such initiatives are expected to stimulate the local economy and create local employment. Laying the groundwork for mobilizing integrated measures and creating an environment where the private sector can exercise its expertise to the full hold a key to enhancing the charms and international competitiveness of cities.

In this context, MLIT is working to reform the subsidy system so that subsidies will be more accessible to local governments, in close coordination with the Headquarters for the Regional Revitalization and Urban Renaissance Headquarters in the Cabinet Office. The ministry is also working to increase support for the related initiatives of motivated local government. In addition, MLIT is supporting urban renaissance projects by the private sector in key areas for urban renaissance (“the Prompt Development Area for Urban Renaissance”) and other related projects.

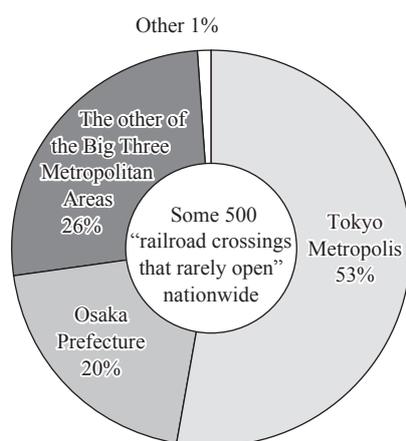
[Promoting policies that support regional revitalization and urban renaissance]

MLIT has already taken a number of steps to enhance the autonomy of local governments. For example, the ministry has created “Community Renovation Grants,” which are quite different from the existing subsidies in that they allow for more autonomy of local governments and cover a wide range of projects. It has also made operational improvements to the special subsidy for local road development. In addition, MLIT has created a framework for supporting municipalities in developing integrated public facilities. Moreover, the ministry has the Regional Revitalization Team.

MLIT encourages local governments to take advantage of the expertise and funds of the private sector. The ministry also supports local initiatives to exploit local resources.

Other physical and non-physical infrastructure development implemented or supported by MLIT includes: rejuvenating built-up areas within cities; developing traffic nodes; eliminating highway-railroad grade crossings; revitalizing public transport that supports local life; promoting cadastral development; and promoting interaction between urban and rural areas.

<“Railroad crossings that rarely open” concentrated in metropolitan areas>



(As of November 2003)

<A conceptual image of continuous grade separation>

JR Chuo Line continuous grade separation

○Project impact

Before : Many crossings along the JR Chuo Line cause traffic jams, traffic accidents, and community partitions directly or indirectly.

Most of crossings are “bottleneck” crossings where traffic is blocked for 40 minutes or more per hour at peak hour, or 50,000 vehicle hours or more per day.

After : 18 crossings of which all but one are “bottleneck” crossings will disappear.

Benefits : In the case of the Koganei-kaido crossing

- The total time period during which the crossings bars are down at peak hours will be reduced from 55 minutes per hour to none.
- The maximum congestion length will be shorted from 530 meters to none.
- The community will be “united” through free traffic flows.



○Project profile

Section : Between Mitaka and Tachikawa on the JR Chuo Line

Section length : 13.1 kilometers

Total cost : about 179 billion yen

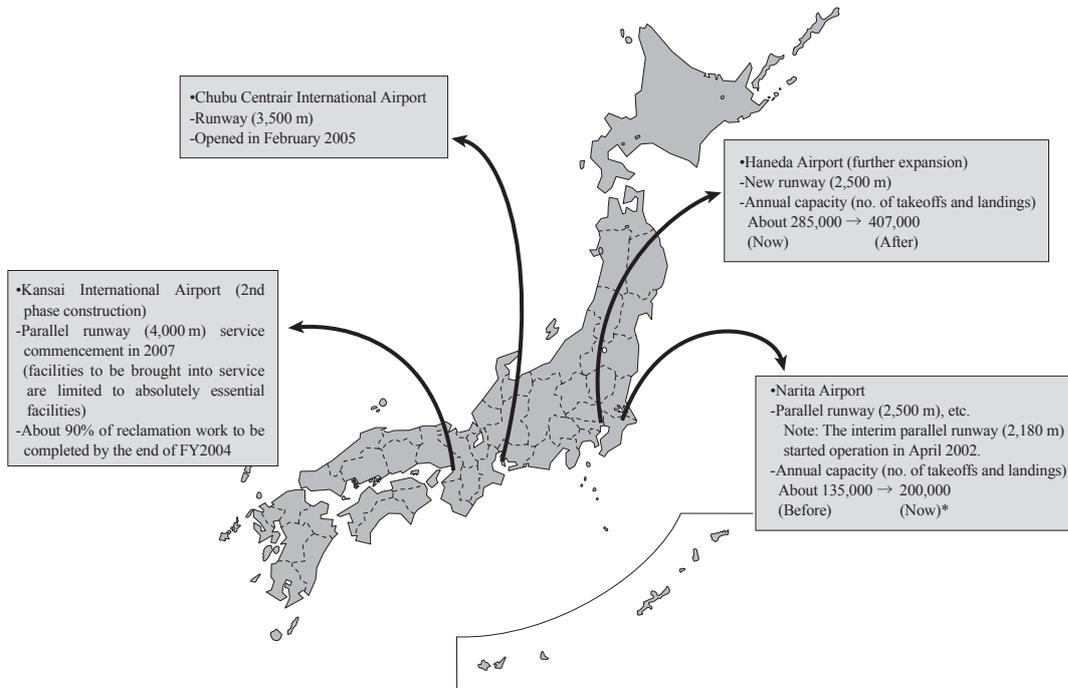
Completion by : FY2006 for the Mitaka-Kokubunji section
FY2008 for Nishi-Kokubunji-Tachikawa section

[Promoting urban renaissance projects]

○ Achieving various forms of vigorous exchanges and economic activities

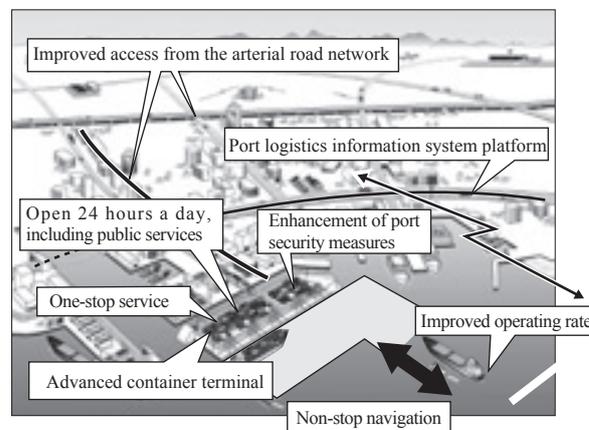
MLIT is working to reinforce the capacity for international exchange and physical distribution and develop ring road networks.

< Major airport project in metropolitan areas >

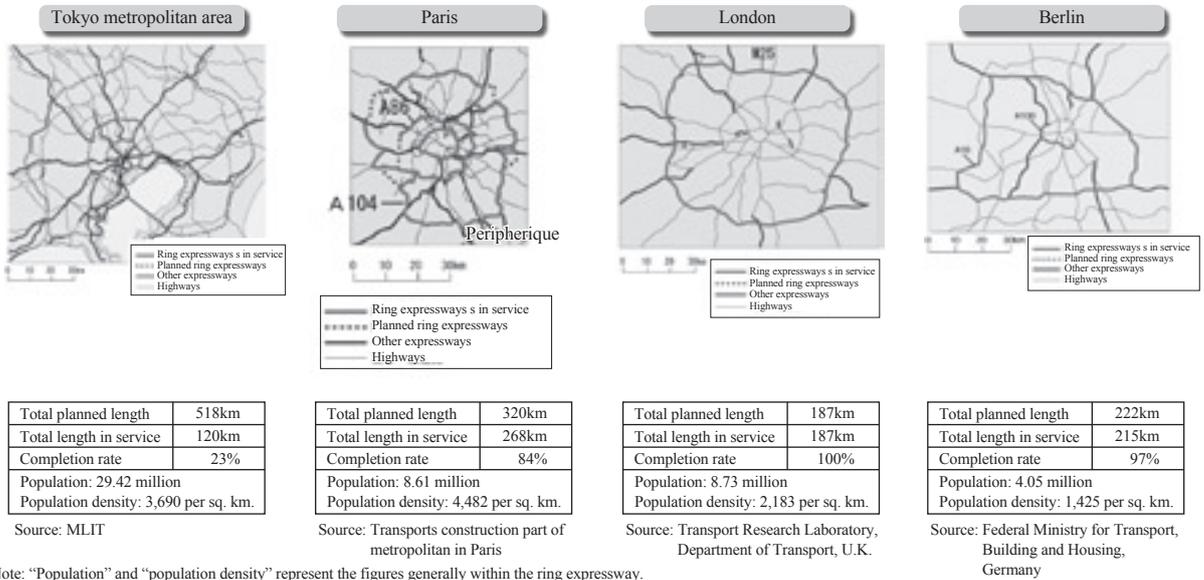


*In accordance with the recommendation of the Roundtable Conference, the airport is limited to 200,000 flights per year after the completion of the parallel runway. Further capacity expansion will require consultation with the local communities.

< Enhanced capacity of an international port >



< International comparison of the growth of ring expressway network in metropolitan areas >



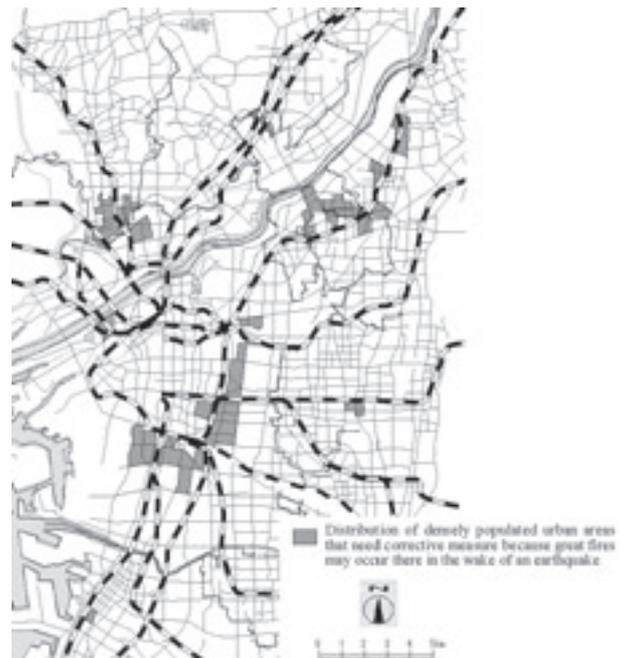
○ Making cities more resistant to disasters for safer life

MLIT aims to further develop key broad-based disaster prevention bases that serve as the center for disaster prevention activities covering many local governments. The ministry also focuses on densely-inhabited areas to improve their disaster-preparedness and their living environment.

< Distribution of densely populated urban areas that need corrective measure because great fires may occur there in the wake of an earthquake (in Tokyo and Osaka prefectures) >

Tokyo: 2,339 hectares in total

Osaka: 2,295 hectares in total



○Building a favorable urban environment

MLIT pursues zero emissions of waste in metropolitan areas. To this end, the ministry strives to reduce, reuse and recycle waste to “close the loop” of resource circulation.

To revitalize urban environment infrastructure, MLIT implements a number of measures including: (i) conserving, regenerating or creating precious natural environments in metropolitan areas, (ii) creating green zones in waterfront areas and expanding green zones in urban areas, (iii) reviving rivers and seas.

Furthermore, MLIT supports efforts to restore Lake Biwa and the Yodo River.

○Promoting urban development initiatives by the private sector

A total of 63 areas (as of the end of December 2004) have been designated as “the Prompt Development Area for Urban Renaissance” under the Special Measures Act for Urban Renaissance. In these areas, various projects are well under way. For example, business and commercial buildings opened one after another in the area surrounding Tokyo and Yurakucho stations. A basic plan has been developed to build a hub for international business and cultural exchange in the area around Osaka Station, the Nakanoshima area and the area in and around Midosuji. A redevelopment project has been completed in the area centering on Takamatsu Station and the Marugame-town area.

<Redevelopment of Marunouchi Kitaguchi, Tokyo>



<Sunport Takamatsu, Takamatsu>



Local governments make “city planning decisions” for the Special District for Urban Renaissance, which establish new flexible city plans free from regulations applied to existing land use zones. MLIT approves private urban renaissance projects, to which financial support and preferential tax treatment are available.

○Flexible budget allocations to promote urban renaissance

Flexible budget allocations, including the “urban renaissance project promotion budget” are available in the middle of the fiscal year. This measure is designed to facilitate effective project implementation by various government offices.