

Brussels, 10 January 2007

IRU position on A ROAD FREIGHT CORRIDOR IN THE TRANS- EUROPEAN NETWORKS (TENS)

IRU Position on a road freight corridor in the Trans-European Networks (TENs).

I. ANALYSIS

Free-flowing road freight corridors would enable users to make the best use of existing infrastructure. Increased fluidity in the traffic flow increases efficiency for road users and saves fuel, which is often wasted in congestion. This hypothesis was proved in the Hague study entitled "Economic Cost to Barriers to Road Transport". The study showed that the largest reported impediment for freight hauliers and own account producers and traders in the UK and Italy was congestion (taking up 5% of the total transit time).

Road freight corridors should not be considered only in terms of an efficient link between the north and the south of Europe. It will be extremely important to establish a complete network between the EU-15 and the EU-25, with the foresight to consider the new member states (from the beginning of 2007) Romania and Bulgaria as well.

Incentives, one of the essential elements of the IRU's "3 'i's" strategy on sustainable development, could be used effectively to 'green the fleet' by providing incentives for drivers of cleaner vehicles. For example, clean and quiet trucks could be given priority on routes at night, or such trucks could be allowed to use the hard shoulder during peak hours of congestion.

Infrastructure, another part of the "3 'i's" strategy, holds the key to an efficient road network. The IRU therefore supports EU-wide harmonisation of traffic conditions and traffic bans. The current road TENs continue to have problems with bottlenecks, which limit the potential for efficiency. Bottlenecks in the transport infrastructure come in physical, political and legal forms (for example traffic bans). The resulting congestion causes many problems, such as delays (leading to poor service), difficulties with adhering to social regulations (for example keeping to driving and rest time rules), problems with logistical planning and higher transportation costs, which are initially borne by the operator and then inevitably passed on to the consumer. Filling in the missing links on these networks would improve their efficiency, thus making an enormous saving in terms of costs to the consumer and to the environment. Furthermore, sufficient investment in the road infrastructure would ensure that truck drivers would have safe and secure parking bays and petrol stations.

The third element of the "3 'i's" strategy is innovation. Implementation of the Commission's initiative on the interoperability of road user charging systems would go some way to facilitating

the industry's work by establishing a single European toll service. This service should be made as efficient as possible, in order to reduce undue costs and risks for operators.

Free-flowing road freight corridors would therefore be beneficial for the following reasons:

- (a) Trucks would be guaranteed free movement on the European TENs network, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – this therefore includes weekends as well. At the very least, crucial corridors should have harmonised traffic bans in order to relieve congestion and bottlenecks. This free movement could come in the form of dedicated motorway lanes for trucks, for example. Harmonisation of the rules and regulations across the whole of the European transport network would be an extremely positive step towards maximising the effectiveness of free-flowing road freight corridors.
- (b) Operators would be able to carry out more precise and efficient logistical planning thanks to the more freely flowing road freight corridor. This would make the service provided by operators more cost effective and efficient.
- (c) Investment in infrastructure could be focussed on the needs of the freight industry (to assist in the overall goal of the smooth and efficient passage of goods) by providing sufficient safe parking bays.
- (d) The environment would benefit through lowered emission levels from fuel wasted in congestion. Furthermore, there would be greater emphasis on the environment in terms of investment in the use of renewable sources of energy for the infrastructure (such as fuel-efficient lighting) and the provision of incentives to “green the fleet”.
- (e) In terms of social policy, truck drivers would more easily be able to adhere to their driving and rest time rules, thanks to the increases in the efficiency of their dedicated routes and the possibilities for logistical planning.
- (f) Road safety would be enhanced, as freight and passenger services would have a steadier flow on these key routes.

II. IRU POSITION

- Free-flowing road freight corridors on the TENs should be supported. The IRU therefore calls for investment of funds and a show of political will equal to that which is currently put into rail transport, and proportionate to the share of freight carried by road.
 - Strategies such as making more effective use of infrastructure and investment in infrastructure, part of the IRU's “3 ‘i’s” strategy on sustainable development, must be implemented.
 - The IRU supports harmonisation of traffic conditions and traffic bans all over Europe, which would add to the efficiency of the network. The IRU therefore calls on the Commission to re-introduce its proposal on traffic bans which was withdrawn under the “Better Legislation” initiative.
-