Sustainable Freight Transport in Sensitive Areas

Proceedings of the conference held in
Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain
7 - 8 April 2005

European Federation for TRANSPORT and ENVIRONMENT

EUSKO JAURLARITZA GOBIERNO VASCO

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DEPARTAMENTO DE TRANSPORTES Y OBRAS PÚBLICAS

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7 - 8 April 2005

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Note on presentations

Presentations slides used by the speakers at the conference can be downloaded from the T&E website, www.t-e.nu

1) Introduction and Objectives

Sensitive areas, such as mountainous regions, wetlands and coastal zones are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of transport. The rapid increase of road freight transport in Europe's sensitive areas, such as the Pyrenees, has seriously deteriorated air quality in the valleys and causes widespread noise nuisance. It also represents a safety risk and transport infrastructure is increasingly congested.

There are various instruments needed to respond to this situation. A one size fits all approach does not effectively protect sensitive areas from the negative impacts of freight transport. For practical not to mention political reasons, one single instrument is not enough.

T&E has been intensively dealing with the question of freight transport in sensitive areas since 1999. In May 2005, T&E's project "Safe and Sustainable Freight transport" will come to an end. Freight transport in sensitive areas played an important role within the project. Therefore, the second part of the conference is dealing with them.

The conference should raise awareness about the sensitivity of mountainous regions and the impact of transport in sensitive areas as the Pyrenees. It should provide an overview of potential instruments for sustainable freight transport in sensitive areas. Examples of good practices from the Pyrenees and the Alps should explain realistic instruments to decision makers on regional, national and European level. A main focus will be on the opportunities and limits of infrastructure building to solve transport problems in sensitive areas. The potential conflicts between scarce financial resources, different interests on regional, national and European level will be examined.

Sustainable Freight Transport in Sensitive Areas

7 – 8 April 2005

Venue: Palacio de Villa Suso | Plaza del Machete, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

Background

Sensitive areas, such as mountainous regions, wetlands and coastal zones are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of transport. The rapid increase of road freight transport in Europe's sensitive areas, such as the Pyrenees, has seriously deteriorated air quality in the valleys and causes widespread noise nuisance. It also represents a safety risk and transport infrastructure is increasingly congested.

There are various instruments needed to respond to this situation. A 'one size fits all' approach does not effectively protect sensitive areas from the negative impacts of freight transport. For practical not to mention political reasons, one single instrument is not enough.

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Aim of the conference

The conference should raise awareness about the sensitivity of mountainous regions and the impact of transport in sensitive areas as the Pyrenees. It should provide an overview of potential instruments for sustainable freight transport in sensitive areas. Examples of good practices from the Pyrenees and the Alps should explain realistic instruments to decision makers on regional, national and European level. A main focus will be on the opportunities and limits of infrastructure building to solve transport problems in sensitive areas. The potential conflicts between scarce financial resources, different interests on regional, national and European level will be examined.

Audience

The audience will be representatives of

- decision makers and stake holders at EU level
- national and regional governments from Alpine and Pyrenean countries
- NGOs and interest groups promoting sustainable transport

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EUSKO JAURLARITZA GOBIERNO VASCO

GARRAIO ETA HERRI LAN SAILA DEPARTAMENTO DE TRANSPORTES Y OBRAS PUBLICAS

T&E

European Federation for TRANSPORT and ENVIRONMENT

Agenda

THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 2005, 9.00 – 13.00

8.30 - 9.00 Registration

Chair: Christian Garnier (FNE)

9.00 - 9.30 Welcome by Matthias Zimmermann

Opening and introduction by Basque Transport Minister. Mr. Alvaro Amann

Session 1: Crucial elements of safe and sustainable freight transport (SSFT) policy in Europe

9.30 - 9.50 **SSFT – How to make European Freight Transport more sustainable**

Jos Dings, T&E, Brussels

9.50 - 10.10 **How Rail Liberalisation contributes to SSFT in Europe**

Alf Ekström, Banverket, Stockholm

10.10 - 10.30 **Example of SSFT pricing in Europe: Swiss Heavy Vehicles Fee**

Matthias Rinderknecht, Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Planning, Bern

Markus Liechti, T&E, Brussels

10.30 - 10.50 **Enforcement of labour regulation in road transport**

Beatrice Hertogs, ETF, Brussels

10.50 - 11.20 **Discussion with the audience**

11.20 - 11.40 Coffee break

Session 2: How can freight transport be sustainable in sensitive areas?

11.40 - 12.00 **Why are the Alps sensitive?**

Heike Aghte, ITE, Neubeuern
Toni Aschwanden, Alpine Initiative, Brig

12.00 - 12.20 **Environmental impacts of transport in sensitive areas**

André Etchelecou, University of Pau, Pau, tbc

12.20 - 12.40 **How can freight transport respect the Pyrenees?**

Pau Noy, PTP, Barcelona

12.40 - 13.00 **Discussion with the audience**

13.00 - 15.00 Lunch

THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 2005, 15.00 – 17.30

Session 3: Efficient investments in transport infrastructure through the Pyrenees

15.00 - 15.20 **Permeability of the Pyrenees, Conclusions from CTP conference**

Raphael Gimenez Capdevila

Catalan Transport Ministry / CTP, Barcelona

15.20 - 15.40 **How French transport ministry supports more sustainable freight transport through the Pyrenees**

Pierre-Alain Roche, French Transport Ministry, Paris,

15.40 - 16.00 **Logistic and Multi-modal projects in Aragon, New solutions for a sustainable freight transport**

Jesus Sanchez Farraces, Aragon transport Ministry, Zaragoza

16.00 - 16.20 **Sustainable transport through the Pyrenees – objectives of French regions**

François Maitia, Vice-President of Aquitaine, Bordeaux,

16.20 - 16.40 **Railways projects in the Basque Country**

Izaskun Arenaza, Agustín Presmanes. Basque Government, Bilbao

16.40 - 17.15 **Discussion with the audience**

Agenda

FRIDAY, 8 APRIL 2005, 9.00 – 13.00

Session 4: Alpine and Pyrenean transport policy – exchange of good practice and ideas

9.00 - 9.15 **Sustainable transport through the Pyrenees – how the Spanish government tackles the challenges**
Angel Aparicio, Spanish Transport Ministry, Madrid

9.15 - 9.30 **Sustainable transport policy through sensitive areas in practice**
Matthias Rinderknecht, Swiss Federal Office for Transport, Bern

9.30 - 9.45 **Realistic assessments for viable transport projects**
Bent Flyvbjerg, University of Aalborg, Aalborg

9.45 - 10.00 **Short sea shipping and improving rail infrastructure**
Guillermo Gárate, Basque Government.
Jose Angel Corres, Chairman Of Port of Bilbao.

10.00 – 10.15 **A future system for distance based charging in France**
Elsa Coslado, FNE/ITE, Orléans

10.15 - 10.55 **Discussion with the audience**

10.55 – 11.15 Coffee break

Session 5: Regional initiatives for sustainable freight transport in the Pyrenees

10.15 - 11.30 **Strategic Projects in the Basque Country**
Jose María Olazaguirre. Euskotren Participaciones S.A.

11.30 - 11.45 **The logistic Platform Euskadi-Aquitaine**
José Ortuzar, Bilbao

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11.45 – 12.00 **Linking ports and railways, improving rail infrastructure**
Santi Ribas Domingo, Catalan transport ministry, Barcelona

12.00 – 12.30 **Discussion with the audience**

12.30 – 13.00 **Conclusions and closure of the conference**
Chair of the meeting
Representative of Basque Government

Jos Dings, T&E director
Brussels

"SSFT – How to make European freight transport more sustainable"

Following the Lisbon Strategy, many environmentalists worried that its goal of making "Europe the most competitive economy in the world" would be detrimental to environmental policy. However, as the strategy is about creating more jobs, lower labour taxes, better social policies and foremost balancing the governments' budgets, this gives us different and important angles from which we can tackle environmental problems in the future.

Decoupling

In order to reach sustainable freight transport, two decoupling policies must be implemented. Firstly, one needs to decouple the link between transport and economic growth and secondly to decouple the growth of transport and environmental load.
However, there exist four myths clouding this issue. These myths are:

1. transport is the motor of the economy
2. less transport is equivalent to less economic growth
3. traffic growth is unavoidable
4. reducing traffic and using road pricing will frustrate economic development

As data show, these myths are wrong in different ways. On the one hand, the statistics of transport intensity in the EU member states proves that there are flourishing economies which do not possess a high level of transport intensity such as in Scandinavia or the UK. On the other hand, looking at transport intensity over time, once again we see that some countries are able to enjoy high economic growth without being transport dependent.

Modal Shift

The second objective pursued for sustainable freight transport has been modal shift. Unfortunately, this shift has primarily aimed at making the transport of goods by rail more attractive and has neglected direct policy to tackle road transport. Furthermore, one of the most important effects of this objective has been investments in mega projects. Being rail or road projects, these investments have shown to be bad value for money as they need vast sums to be invested and only show poor returns. In addition, this has meant that the neglected existing network is now crumbling down. All this leads to 'negative decoupling': more transport, but lower economic growth. Finally, these new large rail projects have an uncertain economic impact on the regions in which they are built, and they often have very detrimental environmental impacts. To conclude, modal shift cannot be a good solution just on its own and we ought to reframe the target for example by increasing the use of existing rail infrastructure.

Achieving sustainable freight transport

In order to reach future sustainable freight transport, four main issues must be taken into consideration:

1. smart and sensible investments
2. transport must pay its way
3. clean up all modes
4. level the playing field

First of all, it would be best to invest in research such as education and training rather than simply in infrastructure. Also, a number of "checks" should be made before a project, for example: could demand management or better use of capacity suffice and will the project benefit the intended region. Secondly, freight transport generates large external costs to society but pays only for a minimal share. There must then a better price structure to provide incentives for cleaner and less damaging transport, and a higher price would at the same time reduce unnecessary road transport. Thirdly, it is not enough to consider road and rail but all modes should be tackled including short sea shipping and aviation. Lastly, there is a lack of level playing field as for example, road is both liberalised and interoperable but rail still is not.

Alf Ekström
Banverket, Sweden

"How Rail Liberalisation Contributes to Safe and Sustainable Freight Transport in Europe"

Liberalisation and the recognition of competition is definitely a necessary step in the development of more efficient and attractive rail freight services, but it will probably not be sufficient to turn demand curves upwards. Creation of the dedicated European rail freight network and improved intermodal conditions through efficient road-rail terminals are important components in the underpinning of the railways' competitiveness – a lot of investments will be needed to realize these objectives.

The efforts to look upon the transport sector as a whole, which could be noticed in the White Book, should in principle make it possible to transfer money earned from one mode of transport to investments in another, if this is politically desirable. But it seems difficult to realize this in practice on a pan-European level. The Swiss example is, however, encouraging and hopefully it will spread to other countries.

In a report on Rail Liberalisation Index 2004, commissioned by Deutsche Bahn AG,[i] it was pointed out that liberalisation of the rail transport markets continues to develop at a slow pace in many European countries, and that the development that actually takes place is driven by the new railway legislation initiated by the European Commission.

One important reason behind the slowness is that operation of rail freight services, generally speaking, is a non-profitable activity. No rail freight operator involved in traditional wagon-load activities, i.e. the old state-owned operators, seems to be able to do this with profit. The complexity of these activities is considerable and the need for investments in hard- and software as well.

It is therefore hard to think that private parties will become engaged in this kind of railway services, unless the conditions change radically. Other rail transport concepts, such as dedicated trains between one consigner and one consignee, can contribute more positively to a railway undertaking's result, but since wagon-loads still count for around 75 percent of many rail freight operators turn-over it seems to be difficult to turn red figures into black without doing something radical.

It will always be possible to find candidates willing to pick cherries, but who can be able to develop the traditional rail freight service? Can it be developed before it is too late? It must be kept in mind that many European countries are in a transition phase from an industry dominated economy to one characterised by service production. Significant parts of industrial production move to other parts of the world, and this will influence demand for transport within Europe. Services will not be transported in rail freight wagons.

There is need for other driving forces than only new legislation in order to develop the railway into anything else but a marginal transport mode. New laws do not generate profit in a hard commercial world, but of course the new legal framework is necessary to add more dynamism into the sector. There must, however, be real possibilities to make profitable business in order to convince new entrants to involve themselves in railway operations. This calls for example for:

- internalisation of external costs,
- massive investments in a rail freight network allowing 25 to 30 tons axle-load and double-stacking,
- harmonisation of charging regimes all over Europe,
- removal of administrative hindrances.

More drastic, or even unthinkable, measures could be to appoint the European Union as owner of the international rail freight network to make access easier and quicker, and to put international wagon-load systems on the tendering list. Finally, it is usually easier to re-regulate a market or a sector where there is a lot of profit to be made and to eliminate disadvantages of such a situation, than by the help of regulation stimulate new initiatives and energy on a market with insufficient business opportunities.

During the next two or three years it will become more obvious if liberalization will lead to a positive development of the European rail freight sector. Let us hope it will.

Matthias Rinderknecht
Officer, Federal Office of Transport / Transport Ministry
Berne, Switzerland

"The Swiss heavy vehicle fee"

Background

- The introduction of the kilometre based HVF needed a long time from the first discussions until the concrete introduction.
- The constitutional act and the confirmation of the federal law needed a referendum.
- The HVF is one important element of a set of different instruments defining an overall sustainable transport policy aiming the polluters pay principle, the fair competition conditions between transport modes, a shift from road to rail especially in alpine regions and the decoupling between economic growth and growth of transport demand.
- The HVF introduction needed a political willingness and a large consensus between stakeholders.
- The HVF is anchored in national law and by a bilateral treaty on land transport between EC and Switzerland.

Key elements

- HVF is defined according to infrastructure costs **and** some elements of external costs (accidents, noise, health, some parts of environmental impact)
- HVF is applied in a non-discriminatory way to all heavy vehicles up from 3,5 tons
- HVF is an area based toll (the whole territory of Switzerland), not a network toll
- HVF is applied according to the maximum authorised weight of the vehicle or the road train
- HVF is applied also according to emission class / 3 categories (cleanest Euro - classes pay less than the others)
- The technical solution is a the DSRC-based OBU, which is mandatory for national hauliers and voluntary for foreigners, the system is semi-compatible with the new Austrian HVF (Swiss system in Austria is running, but not vice versa)
- The use of revenues of the HVF is earmarked: transport infrastructure, mainly public transport -> cross financing system

Short conclusion

- The first experiences from 2001 to 2004 show a positive result
- The incentive by a differentiated fee according to emission class is working and the renewing of the vehicle fleet with cleaner engines is working fast
- The road transport efficiency is growing by a higher load factor per vehicle
- Regarding alpine crossings, the number of vehicles is decreasing at the same time as the net tons increased
- The market share of the rail freight has increased while the declining of the rail modal split in transalpine transport has stopped, however the expected shift from road to rail has not yet taken place.
- To achieve a real shift from road to rail, other instruments need to be established (e.g. new railway alpine tunnels to be finished, etc.)

Markus Liechti
Policy Officer
T&E, Brussels

"Progress in heavy vehicle charging in Europe"

Recent progress of heavy vehicle fee

Within the past two years, important developments occurred in both Austria and Germany regarding the heavy vehicle fee. Both countries adopted such schemes in January 2004 and 2005 respectively. Following Switzerland's example, Austria first imposed a charge on all vehicles over 3.5t on motorways (following EU regulation) and then Germany followed with a charge for vehicle over 12 tonnes. However, the two cases differ in their vehicle classes and average pricing. On the one hand, Austria possesses a weaker classification (3 vehicle classes instead of 2 vehicle and 3 emissions classes for Germany). On the other hand, she charges a higher rate than Germany, i.e. 22 cents/km on average compared to 12.4 cents/km.

Expected progress of heavy vehicle fee

Other developments are expected to reach EU countries in the near future such as the UK (2008), the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. In all case, the charge will apply to all vehicles above 3.5 tonnes; furthermore in the UK it will be extended to all roads (going against EU legislation). Regarding classification, the decision has not yet been taken and is open to discussion. Finally, the use of revenues will depend on national characteristics, for example the UK plans to compensate for fuel taxes and the Czech Republic intends to extend its motorways and traffic management to face diverted traffic through their country.

The Eurovignette

Contrary to popular belief, the Eurovignette is not a new European tax but represents the European framework for national charging schemes for lorries. It has been introduced as early as 1993 and up-dated as part of a European Directive for heavy vehicle charging (99/62/EC). The Eurovignette provides a framework for member states to introduce heavy vehicle fees, that is both user charges (vignette) and distance relate fees (tolls). In July 2003, the European Commission considered the existing directive not to be sufficient and introduced a proposal to amend it. Following this, the European Parliament agreed on a new text in April 2004 and the Transport Ministers reached a political agreement on the 21st of April.
How should the new directive look like? In order for the Eurovignette to be effective, four points should be covered:

1. it should be a mandatory application for all commercial vehicles
2. it must be part of a coherent charging system for all modes and all users
3. the user and polluter-pays-principle should be applied
4. Member states should decide on the use of revenues according to sound and evaluated decisions.

Yet, in the real world a pragmatic approach must be taken. For political reasons, it is impossible to have a mandatory application on European level. Furthermore, a balanced approach must be followed which can be called "flexibility with safety belts". The rationale behind this is the diverging interests of European countries. Indeed, transit and peripheral countries have different priorities such as traffic management or market competitiveness; in addition some have motorway operators. An agreement between the European Parliament and the Transport Council thus needs to find a balanced approach of flexibility without disregarding minimum requirements. There are many benefits from such approach such a subsidiarity of networks or use of revenues; variation on emissions, time, days and seasons; flexibility for construction costs and minimum mark-ups; however there is an important disadvantage which is the exclusion of external costs!

Beatrice Hertogs,
Political secretary Road and inland waterways
ETF (European Transport Workers' Federation), Brussels

"Enforcement of labour regulation in road transport"

1. Introduction

How can we avoid the clash between environmental, social and economic goals when it comes to freight transport?
And about which social objectives are we speaking?

2. Delivering the Goods

Who is delivering the goods today? The professional drivers?
However they are employed by logistics and transport companies or are self-employed and work in subcontracting for those companies. Freight transport is characterised by a supply chain process.
For example, the chemical industry has to deliver goods; they ask a logistics and transport company to organize and deliver what they produce; in some cases the latter is also in charge of parts of the production process as the packaging.

3. Transport Market

The road freight transport market is very fragmented. It is dominated by a small group of 'big' players that use, in subcontracting, the big group of small and medium-size transport companies. Competition is tough.

4. Liberalisation

The European policy on liberalisation of freight transport encourages this competition even more. Competition between modes of transport and this can be in favour of a more sustainable freight transport. (Logistics companies understood this very well and exploit this potential) and competition among firms.
How can we redress this situation, when in the same time we want to correct liberalisation to guarantee road safety, as well as health and safety of the professional drivers?

5. Which instruments?

a. European Standards

European standards on working time of professional drivers as well as on driving and rest time is one instrument to achieve this goal. We have a European legislation or we have a 'remake ' of European legislation but two important issues remain.
Only professional drivers of vehicles of 3,5T and more are covered, which means that drivers of courier-and express deliveries are exempted. Now the market of courier-and express deliveries is booming. We hope that in the 'remake ' of the legislation this sector will be included.
The other problem is the enforcement of the social legislation. Some companies try to reduce costs by not implementing the social legislation. This is unfair competition between road transport companies but also in comparison to rail.
Again, we might have soon a European legislation on enforcement but the practice is another story.

b. The Eurovignette

Imagine we have a new European legislation on Eurovignette, internalising all the environmental and social costs …we could give suggestions regarding the use of this income, for example to enforce social legislation….
However there is a little problem with it, small and medium companies might save the higher costs of the Eurovignette by reducing the labour costs and/or by imposing longer driving times on the drivers….
A target-oriented pricing may be an answer…as well as strong trade unions in the whole of Europe.

Heike Aghte,
Co-President of the "European Transport Initiative / Initiative Transport Européen" (ITE);
Secretary of the "Alliance for a Heavy Vehicle Fee for the Whole of Europe"
Berlin / Neubeuern

"Sensitive Icy Giants – How Traffic Impacts influence the Alpine Glaciers"

Introduction

Glaciers are of great importance to the Alpine region as well as for Europe as a whole. Indeed, they provide:

- A "Wasserspeicher" function for the middle-European area, as several European rivers have their sources in the high Alpine region, e.g. Rhone, Po, and Rhine.
- An "adhesive" function for the high mountain region thanks to its ice and permanent frost areas, also guaranteeing the valley settlements' security and transport infrastructure.
- A source of economic revenue and welfare from its touristic attraction.

However, comparing 100 year-old to actual photographs, we notice the harsh reality of the current situation, forcing us to ask some important questions.

The climate catastrophe has arrived in the Alps.

From the point of view of the earth's history, the past 150 years of decrease in glaciers' mass has taken a normal evolution. However, if we take a detailed look at the past 20/30 years, we notice that there has been a massive acceleration in this process. Indeed, the last 150 years has seen a 50% decrease in the glaciers' volume, but 20 to 30% of this occurred in these last 20/30 years. This leaves us will a frightening prognosis of a 75% disappearance of all alpine glaciers by 2050.

The impact of road traffic

The main causes of this rapid decrease in glaciers' volume is road traffic. Firstly, transport contributes to over 30% of CO_2 emission which is the main factor to atmospheric warming. Secondly, particulate pollution such as soot and dust accelerates glaciers' melting as it darkens the surface, which is then more vulnerable to the sun's heat. Finally, the damage to the ozone layer increases the short-wave UV-radiation.

Consequences to men and nature

In several locations of the Alps, settlements and transport infrastructure have already become unsafe; examples of this include the new "glacier-lakes" and instable mountains because of fading permafrost. The problems will increase in the next few years including raising risks for the whole land transport system between north and south Europe. The damages are already much more extensive than most people expect them to be, and they show us what might take place in the whole Alpine region if nothing substantially will happen to avoid that evolution.

There is no more time to waste

It is still possible to avoid going further towards these very severe damages. To achieve this, concrete short and middle term instruments for CO_2 saving and pollution reducing are needed, and must contain new priority treatment of the transport sector.

If the Europeans population wants to keep their long distance transport infrastructure safe, their alpine settlements secure, and water supply for middle-Europe stable, they will have to act now to stop climate change.

In the transport sector, there are many possibilities for CO_2 saving and pollution reduction that have not been used until today. There are pricing instruments including external cost, innovative logistic techniques and intermodality, legislative instruments like night bans, which in addition will improve the quality of life for the people along the roads. Both the Initiative Transport Europe (ITE) and the "Alliance for a Heavy Vehicle Fee for the whole of Europe", work in order to achieve these aims.

Finally, to judge the quality and efficiency of the planned and implemented instruments, it will be necessary to declare the needs of sensitive regions, like the high Alpine mountains and their glaciers, as a standard - not just as a lobbyists' opinion.

Toni Aschwanden and Andreas Weissen,
Alpine Initiative,
Altdorf, Switzerland

"The Alps – A Sensitive Area"

As the roof garden of Europe, the Alps are a reservoir of majestic peaks, clean water, pure air, unique landscapes, and rich biodiversity. The Alps also form a natural boundary between economic centres in northern and southern Europe. The Alps constitute a fragile and vulnerable ecosystem. They are rapidly affected by the disadvantageous features of modern society such as heavy goods traffic and pollution. In the recent past, floods, landslides and avalanches have demonstrated that nature has been strained to the limit in the Alps.

The goal of a sustainable transport policy is defined as follows in the Alpine Convention, an international treaty for the protection and the sustainable development of the Alps: Reduce pollution and risks generated by inner-Alpine and trans-Alpine traffic to the level that is tolerable by humans, animals and plants, as well as their habitats. This goal has to be attained by a transfer of goods' transport from road to rail and promoting environmentally friendly public transport.

Mountains are dynamic environments: The long, steep slopes promote rapid or slow movements of material. Gravity forces are bringing material from the tops of the mountains down to the bottoms of the valleys. Large amounts and high intensities of precipitation cause floods, snow and ice avalanches, but also soil erosion, mudslides and rock-falls. Strong winds and rapid changes of temperatures accelerate the dynamic and erosion processes. Human mismanagement like cutting forest or constructing in potential hazard areas can increase the destructive potential of so-called "natural hazards".

Mountain plant and animal communities have developed many strategies for survival in harsh living conditions like extreme temperatures, short vegetation periods, dry air, strong winds and soil movement. General plant adaptations to the extreme living conditions in the Alps are, e.g.:

a) Nanism: Dwarf growth permits a maximum of use of soil heat and offers protection against winds.

b) Large root systems: more water and more nutrients can be taken.

c) Longevity: Alpine plants are surprisingly long-lived, some more than thousand years.

d) Protection against evaporation: dense hairiness, wax-coating, leathery leaves and succulence.

Human activities endanger many mountain ecosystems and species. Endemic species (up to 470 vascular plant species only be can be found in the Alps!) and wetlands are particularly vulnerable to dam construction, drainage, pollution and the introduction of alien species.

Air pollution brings additional nutrients to a landscape. Atmospheric nitrogen fertilizes high-altitude habitats and leads to the development of a dense plant cover with many tall-growing herbs, while rare plants, that can only survive in nutrient-poor regions disappear. Moreover, atmospheric acids have a negative impact on mountain lakes, some of which have become so acidic that most of their life form has been destroyed. Biological diversity is decreasing

In the narrow valleys – all the so-called transit corridors go through valleys that are not broader than some hundred meters – pollutants disperse slowly and frequent thermal inversions, especially during winter time and night – lead do pollution levels which, even when there is little traffic, are already as high as in big towns with loads of traffic.

The propagation of noise in narrow valleys is very different from the propagation in flat lands. The slopes and rock walls often have an echo-effect that means they can double and triple the original noise level.

The construction of highways and other roads is the main cause for the loss and fragmentation of habitats. The connectivity of habitats is destroyed. The corridors for migrating animal species like large herbivores (e.g. chamois) or large carnivores (lynx, wolf, bear) are interrupted.

André Etchelecou
University of Pau
France

« Environmental Impacts of Transport in Sensitive Areas »

The growth in freight transport by heavy vehicle through the Pyrenees is increasingly becoming a risk for the environment but also for the neighbouring populations.

These days, 20 000 trucks/day are crossing the Pyrenean border whereas in 1984, the daily flow only accounted 3 800 trucks.

The saturation of road networks on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coast forebodes that heavy vehicle traffic flows will be transferred towards the narrow valleys of the Pyrenees such as the Aspe valley and the Aran valley.

The studies that were made in the framework of the “Ecosystems, Transports, Pollutions” programme put forward some characteristics about the Pyrenean valleys. Indeed, we discovered that these valleys demonstrated some morphological and climatic particularities that prevented an easy dispersion of pollution.

The problem is now even more critical since we discovered that local pollution is not the only pollution the valleys suffer from. In addition, pollution that is produced far from the mountains is carried to this area via tropospheric or even stratospheric atmospheric transport (PAP Programme: Pyrenees-Air-Pollution)

The only solution lies therefore in an urgent involvement in a multi-modal transport policy and possibly also the construction of a high-capacity railway.

Pau Noy,
President of Association for the Promotion of Public Transport
Barcelona, Spain

"How can freight transport respect the Pyrenees?"

Transport in the Pyrenees

As the time goes by, Spain and Portugal have effectively integrated in Europe from the point of view of the economy. So that, the freight transport through the Pyrenees is increasing three or four times more fast that the growth of the economy. It is urgent to set up a new transport policy that achieves to protect the Pyrenees. This conference has been based on a study that has done a diagnostic on the situation in the Pyrenees. If road traffic is measured in tonnes-km, we found that in the whole four Spanish Pyrenean regions only the 10% is traffic intern. 57% is traffic with the rest of Spain and 33% is traffic with Europe. This means that the main efforts in diminishing the effects of the social and environmental impacts have to be focused on the trips on long distances. The freight externalities in 2003 reached 6.500 millions euros in the four Spanish Pyrenean regions. It has been proved that a very important percentage of international road transport can be shift to rail. A modelisation of both road and rail freight international transport have been made.

Hypotheses

On three hypothesis of transfer from road to rail (low, medium, high) the capacity of Spanish and international rail network for supporting the transfers is analysed. At the same time each one of these three hypotheses are based on the possibility of long trains (30 wagons) or short trains (20 wagons). As a result, it is shown that railway system is able to accept about 20% of the international road freight transport without increasing capacity. Under all hypothesis it is necessary a change in the way that the rail network is managed. It is expected that the recent liberalisation approved by the Spanish government will help us in developing this goal.

Rail Infrastructure Improvements

In order to solve the lack of rail capacity trough the Pyrenees, three phase of rail infrastructure improvement are proposed. The first one is based on the cheapest solution: amending what currently is working. Investing in Portbou (in Spanish-French border), in the Puigcerdà-Barcelona line and in Canfranc-Oloron line, that nowadays is broken, the rail system could offer capacity for 50 trains daily in either ways, or 4 million of additional tonnes. The second alternative is based on the Basque "Y" (mixed high-speed line) and the Catalan high-speed line from Tarragona to Perpignan. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary to built up in parallel a new section between Perpignan and Narbonne. This new high-speed line would provide capacity for 200 trains in either ways or 16 millions tonnes. And the third phase is based on the Central Pyrenees Crossing and the Mediterranean Arch. The Central Pyrenees Crossing is a project that appears in the European Agenda and it is supposed that will provide capacity for 240 daily freight trains in either ways. The Mediterranean Arch is a freight rail project proposed by the economical lobbies that would provide a capacity for 400 trains in either ways. These two rail projects will provide a huge capacity of 50 million tonnes. But they only will be useful if previously Spanish and French bottlenecks beyond the Pyrenean regions are solved.

Future Improvements

Finally, the presentation presents other considerations. The rail liberalisation is absolutely necessary for having success in the shift from road to rail. The PEIT (Infrastructures planning tool) that recently was presented by the Spanish government should have to foresee an improvement of the rail facilities: electrification of the whole rail Spanish network, rail siding offering capacity for trains with 30 wagons instead of 20 and an important improvement of the terminals. Moreover, it is basic to solve the bottlenecks of Portbou and Irún, in the border, and the rail freight international traffics should have to be containerised in order to make easy the change of gauge in the border.

Rafael Giménez Capdevila
Secretary to the Infrastructure and Communications Commission
Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées

"Sustainable Infrastructure and mobility in the Pyrenees – Conclusions from the Second International Conference of the CTP"

Transboundary Cooperation

The French government often seems to be curbing improvements in transpyrenean transport communications. However, this conference informed us of how its role had be evolving: creation of the « mission Pyrenees » at the "Ministère de l'Equipment"; new debates schedules in the National Assembly; meeting scheduled between the French and Spanish senates.

It was highlighted that Spain is France's first customer and that if France wanted this to remain the case; it will have to do its best to improve transport communication with Spain.

One must also appreciate the good work done by the Franco-Spanish Observatory of Pyrenean traffic whose results are increasingly refined and useful. This data helps establish a consensus on transpyrenean transport problems (according to various periods and view-points).

Two factors should help accelerate transboundary infrastructure projects. The first is the (imminent) creation of a "European Coordinator" in charge of large projects by the European Commission. The second is the legal figure of the Declaration of European interest.

Transboundary Traffic

Forecasts are showing trends going towards a doubling of freight volume going through the Pyrenees within the next 25 years. Even if rail capacity increases, flows using road network will still rise. Consequently, « break off » actions must be taken in order to meet future transpyrenean transport communications.

The key to the problem seems to be the internalisation of external costs, which is using user-pays-principle, instead society as a whole paying the transport bill.

The revenues generated in such a way could then be used to apply transport policies under the same model as the Swiss' or the French (which is starting in coordination to the infrastructure financing agency on January 1, 2005).

Development of Alternative Modes

The road transport's success is the result of the past decade's infrastructure investment, but also of its flexible and efficient organisation.

Consequently, alternative modes to road transport not must only improve their infrastructure but also their efficiency and productivity. Opening rail networks to the open market should enable better competitivity and efficiency for freight transport.

The feasibility of such projects is demonstrated by examples such as short-sea shipping and inter-modal railroad transport.

Jesús Sànchez Farraces,
Transport General Director
Aragon Government, Zaragoza (Spain)

"Logistic and Multi-Modal Projects in Aragon,
New Solutions for a Sustainable Freight Transport"

We will revise the different logistic projects in Aragon, taking into account that it is becoming a special Spanish region from the logistic point of view, a space of wealth and opportunity, where sustainability and intermodality are entirely guaranteed.

Background to the project

In 1999, few Spanish regions had even given the jump to program and to seek logistic spaces. Aragón ordered then a previous study for a great Logistic Platform in Zaragoza, without hardly any knowledge of its keys, a new field to cross to a large extent from ignorance, but with the capacity, the commitment and the support of solid equipment.

This previous study, happened to become a project, and now it is already a reality. PLAZA is in the heat of development and is object of "example of good practices and success", comparison for so many others that we will happen to enumerate, all of them in the region of Aragón, and that will end up turning this territory a great network of platforms, a great nucleus of transports, and where it will harness specially the railway transport, as the European policies invite to make.

Current progress

At the moment, the freight transport by road generates, directly and indirectly around 13% of the employment, with a presence of the PIB superior to 7%. Today, of each four tons, three are transported in Spain by road and rail, especially by the first one. It is fundamental therefore to take care of these ways of transport, to relate them, to fortify them and to organize them, but without forgetting that the European Union has already taken the decision, through the White Paper, to bet clearly and decidedly by the future of the railroad, its capacity of growth to future and its sustainability. The experts agree in which the increase of the volume of merchandise by road could not totally be absorbed in the next years by the current network. It is very important to fortify the railway system, for that reason Aragón Government has a special interest in increasing the present capacities, in fact, PLAZA will locate the entire terminals and installations railway, at this moment situated around the city, in this surface.

The projects

Some of these projects are:

- "The City of the Transport", in operation for many years in Zaragoza, since the 70's
- The "dry port Terminal of Zaragoza" associated to Barcelona port.
- The new Technological Park of recycled products, in Zaragoza.
- The new Logistic Platform in Huesca.
- The centre of transports of Fraga (Huesca).
- The Logistic Platform PLATEA, in Teruel,
- and finally our great project, PLAZA, in Zaragoza.

Practically all of these projects are associated to a railway terminal. The reason behind this is to harness this transport and to obtain that a great part of the traffic that is currently crossing the natural barrier of the Pyrenees can use alternative solutions, as it is an environmental and social absolute necessity.

Pierre-Alain Roche,
Director of the Pyrenean Mission
METATTM, France

"Transpyrenean Transport: The French Policy"

The Framework:

Transport Policy

In France, planning and management of the transport policy is based on a decentralised framework. This framework allows for the traditional involvement of regions and "departments" as well as their well-established consultation processes and public debates (given at all stages of the process). Moreover, this format suits the case of the Pyrenees like a glove allowing for the sensitive nature of its social and environmental stakes.

Forecast

In December 2003, the direction taken by the CIAT (?) showed a strong tendency towards sustainable development. This analysis was based firstly on forecasts of an evolution towards a strong traffic decrease compared to previous flows (+40% freight and 60% in passenger transport) and secondly on the general involvement to stabilising greenhouse gases to 1980-standards by 2020 (30% of these emissions come from transport). Four priorities were established: firstly quality of services and use of existing infrastructures, secondly modal switch, thirdly road safety and fourthly noise reduction. Long-term infrastructure maps were designed to take these priorities into account.

The Evolution of Transpyrenean Traffic:

In a first instance, the Franco-Spanish Observatory of transpyrenean traffic has enabled us to build an essential common database. Now, what needs to be done is to design a common future policy:

What are the total flows?

This very important question is right at the heart of the debate since the necessary demographic analysis is currently undergoing major re-evaluations. In addition, it is important to analyse correctly on the one hand the elasticity of external trade to GDP (as it cannot be based on the previous records) and on the other hand, the conversion of these evolutions in volumes of goods traded (this also with its origin-destination variable that will most certainly evolve and impacts strongly transpyrenean transport policy).

What are the objectives of modal switch?

A realistic analysis of the possibilities of modal switch strongly depends on the development rate of the UIC dimension in Spain concerning rail. The motorways of the sea projects are also very promising. However all this assumes thorough logistical restructuring. The report does not only rely on an offer of transboundary infrastructures. The general movement of the PEIT on the subject are encouraging. The projects are in progress. It is also important to keep in mind that these projects (being road, rail or sea based) do not in any way plan to develop freight transport via road in the mountainous region of the Pyrenean border because of the general sensitivity of the area.

Conclusions

Once again, we must insist on the importance of the efforts made towards a dialogue with the Spanish government. This dialogue is important in finding common methodologies and undertaking a common constructive plan for the stakes shared by both countries.

Matthias Rinderknecht
Officer, Federal Office of Transport / Transport Ministry
Berne, Switzerland

**"Sustainable transport policy in the alpine space:
Practice and experiences in Switzerland"**

Introduction: Key figures

- Alpine crossing by lorries cannot be growing in an unlimited perspective (infrastructure constraints and environmental impact), more than 1,4 millions of lorries in 2000
- A constitutional act introduced by a popular initiative voted in 1994 aiming at a limitation of lorries in transalpine traffic has to be implemented (transfer act)
- Modal split in alpine traffic: decreasing share of rail
- Increase of transport volume is mainly operated by road which is more and more creating negative environmental impacts

Goals of Swiss transport policy for modal shift

- Implementation of the Constitutional act (Article 84 on alpine transit) in conformity with the principles of sustainable development
- Achieving the objectives led down by the transfer act, e.g. reduce the number of HGV in alpine transit to 650'000 by 2009

Instruments of modal shift

- Bilateral agreement on land transport concluded between CH and EC in 1999, in force since 1 June 2002
- Introduction of the mileage-related heavy vehicle fee in 2001 (maximum tariffs defined in the bilateral land transport agreement CH-EC)
- Railway reform for improving rail efficiency especially in freight transport
- New railway infrastructure, 2 new railway base tunnels through the Alps, Rail 2000, high speed links to rail TEN-network, rail noise protection measures, aiming at improving rail capacity and quality (20 billions EUR)
- New rail infrastructure funding by cross financing system: HVF revenues reinvested in rail infrastructure
- Subsidies as supporting measures for modal shift policy: promoting rail freight services by 2,85 billions CHF from 2001 until 2010: Rolling highway, reduction of slot charges, subsidies for terminals

Conclusion: Positive results

- In transalpine transport the number of HGV is decreasing (1,4 -> 1,25 mio veh)
- Higher productivity and efficiency of road transport
- More environmental friendly freight vehicles
- Improvement of rail infrastructure and rail freight services
- Increase of transported net tons by rail
- Slight increase of the rail market share

Bent Flyvbjerg
University of Aalborg
Denmark

"Realistic Assessments for Viable Transport Projects"

The focus of this presentation is on how to arrive at realistic assessments of viability for large transport infrastructure projects. First, Bent Flyvbjerg shows that perverse incentives generate assessments of viability that are highly misleading, with underestimated costs and overestimated benefits. As a consequence, non-viable projects are implemented, with cost overruns and benefit shortfalls being the norm rather than the exception. Second, it is spelled out how realistic assessments of viability may be obtained. Finally, the roles of the EU, national and regional government, and NGOs in obtaining more realistic assessments are identified.

Formula for project approval

During a survey, one of the megaproject planners interviewed admitted that *"It's all about passing the test [of project approval]. You are in, when you are in. It means that there is so much focus on showing the project at its best at this stage."* There is a simple formula for this project approval: firstly one underestimates the costs of the project, then he overestimates the revenue, next he undervalues the environmental impacts and finally he overvalues the economic development effects.

Cost overrun as an example

The consequence of this disastrous project approval formula is not surprising, leading to cost overrun, revenue shortfall, environmental degradation and regional stagnation this all resulting in mismanagement or sometimes even disaster as we have seen with the channel tunnel financial disaster. Of course, not all projects suffer from these results but there is an evident statistical tendency towards this conclusion. Some key observations show that 9 out of 10 projects have a cost overrun, overrun is also found in 20 nations across 5 continents but most importantly this overrun has been constant for the past 70 years. This is evidently a problem as it leads to a Pareto-inefficient allocation of resources, i.e. a waste. Furthermore, it destabilises policy, planning, implementations and operation. However, the problem is also getting bigger as the projects are themselves getting bigger, and this now not only restricted to the field of transport infrastructure.

Towards realistic assessments

Steps must be taken in order to reach realistic assessments of projects' viability. These steps include benchmarking projects; using a reference class forecasting to reach better accuracy; getting independent reviews of all costs and benefits estimates to avoid the obvious promoter's bias; engaging stakeholders and civil society; and getting more transparency by making all documents and other information publicly available, e.g. via website.
Another important aspect is installing more accountability. To do this, there must be a change in the incentive structure, forecasters must be made to share financial responsibility for covering the costs overruns and benefits shortfalls, there must be a go-ahead contingent on 1/3 risk capital and this also in subsidised projects, and finally PPPs will help make the size of the subsidy dependent on the accuracy of forecasts.

Roles of the EU, governments and NGOs

First of all, the role of the EU is to eliminate the preserve incentives, develop guidelines for realistic project assessment, enforce these guidelines as well as ensure that they are applied consistently across member states, and finally update investment policy from old to new economy. Secondly, the role of the national and regional governments is to be realistic about the economic development effects of transport infrastructure, to invest in what matters and not what gets EU funding, and help the EU make a move into the 21st century. Finally, the role of NGOs is to keep insisting and extending the stakeholders' involvement, to take their role as watchdog seriously, to make independent studies and to push governments and businesses in the right direction.

Elsa Coslado,
Chargée de mission pôle Aménagement Durable du Territoire – France
France Nature Environnement

« Heavy Vehicle Fee in France: a possible reality? »

Current Situation
In France, road infrastructure charging is based on a toll system that aims only at covering the construction and operating costs. More specifically, some regions have chosen not to charge for the use of their motorways while others only charge an average of 0.5 eurocents per ton-kilometre travelled, the rest of the French road network being free. The cost incurred by the use of road infrastructure is thus very low; this then leads to an excessive use of road as a mode of transport. In 2003, at national level, the share of freight transport was divided into 98% for trucks, 12% for rail and 7% for waterways (in ton/km).

It is obvious that heavy weight vehicles are a flexible and useful transport mode but its dominant position is not without consequences. On the one hand, they are responsible for serious environmental and social impacts (e.g. air pollution, road accidents, noise, congestion, etc) and on the other hand they certainly do not improve welfare since most of the costs they produce are not borne by themselves.

FNE Project
The objective of the France Nature Environment project « Constructing a sustainable freight transport policy in France » is to limit the impacts of freight transport and to promote alternative environmentally friendly. To achieve this, there must first be a decrease in the growth of road freight transport. However, because of the unfair competition that the heavy vehicle sector enjoys (they neither pay nor pay hardly enough for the infrastructure or operating costs; nor do they pay for the social and environmental costs), these objectives seem hardly feasible in the current situation.

This is why organisations such as FNE are proposing to rationalise the freight transport sector. To do so, there are 3 main levers that must be moved, these are: economic instruments (e.g. internalising costs), polluter-pays-principle and the improvement of regulations and controls. These instruments have already proven to be effective, as for example in Switzerland, where the RPLP is showing encouraging results. Thus in 2004, we have seen a 10% decrease in heavy vehicles on Swiss roads, rail use increased by 10% through the Alps and the average heavy vehicle duty increased from 6.3t to 9.6t between 2000 and 2004.

Political Impact
Analysing the French case, we see that a lot still needs to be done and that a lack of involvement still prevails at governmental level. Indeed, the “Boiteux II” report considers that “overall the road covers its costs “and that some motorway sectors even cover external costs. But if the road is globally covering its costs, it is because car users are paying out for the use of heavy vehicle. Furthermore, not only does this same report neglects to integrate secondary transport networks but also its indicators are far from thorough (no inclusion of housing depreciation, noise, health impacts, etc).

Fortunately, due to public pressure, the state has since 2005 taken matter in their hands by opening a dossier on internalisation of costs. From now on, the “Commissions des comptes” of Environment and Transport will be working together. Besides, regions have started to act together; Alsace instantly reacted to the implementation of the LKW in Germany, the Rhones Alpes and Iles de France regions are also lobbying towards a heavy vehicle fee.

However some locks still need to be opened in order for a concrete and global RPLP in France. Whereas the state is engaged in working on a charging approach with the motorway dealers, legal obstacles such as the constitution, public road code and necessity of parliamentary votes still exist.

Conclusion
Thus, in order to brave these obstacles, the FNE project proposes to resolve the legal problems in a concrete manner and to use the revenues from a heavy vehicle duty for a sustainable transport policy. The solution is within our reach: this approach needs the stakeholders and public opinion, and will enable a sustainable freight transport policy.

José María Olazaguirre
General Manager of E/T Participaciones S.A.
Bilbao, Euskadi, Spain

"Strategic Projects in the Basque Country"

Transport infrastructures should be considered as a whole, in order to make the best of them. This implies combined systems:

- A combined system that may be very practical is piggy-back traffic (ferroutage).
- Unaccompanied piggy-back traffic is extremely interesting for long distance travel.
- The creation of iron highways would provide piggy-back traffic with added value

Current situation

- Over 9,000 lorries cross the western Pyrenean border each day.
- The western Pyrenean crossing connects Aquitaine with Euskadi.
- This traffic is collapsing the motorways and high-capacity roads in Aquitaine and in Euskadi.
- Currently, due to several reasons, railways hardly transport goods through the said border crossing.
- By the year 2015, forecasts indicate that heavy traffic through the said border crossing will have doubled.
- The situation today is already unsustainable.

Basque policy

- The Dept. of Transport of the Basque Government has prepared a Master Plan for Sustainable Transport.
- The Basque Parliament has urged the Institutions to encourage combined transport systems.
- The Governments of the Region of Aquitaine and of Euskadi have agreed to create the PLAE
- The PLAE, among other purposes, should co-ordinate the efforts made by both administrations to solve the road transport problem.
- The Euskadi Minister of Transport, over two years ago, contacted important French figures who informed him of ideas concerning an experimental long distance "piggy back transport system".
- This idea was matured in Aquitaine and in Euskadi.
- The Reseau Ferré Francais (RFF) has presented the Hendaye-Tours-Lille Atlantic Iron Highway (AFA Eco Fret)
- The high speed train service in Euskadi ("Y") has a UIC gauge, as in France.

Conclusion

In the light of what has been mentioned above, we consider that:

- We have to proceed in the direction of a much more sustainable situation that must not be expensive for transport.
- A Vitoria-Bordeaux-Tours-Lille iron highway is necessary.
- The "piggy back system" will be an important contribution.
- Studies are already being prepared: from Hendaye to Lille by RFF together with the Ministry and the Regions and from Hendaye to Vitoria by Euskadi with the advice of RFF.
- The conclusions of the study will be jointly agreed.

José Jaime Ortúzar,
Chief operating officer
Logistic Platform Aquitaine Euskadi AEIE,
Bilbao, Spain

"Logistic Platform Aquitaine-Euskadi AEIE"

Introduction and Origins

- 1989: Aquitaine and Euskadi sign a Protocol of collaboration on transport
- 1999: The constitution of the Logistic Platform Aquitaine-Euskadi is approved
- 2004: The constitution of the European Group of Economic Interest (AEIE) of the Logistic Platform Aquitaine-Euskadi is ratified (November)

Goals of PLAE

- Promoting and organising the infrastructures tissue and structures of the transport in both regions
- Promoting and presenting the "Euroregion" that comprises Aquitaine and Euskadi as the Atlantic gateway of Europe
- Constituting a reference in the Transeuropean Transport Network
- Establishing proposals to favour the combined rail-road transport through existing infrastructures and other projects
- Encouraging less polluting transport modes such as Ferroutage and Short Sea Shipping
- Co-operating in common rail projects such as the High-Speed Train Dax-Vitoria
- Making use of the potential of the sea harbours to establish *feeder* and short sea shipping lines of short distances

Infrastructures in the PLAE

- The port offer comprises 5 ports
- The road infrastructure network gives coverage to the area and allows a good communication with the rest of Europe and the Peninsula
- Modernisation of the current rail network and construction of the new high-speed network will allow to absorb part of the goods traffic from road with the consequent decongestion of the Irún crossing
- 5 airports, of which only 3 have a significant weight in the freight transport

Activities of the PLAE

The Strategic Plan of Action of the PLAE in 2004 dealt with the organisation of professional events. These have been converted into platforms to allow for meetings between the administrations, organisations and associations, as well as with the managers of the transport companies, the logistics and the industry; the Atlantic Logistic Forum (ALF); First International Congress about the situation and the perspectives of cross-border railway transport).

Future Activities of PLAE

- In 2005 PLAE will continue with its activity of promoting of both regions through the organisation of professional events and the participation in fairs and international events
- Besides, PLAE will present shortly some studies analysing different sectors of transport that allow the development of the intermodality, especially in the rail sector, where the *ferroutage* will have a preponderant role
- In December, we will end the year with the organisation of the second edition of the Atlantic Logistic Forum (ALF) in Bordeaux.

Christian Granier
Board Member
FNE

Conclusions of the chair

Number of presentations was given at the T&E "Sustainable Freight Transport in Sensitive Areas" conference. All of these were very helpful in order to start the discussion on some important topics.

The first and foremost topic was the issue of sensitive areas, as it played a recurring role in each and every presentation.

On the one hand, the situation occurring in these areas is worrying when we look at the current transit intensity and size of impacts that these are already supporting, but even more so when we consider the studies made on their future perspectives.

On the other hand, the terminology of "sensitive" is also problematic. Qualifying these areas in such a way, gives us a notion of the problem being intrinsic to the nature of these sites. In truth, the problem really lies first in the excessive pressure that is forced upon them. And one should not consider that other areas not as "sensitive" may support any kind of aggression.

Furthermore, it is important that one does not see these "sensitive areas" just as sanctuaries or natural reserves. Indeed, the human population is the first to suffer from these pressures and so does economic growth. As we know, the touristic value of theses areas is often inversely proportionate to the infrastructure's growth that they bear.

Finally, it became evident from the discussions that there are traps one must avoid. An example of this is the over-protection of particular areas as the expense of other areas, which are not seen as important simply because of subjective criteria. Indeed, we must go towards a better environmental quality for all, instead of lowering our standards on the account of that this is what is done elsewhere.

The second main point resulting from the debate was the consensus that was reached on the issue of traffic intensity. All readily agreed that traffic globally had been booming but that some transport modes (esp. environmentally friendly ones) had seen their share of the market stagnate or even decrease. The solution must thus firstly come from a decrease in the flow of a part of the traffic, and then from a transfer in the flows between different transport modes, so as to encourage the least polluting ones, and preventing a lot of useless traffic.

Yet, on the topic of decoupling and its efficiency, the general opinion was split into a European North/South divide. This was especially noticeable once at the heart of the issue and that the dimensions of "transport intensity" and "economic growth" were discussed.
Once more, no consensus was met on the efficiency of the recent urban mobility plans instituted in some cities (generally over 100 000 habitants). Moreover, some of the regions that are indeed concerned with the problem of transport growth (e.g. Midi-Pyrenees) show some reserve as to the reality of a possible global reduction in transport.

As we can see, there is an undeniable consensus on the source of the problem but none on its cure.

From a critical point of view, some major issues of the political stakes were still an obvious taboo from most of the representatives of the political authorities at the conference. Two examples of these silenced issues were the problems related to pollution (and their consequences on health) as well as the price of petrol. During the discussion, the limelight was focussed on economic and environmental aspects, which unfortunately helped elude the social dimension of the problem even more.

Besides, there is an increasing necessity for collaboration (and coherence) on numerous infrastructure projects. A good example backing this argument is the obvious problem due to the networks' problems of interoperability. Plus these problems often reflect an internal competition within these projects. Within this era of European integration, sustainable development and consensus that a strong reduction in irrational transport due to artificial low costs, generating misorganization and bad efficiency, is necessary, economic considerations as well as competition issues should no longer overshadow such pillars as sustainable development.

Jos Dings (T&E, Brussels) said that these questions were difficult to approach and often layed unanswered. This is exemplified in solutions such as the improvement of existing networks versus the building more efficient ones. As we can see, short sightedness and the limited temporal view of the stakeholders are evidently underlying this question, notably in a socio-economic context that is in constant evolution.

Improvement of existing infrastructures is nevertheless often a crucial issue in many situations: reduction of blackspots or major bottlenecks for coherence of railway networks, and improvements in new member states.

It is important to consider the social dimension and in particular the problem of work conditions that have an evident impact on safety and the environment. Once this is done, it then becomes obvious that a thorough reform of the transport jobs sector (esp. road) will have to take place in certain countries, beginning with Spain and France which are the first concerned.

The Swiss case that was exposed showed that it is essential to have a long-term political involvement. The changes in the field of transport were only possible due to the participation and the pressure set by the general public and NGOs. The Swiss case seems thus the best example for similar solutions to take place in other European countries.

To conclude, Christian Garnier proposed some more personal comments.

Firstly, he stressed that in the view of many actors, infrastructure programs were regarded as mere factors of happiness: big road and highway developments by most politicians, and alternative rail infrastructures by many NGOs. Several questions must nevertheless be raised: speeding up of regressive evolution of certain territories with destruction of jobs and activities, poor creation of employment due to big infrastructures, geographical shift of problems and traffic nuisances, impoundment of financial resources. Fundamentally, employment had not sufficiently been answered. The output ratio of every million € invested should not only be considered under better scrutiny but also included in the definition process of infrastructure projects.

Furthermore, he stated that we were in a kafkaian situation regarding the costs of transport.
For instance, the difference between petrol and diesel prices in many European countries is not justified when the cost of production are about the same. And even more so when one knows that a truck is equivalent to some 5000 cars in terms of road wear out and that trucks only pays the double of the toll fare of a car if any. Knowing this, we can wonder whether our price model regarding transport is not some kind of a substitute to the sovietic model. The truth about this model is that it is the result of a historical stratification of sectorial measures based on quick and "clientéliste" answers, which has lead to unrealistic prices and strong dumping with "fancy flags". There will thus be a lot of work to be done before the opacity and anarchy of the system can be overtaken (the case is similar for agricultural prices).

Some paths towards improvement still exist. Nonetheless, in order to reach these, a thorough, systematic and global approach is necessary. In this perspective, already existing reality-checks such as project evaluation and strategic impact assessment should be used. Also, it is essential to integrate to this the new possibilities arising from new technologies and organisational modes.

The array of choice in which we live is constantly changing and getting more and more complex and uncertain. One should thus work in an increasingly intelligent and collective manner so as to take the best and most legitimate decisions. Only then can a desirable and sustainable development come.

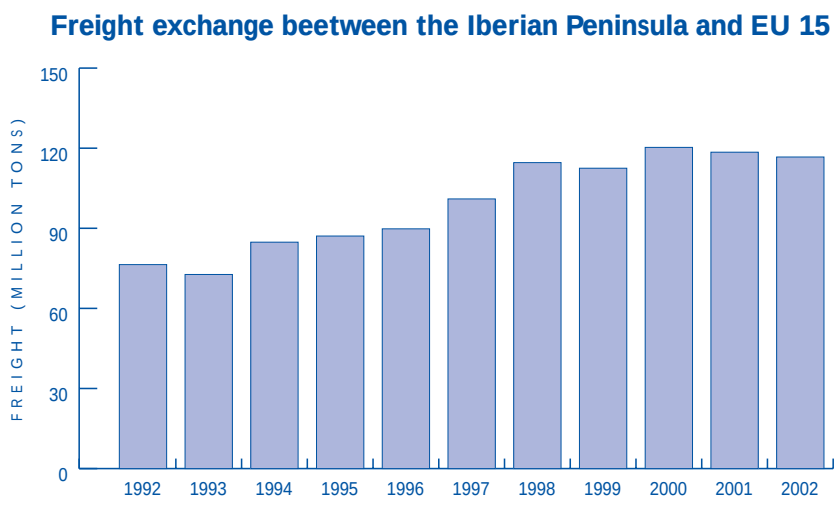
Pyrenean Freight Transport

The Pyrenees: transit and frontier region under pressure

The Pyrenees build a 700 km long chain of mountains between the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Mediterranean in the east. In the north-south dimension the chain is only 50 kilometres. The Pyrenees build the frontier between France and Spain and include also the small republic of Andorra. 212 mountains in the Pyrenees have a height of over 3000 m. The economic activities of the four Spanish (Basque country, Navarra, Aragon and Catalonia) and three French (Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrennés and Languedoc-Roussillon) regions around the Pyrenees and of Andorra are divers with a strong agricultural sector in some regions (e.g. 10 % in Aragon), and important industrial activities e.g. around Toulouse, Barcelona, Zaragoza or in the Basque country. One of the most important and growing economic sector in and around (on the Mediterranean or Atlantic coast) the Pyrenees is tourism. Parts of the area have been growing substantially over the last years, both economically and with regard to the population. In addition, since Spain and Portugal have joined the European Union, transport has been growing significantly. All these developments have increased the pressure on the Pyrenees which build a natural barrier between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe.

Freight transport and transport infrastructure through the Pyrenees

With the economic integration of Spain and Portugal in the European Union, the exchange of goods and people between the two areas has increased very importantly. According to EUROSTAT, freight transport has grown by about 50 % from 76.4 Million tons in 1992 **to 116.7 Million tons in 2002**. The long distance freight transport takes manly part between Spain and France, Germany, UK, Italy and Benelux. About 50 % of terrestrial traffic between the Iberian Peninsula and France is among the Pyrenean regions.

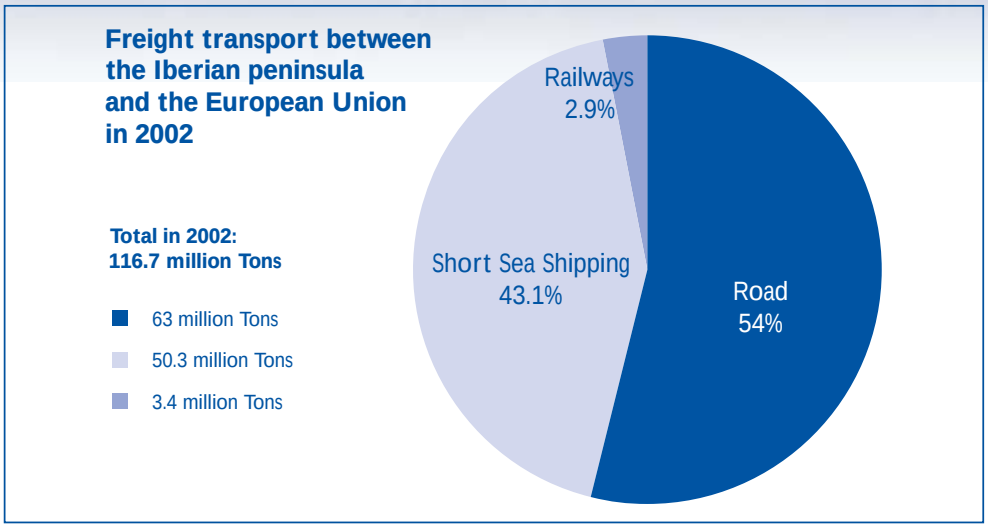


Source: Eurostat and Observatorio hispano-frances de trafico en los Pirineas, 2003

T&E
Europe's voice for sustainable transport

Trans-Pyrenean transport is very uneven allocated to the different transport modes. Over 90 % of land transport is road transport **(66.4 Million tons in 2002)**. Railways play only a small role with **3,4 Million tons in 2002**. 43% of freight exchange between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe is done by short sea shipping.

Source: Eurostat and Observatorio hispano-frances de trafico en los Pirineas, 2003



Land transport is concentrated on the east and west coasts. The big majority of heavy goods vehicles are using the motorways A63 / AP8 between Irun and Bayonne and A9 / AP7 between Girona and Perpignan. There are quite a few road links through the central Pyrenees, but they are mainly used for passenger transport and local goods delivery. However, over the last years though the number of heavy goods vehicles has increased notoriously on the links through the central Pyrenees.

There are only three open rail links between France and Spain. The main links are again on the coast between Irun and Hendaye on the Atlantic coast and between Port Bou and Cerbère on the Mediterranean. The third one is a steep connection in the eastern Pyrenees links Toulouse with Barcelona via La Tour de Carol and Pugierdà. A fourth link between Toulouse and Zaragoza is only open on the Spanish side till Canfranc but closed on the French side. Currently a project is carried out on the Spanish side to improve the access to this link. All rail transport between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe is faced with the problem of lack of interoperability. The width of the gauges of the French and the Spanish rail network is different. This reduces the capacity of the rail network and is one reason for the low level of rail freight between Spain and France.

The transport projects

For reasons of the land development of the Pyrenean regions, a number of transport infrastructure projects are planned through the Pyrenees, among them quite a few road projects.

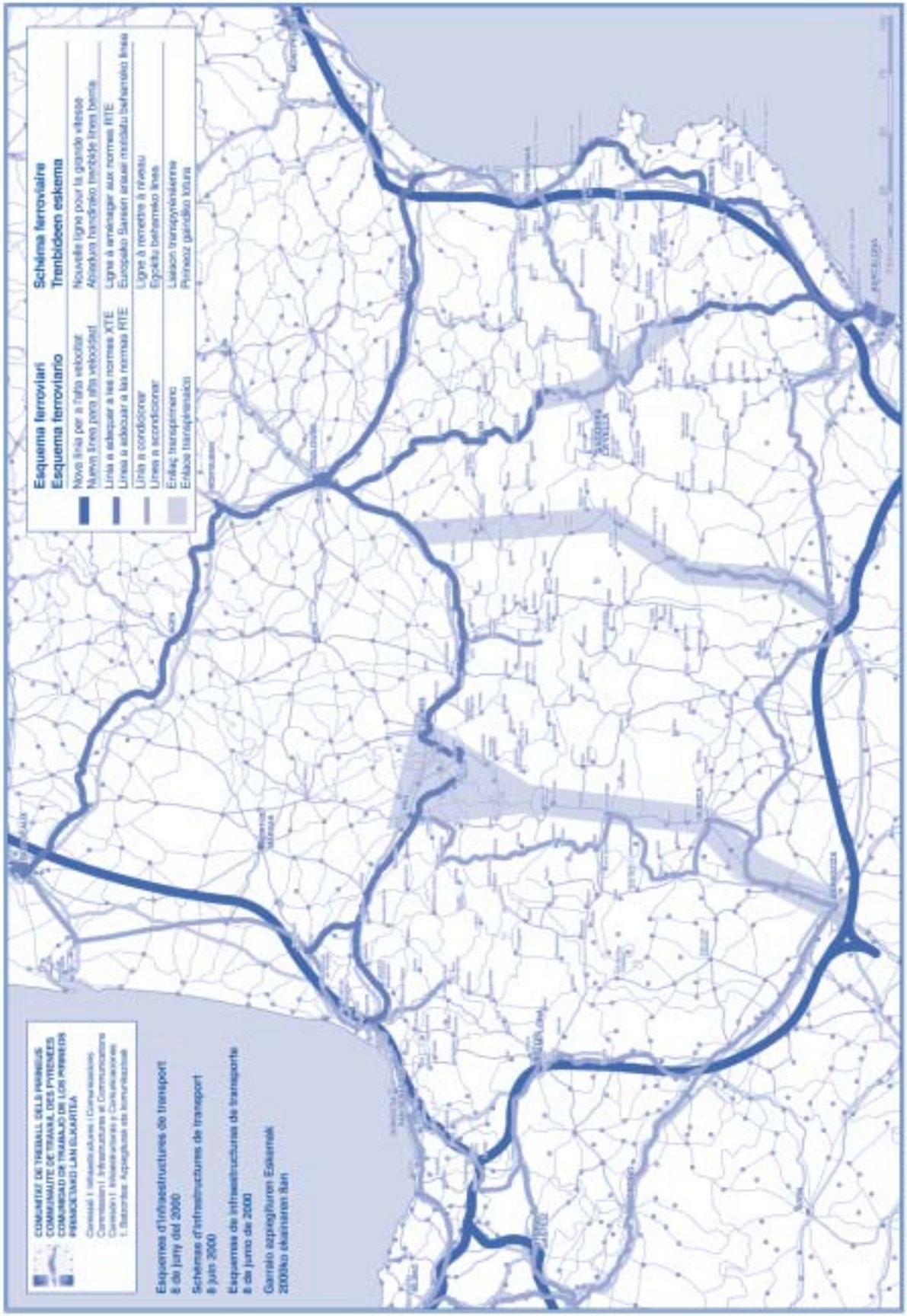
The works of the following projects have been recently completed or is under construction:

- Somport: In 2003, a new road tunnel has been opened on the Somport between Zaragoza and Bedous, situated in the French side of the Pyrenees.
- Improvement of the existing rail link between Huesca and Pau (Canfranc)
- Vielha: the existing road tunnel is being doubled on the link Lleida – Toulouse.
- High speed rail link Madrid – Barcelona – France is being built on the Mediterranean coast including a new railway tunnel across the Pyrenees.
- Basque Y: new high speed railway link on the Atlantic coast.

The following projects are at the moment under consideration for the future:

- Multimodal corridor Portugal – Central Europe on the Atlantic coast: this is one of the priority projects of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).
- Vignemale: A new rail link of high capacity and UIC (European) gauge will be built for the transport of trucks (piggyback) to better link the areas of Zaragoza and Toulouse
- Road tunnel Salau: New road tunnel should improve the link between Lleida and Toulouse.
- Road axis Andorra: A high capacity road transport axis including 12 tunnels should be built through the republic of Andorra.
- Rail link Tour de Carol: the existing rail link between Barcelona and Toulouse should be equipped with and European gauge.

Railway projects through the Pyrenees



The risks of increasing transport capacities

The planned increase of transport capacities, mainly for road transport, bears several risks for the regional development, the social and environmental situation in the Pyrenees.

The already high number of long distance freight trucks may increase even more. This will have negative economic, social and environmental impacts. The recently opened connection through the Somport in the western part of the Pyrenees is a point of concern as regards to the increase in freight transport.

The central Pyrenees which are an important tourism region may suffer from increasing truck traffic and thus suffer economic losses. This means that the original objective of the infrastructure building, i.e. contribute to the regional development may not happen, on the contrary, regional development can be harmed.

Citizens along the transit routes with increased traffic will be even more exposed to noise and air pollution while air emissions reach a level above the legal limits already today.

The attraction of more trucks due to the improved network may lead an increase of accidents on the feeder secondary roads which are not adapted to a high amount of heavy vehicles traffic.

The new links will use land which is scarce in mountainous region and serves the local citizens for their needs of housing, agricultural farming and developing economic activities. It may also endanger precious habitats and biodiversity.

The alternatives

All these risks seem to contradict to the original objective of improving inner-Pyrenean transport and thus contributing to local development. In order to achieve these objectives, existing, up-graded and new transport infrastructure through the Pyrenees must be economically managed according to the scarcity of resources.

Therefore, an alternative transport policy is needed applying a wide range of instruments, or toolkit, in order to achieve a sustainable transport system which serves the citizen, and the environment without damaging the sensitive Pyrenean area. Such a transport policy should be focused on the following objectives:

- Improve the use of already existing transport infrastructure at the boundary of the Pyrenean area
- Shift long distance freight transport from road to rail and maritime transport

To achieve these objectives the following measures should be taken:

- All infrastructure plans and programmes should undergo a strategic environmental assessment according to European law and comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.
- Heavy vehicles should pay distance related charges which makes discourage long distance traffic on road.
- Reopen the rail link between Zaragoza and Bedous through Canfranc and improve the existing railway links on both sides of the Pyrenees.
- Increase the capacity of the existing rail links between Spain and France by fitting them with European gauges (e.g. Zaragoza – Huesca)
- Promote intermodal transport by improving access to rail infrastructure and ports (e.g. short sea shipping on the Atlantic Arc).

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fact sheet

Sensitive Areas Must Be Protected

Particularly sensitive areas, such as mountainous regions, wetlands or coastal zones, are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of transport. The rapid increase of freight transport in Europe has seriously deteriorated air quality, caused widespread noise nuisance and the ever-increasing spread of transport infrastructure is a major threat to biodiversity.

Sensitive areas include unspoiled natural or mostly-natural areas, rare landscapes and habitats, national monuments and nature protection zones. The 1997 Vienna Declaration of the UNECE Conference on Transport and the Environment defines sensitive areas as "areas where the ecosystems are particularly sensitive, where the geographic conditions and the topography may intensify pollution and noise and where unique natural resources or unique cultural heritages exist". The Declaration explicitly asks that sensitive areas be protected from the negative impacts of transport on human health and the environment. It also recognizes the need to develop and implement additional and stricter measures for freight transport in sensitive areas.

Sensitive areas are valuable for several reasons

They help maintain biodiversity, contribute to the purification of water and air and alleviate climatic impacts. Furthermore, sensitive areas have the potential for development focussed on sustainable solutions such as small-scale farming, environmentally-sound settlements and landscape patterns, "soft" tourism and recreational activities.

Freight Transport is Endangering the Sensitive Areas

When is an Area Sensitive?

When determining whether an area is sensitive, it is not enough to just examine the sensitiveness of the ecosystem. A criteria catalogue was developed in 2001 which recommends assessing the ecological and cultural value of an area, the fragility of the habitat and the potential for sustainable development, before deciding on major projects (e.g. infrastructure projects or traffic-inducing projects such as factories or shopping-malls).

Source: BMLFUW, 2001

Although particularly sensitive areas must be protected against negative impacts, instruments such as higher tolls or night bans on freight transport, are rarely considered politically acceptable.

No sufficient protection by existing legislation

The Treaty of the European Community states, in Article 2, that the EU must ensure a "high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life". Several directives (e.g. the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC) aim to maintain biodiversity and conserve wild flora, fauna and habitats of importance to the Community.

The Air Quality Framework Directive adopted in 1996 sets a general policy framework for dealing with air pollution. Air quality standards exist for four pollutants, namely: sulphur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen oxides (NO_x)3, particulate matter (PM10), and lead (Pb). With the aim of protecting human health, it specifies targets, which are to be attained within a specific deadline.

In spite of the above-mentioned legislation, sensitive areas are not sufficiently protected. The issue of protecting sensitive areas regularly collides with the interests of those who believe the myth that increased infrastructure and transport is a prerequisite of economic growth.

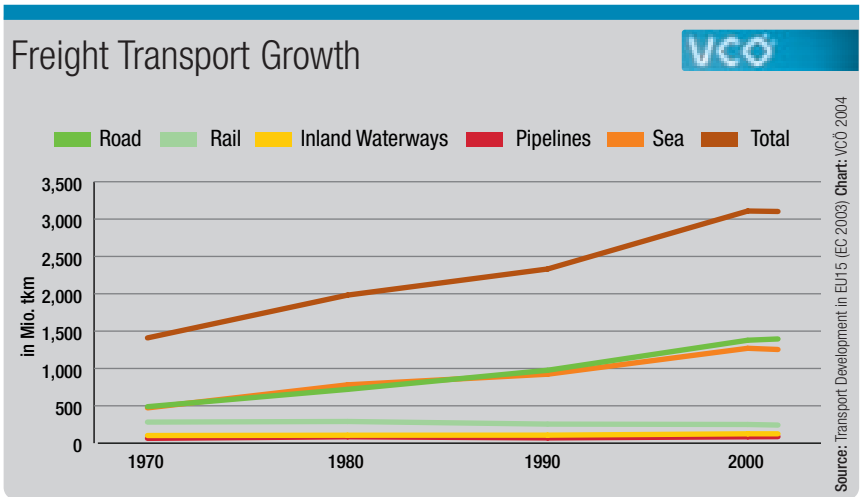
The Current Transport System is Not Sustainable

Transport growth has been particularly high for the last ten years as freight transport growth rates exceeded growth of the European economy. Road transport, since 1990, has been growing at a rate of about 4 % per year on average. Short sea shipping has also increased significantly (2.6 % per year) while rail transport has stagnated. Therefore, road trucking now accounts for 43 % of total freight transport compared to 33 % in 1980.

Unsustainable trends in freight transport

Transport represents a growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. Already 28 % of all greenhouse gas emissions are caused by transport. Road freight transport is responsible for 25 % greenhouse gas emissions from transport. Trucks consume significantly more energy per tonne-km than rail or ship transport and also cause comparably higher CO_2 emissions per tonne-km.

Freight transport
Transport growth has been particularly high the last ten years.



The Variety of Sensitive Areas

- Areas which already have international protected status, such as Natura 2000 areas pursuant to Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds
- Areas covered by Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
- Areas falling within the scope of the Convention for the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention)
- National parks in accordance with IUNC rules (Category II protected areas)
- UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Areas covered by national protection provisions governing the soil, water, the atmosphere, flora, fauna, habitats, the landscape and cultural assets
- Areas which meet the criteria governing ecological and/or cultural value, the fragility of habitats and the potential for sustainable development

Source: Environment committee of the European Parliament as part of its opinion on the Eurovignette proposal (EP 2003).

Road freight transport is the most significant emitter of particulate matter (PM): more than 50 % of total PM emissions are due to trucks, a contribution which has slowly increased since 1990. Particulates seriously damages health, they can cause respiration problems, asthma and increased risk of cancer.

Road, rail and aviation are major sources of noise annoyance. More than 30 % of EU citizens (EU15) are seriously annoyed by road noise above 55 dB.

Land is under continuous pressure from new transport infrastructure. It is estimated that between 1990 and 1999 almost 10 ha a day were consumed by new motorway construction in the EU15.

Impact of Transport on Sensitive Areas

In ecologically sensitive areas, emissions from transport (including noise) can lead to a change in living conditions and even extinction of specific animals or plants. Transport is also a growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. The impact of climate change on sensitive areas is already visible: eight out of nine alpine European glaciers are retreating and ice in the European arctic is declining.

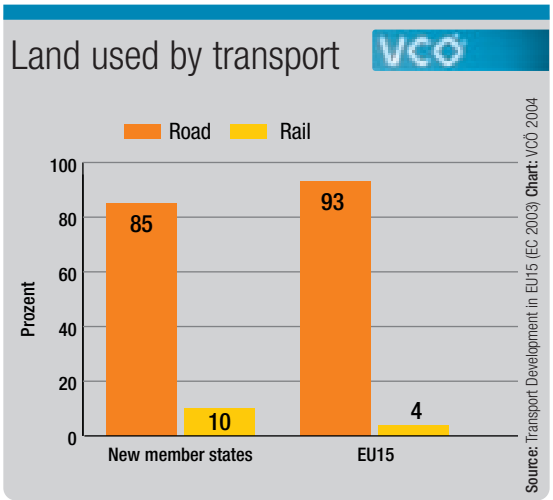
The expansion of transport infrastructure networks and continuous traffic growth also pose a significant threat to biodiversity from direct impacts and by fragmenting and isolating habitats. In the new EU member states habitants stand a better chance as the average size of non-fragmented land is 174 km² compared to 121 km² in EU15. With the rapid creating of new roads, the question is, for how long?

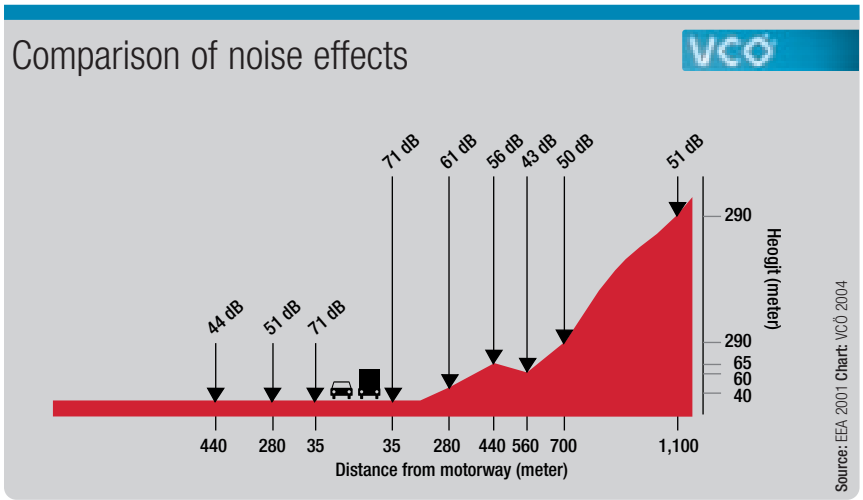
Many sensitive areas have topographic characteristics, which intensify negatives effects. The specific topographic and meteorological conditions of mountainous valleys hamper the dispersion of air pollutants, thus increasing the harmful effects of pollutant emissions compared to non-mountainous areas. The direct effect on the concentration of pollutants in ambient air per unit of NO_x emission is almost one order of magnitude higher than in lowland areas.

CO_2 emission
The CO_2 emission rates for freight transport are larger than for passenger transport.

Infrastructure
Road is the biggest land consumer.

Noise
Mountainous areas are suffering from traffic noise





A Flexible EU transport Policy is Needed

A scarce resource
In sensitive areas infrastrastructure should be seen as a scarce resource.

Transport policy needs differ across Europe. There are differences between peripheral and central countries, and between particularly sensitive and less sensitive areas – a "one size fits all" strategy is not appropriate. A flexible EU policy, based on an understanding of different national and regional needs, is urgently required.

The European Commission should propose a set of criteria to define what constitutes a sensitive area both ecologically and from the point of view of human health. Once sensitive areas are defined, the citizens, environment of the area should be effectively protected against the negative impacts caused by transport. Whereas targets for air quality already exist, targets for noise and fragmentation of land are still lacking. The defined targets must be both ambitious and achievable by a set of instruments. One single instrument is not enough to achieve the targets.

Member States should be allowed to protect their sensitive areas by applying pricing instruments. Regarding air quality, the Commission should propose a coherent policy to enable Member States that want to go further than minimum EU requirements.

More Infos:

VCÖ: www.vcoe.at

T&E: www.t-e.nu

VCÖ and T&E Recommendations

European Level:

- The Commission should propose a set of criteria to **define what constitutes a sensitive area**
- A **coherent transport policy** for such areas should then be developed. The policy should be **target-based**, and supported by instruments.
- Targets should be **non-discriminatory** and achieved in the most **cost effective** way possible, thereby favouring economic instruments over regulatory ones
- The Transport Council should appoint a representative to sign the Transport Protocol of the **Alpine Convention**, as promised in 2001
- In the field of European transport **investment** policy, audited Cost Benefit Analyses are needed to avoid unnecessary fragmentation and to enhance Europe's competitiveness.
- Regarding **air quality**, the Commission should propose a coherent policy to enable Member States that want to go further than minimum EU requirements
- The EU should transfer responsibility for noise standards for vehicles, tyres and asphalt/rails to the Environment Council, and propose **general noise targets** as soon as possible, as announced in the Directive on environmental noise

National Level:

- Member States should be allowed to use **pricing instruments** to protect their sensitive areas
- National governments should be prepared to **make maximum use of current flexibility** in EU legislation and implement it in an unambiguous, non-discriminatory manner.

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