

14



625

Response by the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile Report of the High Level Group on the Trans-European Transport Network (Van Miert Report)

European Commission
DG Energy and Transport
TEN-T Revision
DM 24 7/16
1049 Brussels

For the Attention of Martine Genoux-Stawiarski

(B2)

RECU LE
25 AOUT 2003

14th August 2003

Re Consultation on Van Miert Report

Dear Sir/Madam,

Regarding the Commission's invitation to stakeholders to comment on the High Level Group Report on the Trans-European Network, please find enclosed five copies of the comments of the AIT and FIA. I have also enclosed a copy of the manifesto 'Mobility for All' which sets out our policy agenda for the coming years. This manifesto contains a more detailed explanation of our points of view.

Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Adam McCarthy
Research Officer

Enc.

DG TREN	code: 625							
A/	27902							
21-08-2003								
ACTION:								
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
D	DGA	ASS	CP	CA	AAE	ANX		

DATE ARRIVEE: 22 08 2003							
DIR.	B	B1	B2	B3	B4	ASS	DIR
			A				
ECHEANCE: 04/09/03							



625

Response by the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme (AIT)
and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) to the
Report of the High Level Group on the Trans-European
Transport Network (Van Miert Report)

The AIT and the FIA are pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the report of the High Level Group. We believe that now is the time to have an informed and impartial debate on the future of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). However, the conclusions, with their emphasis on rail projects, reached by the High Level Group do not represent an feasible or sustainable solution to the challenges facing Europe's transport sector. As the representatives of Europe's motoring organisations, representing some forty million motorists, we feel that it is necessary to highlight some of our concerns as the European Commission begins its review of the TEN-T. Our rejoinders will be based on a simple premise based in reality: **the car and car users should be placed at the heart of the policy agenda.**

Before making specific comments on the High Level Group's report, we feel that it is necessary to provide a few facts about the road sector and transport reality, that is the centrality of the car, and the road sector in general, in the modern European economy and society. The car is the transport mode of choice for the vast majority of Europe's citizens. It is unmatched for independence and convenience and its benefits to society will continue to grow as the balance between its social costs and benefits become increasingly positive. Economically the road transport sector is vital, enabling the production process to run smoothly and efficiently. No other mode of transport can match its flexibility and efficiency. Any effort to starve the sector of vital investments will place the economic well-being of Europe at risk. As a sector in its own right, road transport contributes massively to the European economy, conservative estimates put the number of people employed by the sector at around 6.5% of the EU's work force and suggest that it generates about 12% of GDP. These figures do not include the billions of Euro that motorists pay in taxes each year. Thus, with its focus in moving public investment away from the car and the road sector, the report (if carried out) risks undermining our socio-economic welfare. Access to a car is essential for economic and social activity for a majority of people. Car dependence is a social and economic reality and it is to late turn back the clock. There are the parameters within which policy-makers need to work if they are achieve sustainable mobility in the future.

Turning fully to the report of the High Level Group, the AIT and the FIA find that whilst the report manages to identify the many (obvious) problems facing



our transport sector. It fails to present coherent solutions to these problems. This is due to the assumptions made by the High Level Group and its overall aims. The report is correct to note that the transport network is characterised by increasing congestion due to the persistence of bottleneck and missing links. Where the report fails is in its solutions to tackle the problems faced by the network.

Within the report we find an overt bias against roads and road traffic, the only viable solution to our problems: 'The objective of sustainable development requires a shift in modal balance to be operated in favour of transport roads which are alternatives to road' (Pg 6). Thus, the report fails to grasp the reality of the situation in contemporary Europe. Such an approach is bound to fail. It is the opinion of the AIT and the FIA that modal shift will not happen. Roads are the best and most efficient means of transport in the EU. Simply pumping money into the other modes will not solve the problems of congestion and pollution. Rather, what is needed is targeted investment in the road sector and the promotion of cleaner vehicles. This is not to say that the AIT and the FIA do not support investments in other modes, it is simply that this investment should not come at the expense of roads and be held up as the answer to all our problems. Thus, the AIT and FIA believe that given the underpinnings of the report its outcome cannot have any lasting affect on the challenges facing Europe's transport sector.

The High Level Group report is also identifies a lack of funds as one of the problems facing the TEN-T. It is noted that average investment in the transport network, especially roads, has declined over the last decade. The AIT and the FIA would like to remind the Commission that motorists pay some 270 bn Euro a year in tax. Thus, the question must be asked where does this money go? There should be more than enough to pay for not only roads, but other projects.

With this in mind, however, the AIT and the FIA finds the approach of the High Level Group to financing the different modes objectionable. In effect the report is suggesting that public funds are used to pay for rail and waterway projects, whilst the roads are left to fend for themselves to be paid for via additional tolls. This approach is unacceptable to the AIT and the FIA, why should motorists be asked to cross-subsidies other modes and then pay extra for the development of the road network? The already high taxes paid by road users should be spent on roads. The AIT and the FIA believe that the report's approach of suggesting extra tolls for road users will simply not be accepted by motorists. This is not to say that we are against the use of infrastructure charging as one possible method to alleviate the problems associated with congestion. However, such a system should represent a change in the tax system from one based on ownership to one based on usage. Additionally, such a change would have to be revenue neutral and transparent, the proceeds would have to be spent on roads.



Turning to the recommendations of the project, it should come as no surprise to find that the AIT and the FIA find the projects to be overly balanced in favour of rail. The most efficient mode of transport is the road. Simply building more railways will not change this situation. It is certainly true that more railways are needed, however before huge sums are invested the rail sector needs to drastically improve its levels of efficiency. The report fails to take into account the real needs of the road sector, especially with the forthcoming enlargement of the EU, and simply dismisses the road sector. What is needed is a re-balancing of the priorities of the TEN-T so as to reflect the real world situation, that is the dominance of the road sector. This is a dominance which will go unchallenged in the coming years.

In summary, the AIT and the FIA welcome the timing of the Van Miert report as we enter into an exciting and challenging period for the European Union. However, the AIT and the FIA find that the report of the High Level Group does not take reality into account. Based on false assumptions and the unachievable goal of modal shift, the report presents lists of projects which are unfairly biased towards rail projects. Little account has been taken of the needs of the road system or the majority of Europe's citizens who rely upon their cars in their everyday lives. The report fails to recognise the overall benefits of road use to Europe's economic well being and fails to address the real problems facing the network. Simply investing in rail will not solve any of these problems and seriously risks undermining Europe's economic performance. Thus, the AIT and the FIA calls on the Commission to look again at the priority lists and ensure that the needs of Europe's primary transport network are accurately met. To do otherwise would be a folly based on an unreal view of the modern world.

For More Information, Contact:

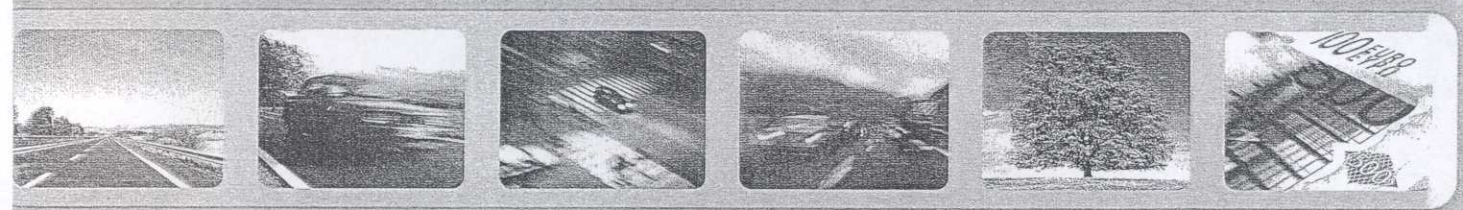
Adam McCarthy
European Bureau of the AIT and FIA
Rue d'Arlon 50
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Tel: +32 2 282 0825

Fax: +32 2 280 0744

a.mccarthy@pop.kpn.be

Mobility for All



A Transport and Mobility Manifesto
for 2010 from
the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme (AIT)
and the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)



