On September 1, 1923, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake struck the Kanto region. The following day, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Gonbe Yamamoto was formed, and the Bureau for Reconstruction of the Imperial Capital, an organization under direct control of the Prime Minister was established. Minister of Home Affairs and former Mayor of Tokyo Shinpei Goto was appointed as President of the Bureau for Reconstruction of the Imperial Capital. Goto led creation of the reconstruction plan. Although the budget for the government plan, which originally called for 1.5 billion yen, was cut to 488.44 million yen, the plan achieved results such as being the first to incorporate modern city planning methods. Years later, it even had an impact on Japan’s postwar reconstruction plan. In accordance with the reconstruction plan, roads, bridges, rivers, canals, and parks were developed and land readjustment projects were carried out mainly in the areas that were ravaged by fire to create infrastructure that still contributes to the Tokyo of today.

Roads, bridges, and other facilities were built. Nine iron bridges called “earthquake reconstruction bridges,” were built. Of these bridges, the Ryogoku, Umaya, and Azuma bridges were built by the national government, while the City of Tokyo constructed the Aoi, Eitai, Kiyosu, Kasumigaseki, and Koto bridges. Other bridges constructed as part of reconstruction from the disaster, including Shinbashi, Masaki, and Hijiri bridges, are still being used today.

To replace the many wooden bridges over the Sumida River that collapsed due to the quake, nine iron bridges—called “reconstruction roads,” were built. Of these bridges, the Ryogoku, Umaya, and Aioi bridges were built by the national government, while the City of Tokyo constructed the Aoi, Eitai, Kiyosu, Kasumigaseki, and Koto bridges. Other bridges constructed as part of reconstruction from the disaster, including Shinbashi, Masaki, and Hijiri bridges, are still being used today.

Construction of arterial roads (1926)

From Teito Fukko Kinencho (Imperial Capital Reconstruction Commemorative Album), aerial view of Arterial Road No. 1, from the collection of the Edo-Tokyo Museum.

Aerial photograph of the area near present day Nihombashi 2-chome, Chu-ku. Construction progresses on Arterial Road No. 1 (Showa-dori Avenue), road running vertically in the photograph, and Arterial Road No. 3 (Edo-dori Avenue), road running horizontally near the center of the photograph.

Distribution of the areas burnt down to ashes by fires following the Great Kanto Earthquake and the number of death-roll


Source: Kajima Corporation.