

“Looking to the future: our vision and plans for the next 10 years”

By ECTRI Vice-President Prof Neil Paulley

*Dear guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The mission of ECTRI will continue to be primarily focused on promoting: green, safe, efficient and inclusive multimodal transport for people and goods through high quality transport research of global scientific excellence and effectiveness; ECTRI will also continue to provide independent, evidence-based advice to decision-makers in Europe and to want be perceived in Europe, and globally, as a legitimate and respected representative of the European transport research community.

So there are two closely intertwined elements to ECTRI's future activities: outward towards the transport research and policy making community, and more inwards towards supporting its members' activities. Each element of course supports the other.

Let me first take a brief look inwards.

ECTRI already consists of the leading surface transport research institutions across Europe, and their credibility and expertise is what makes ECTRI one of the foremost associations concerned with transport research. We do, and will, of course welcome into ECTRI other institutions engaged in appropriate relevant research and thus continue to strengthen its capabilities and relevance.

An association is nothing without the active participation of its members, and we are pleased that the Thematic Group structure which you have just heard about is beginning to bring clear rewards, through networking of researchers and the development of focussed research statements and of research needs. Over the coming months these Groups will be the springboard for the assembly of ECTRI-based consortia that will bid to address the Horizon 2020 workprogramme which, if successful, will bring benefits to our members in terms of research activity. These Groups are the core of ECTRI, and we will continue to develop and support them so that they truly become a network of researchers with real voice in their topic areas. We also want to support and assist our members in becoming, within their respective countries, the most active and successful contributors to the European Union's framework programmes of research.

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Information is king! One of the activities of the secretariat most valued by our members is the regular monitoring and dissemination to them of actions, events, policies, Calls etc taking place at the European level. This facility also enables the sharing of information between members, and the website will become an important feature in dissemination activities. I should note at this point that how important an effective secretariat is in its continued development.

We want to foster education and training amongst our members' researchers, providing them with opportunities to meet with and learn from each other. To this end we, with FERSI and FEHRL, have established the biannual Young Researchers Seminar. These have been much appreciated by who have participated in them, and we look forward to working with our partners in continuing and developing the programme over the coming years.

All these ambitions, of course, in their turn contribute to the shaping of the future European Research Area and in particular to defining the research needs and supplying research content for Horizon 2020 and beyond. From time to time over the past 10 years we have already provided the Commission with documentation outlining what research is needed to address the many challenges established by the EU, mapping out programmes and establishing priorities. We will continue to do this as Horizon 2020 evolves, working closely with the Commission as appropriate. It is also important that we are able to provide credible and robust evidence that supports decision and policy making at the European level, and within ECTRI we have put structures in place that enable us to respond effectively to Commission requests and consultations. As I have said, our Thematic Groups are key to this process.

Furtherance of the ambitions of ERA can be facilitated by closer relationships with our many partner associations engaged at the European level. Good relationships provide the opportunities for the exploitation of synergies and each other's strengths, for removing barriers and fostering cooperation for wider benefit. The European Transport Research Alliance (ETRA), of which we are a founder partner, is an important first step in this regard, and with our partners we will look to develop its effectiveness and its relevance to European research.

As has been very eloquently demonstrated by the previous speakers [?], ECTRI has a presence and a role beyond Europe. While our main focus must be in Europe, there are lessons to be learnt from other countries that can improve the evidence base and lead to more informed policy making. Our close cooperation with TRB is proving very fruitful, and we plan to improve information exchange on the potential for project participation in each others' research programmes and to further explore mechanisms for research co funding and facilitate bilateral exchanges of researchers. These activities also bring value to our members.

Finally, let me finish with a bit of a 'call to arms'.

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The benefits provided by an efficient multi-modal transport system are very large adding greatly to societies' wealth and prosperity. Our infrastructure is providing access to a greater range of facilities and services and our expectations of what transport enables us to do, both at a commercial and a personal level, are ever increasing. There are changes in demographics and lifestyle which influence, and are influenced by, mobility and the opportunities it affords. Globalisation and population growth add to these effects. These have particularly significant implications research in transport, as the problems become more international, and the solutions both more cross-boundary and more interdisciplinary.

We live in age when technology is developing at an astonishing rate, and the benefits from technology and systems advances in relation to transport in particular are potentially very large. Understanding, analysis and evidence inform better development of policy options facilitated by such technology advances and innovation. These activities go with the present evidence base to help get more out of existing transport systems, to help integrate movement between them, to help integrate them with other infrastructure components, such as energy, and to point the way to what is needed from the infrastructure systems of the future.

These are challenging times for us all, but they also offer great opportunities and potentially great benefits from properly targeted research. Getting things right depends on understanding; we need knowledge - how to achieve, when to achieve, what options there are, or could be, for policy and operations and how to choose between them to get the best outcome. Providing that knowledge, and how to apply it, offers the prospect of an exciting future, one that ECTRI is proud to be a part of. ECTRI's vision is to be a visible, credible and valued organisation, able to rise to future challenges, and we look forward to working with you and indeed all stakeholders in furthering this vision over the next 10 years.
