

TO THE EUROPEAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION

PETITION

Object: problems related to the proposal of a new high-speed and capacity railway connection between Turin and Lion.

The facts

Ten years ago some business and political groups from Piedmont and the Rhone-Alpes Region, together with Action Committees and pressure groups started promoting a new railway connection between Turin and Lion. This was excellent publicity for the project and soon the Italian and French government began negotiations. Strangely, very little economical interest was shown by the businesses involved and, in these ten years, no private investor has been willing to participate in the financing of the project.

At first, the project was thought to finance itself thanks to the high number of passengers, but when this was no longer certain, they started talking about a "high capacity railway", which would carry large amounts of goods on a hypothetical East-West route between Lisbon and Kiev. The project would involve the Alps and the Padana Plain region, cutting through the Alps with long, problematic and costly tunnels (about 100 km. of tunnels, one of which longer than 54km.)

The new railway will supposedly also cross the lower Susa Valley, the North-Western outskirts of Turin and perhaps even Turin itself. The alpine valley is at high hydrogeological risk, is crossed by a river and its affluents and is divided in 25 densely inhabited municipalities. It is already over-loaded with structures: 2 state roads that lead to 2 passes: Moncenisio and Monginevro, the Frejus Highway, and a power line. There is also an international railway (Turin- Modane), which was recently doubled, and is object of improvement work for 300 milion euro (interventions include the raising of tunnels). Since 1999 the valley has become the most important route to Northern France after the Mont Blanc tunnel accident and its temporary closedown. 30% of the goods that crossed the Italian border in that period came through the Susa Valley.

141 trains transit on the present railway line each day (92 goods trains every day) but only during peak periods, including many empty goods trains on their way back from France, and three pairs of TGV trains and "Pendolini" trains with very few passengers, except during Christmas and Easter vacations. On this line less than 10 milion tons of goods are carried each year, and this amount hasn't changed in the last

10 years regardless of the existing potentialities (past predictions talked about 19 million tons by 1990). As a matter of fact today the line is used for only 38% of its capacity.

In order to cross the Alpine chain, the new railway line would have to cut through the Massif d'Ambin with the longest tunnel ever designed.

The studies on the 54 km. tunnel are far from being completed and they need further financing, while no survey has yet been done in the highest risk areas of the Alps massif and the valley below. In any case, the few documents available are not clear about the materials found during excavations, their destination, the necessary investments and supposed timing regards completion of works. Nevertheless, more than 150 million Euro have been spent for these studies, partly from U.E. funds

The CIG Italian French Inter-Government Commission final report says that only 1% of the goods presently transported on highway could be diverted on rail (when completed), leaving vehicular traffic unaffected through our valley. To increase that percentage, some studies have even suggested a tax on alpine road traffic of about 100 Euro per lorry, with inevitable effects on competition and transportation costs and, consequently, on the final price of goods.

Besides, it's important to consider that, unlike the Eurotunnel that crosses the English Channel, excavations through the Alps would not find only one type of solid rock, but different materials, including an extensive karstic system near the Moncenisio lake, firedamp gas, rocks with uranium and asbestos. There are also high levels of pressure and heat (50 ° C) and faults along which the alpine rocks move constantly. Along its course, the line affects high quality agricultural regions and densely populated areas, involving the northwestern neighbouring towns of Turin, and more tunnels would be built in the lower Susa valley with negative effects on water beds, waterworks and on the quality of life of the people living in the area.

Finally, but most importantly, in these past ten years, the people living in the Susa Valley and in the area west of Turin have strongly contrasted the various projects. This social opposition has led to many initiatives and demonstrations which have involved thousands of people.

This democratic resistance has been supported by the local governments involved, who are not simply fighting against the plan, but have come up with alternative studies to contrast the implicit model of development in the area: the transformation of the Susa Valley and surrounding area into a "*Corridor of Facilities and Services*"

Our questions

On the basis of the facts described above and the many uncertainties about the true usefulness of the project, the financial risks, the technical difficulties for its realization, the lack of interest that private investors show in contributing to its costs; in consideration of the strong social opposition in the areas involved, we would like to ask the European Parliament Transportation Commission the following questions:

- Is it acceptable and democratic to ignore the requests of the local governments and of the people living in the area in the name of higher interests that have never been proven, and that might very well be the interests of the proposing companies involved in the project?
- Is it acceptable that, with an existing railway line scarcely used (the Frejus line), more European funds are requested to study alternatives justified by pressure groups with "predicted" needs 15-20 years from now, that have been contradicted by statistical trends (for example: by 2007, 30 million tons of goods will predictably transit through the modernized Sempione Tunnel)
- Is it right to create only a few busy "traffic corridors", creating problems in the surrounding alpine areas and taking away resources from the modernizing of existing lines, thus favouring hypothetical corridors (like the East-West one south of the Alps, while the most important routes between Italy and Europe run North- South)?
- When creating new European railway lines, that run through mountains, valleys and densely populated areas exposed to high environmental risks, shouldn't all the local administrations be actively involved in the process of establishing European standards of safety and noise reduction ?
- Is it reasonable that all the alternatives to the T.A.V. project suggested were not taken into consideration giving priority to the most costly and least safe one?
- Is it right to insist on this project since, in other areas of Italy (like the Mugello), the building of such galleries has created the drying up of water springs, serious damage to private and public property, to artistic and archeological sites (which are also present in the Susa Valley)?
- Shouldn't there be a study beforehand on the hydrogeological risks, since in the area there are large asbestos deposits and consistent veins of uranium rock?
- Wouldn't it be reasonable, before financing the project, to consider the "Brossier Report" and the independent investigation by the French Government, which express a negative opinion on the project and point out a series of technical difficulties questioning the final report written by the CIG Environment Group?
- In case the project will be realised, wouldn't the recent "obiettivo" law on the accelerated and simplified environmental impact procedures create further risks for the whole territory? Wouldn't it be better to follow the usual European contracting procedures and controls, since this will be an international railway line?

The signers of the petition:

Original signatures are at Legambiente Circolo Valle Susa head Office of Bussoleno.

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Pro Natura Piemonte	Torino	Chairman	Emilio Del Mastro
Associazione Habitat Onlus	Condove	Chairman	Prof. Claudio Cancelli
Legambiente Piemonte	Torino	Chairman	Wanda Bonardo
Federazione Provinciale Coltivatori Diretti	Torino	Chairman	Dr. Carlo Gottero
Legambiente Circolo Rivoli- Cascine Vica		Chairman	Pietro La Camera
Comitato San Rocco	Condove	Chairman	Gabriella Tittone
Comitato Spontaneo Alesino contro il TAV TAC		Person in charge:	Fabrizio Falca
Comitato Spinta dal Bass Avigliana		Person in charge:	Maurizio Piccione
Comitato quartiere Villaretto	Torino	Person in charge:	Michele Falcone
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Gruppo Pace Valsusa	Condove	Person in charge:	Bianca Riva
Redazione del mensile Dialogo in Valle		Person in charge:	Marisa Ghiano
Comitato Gente	Comune Caprie	Person in charge:	Matteo Carello
Comitato No Tav	Città di Torino	Person in charge:	Paolo Mattone
Com. Spontaneo anti Tav/Tac di Val della Torre		Person in charge:	Nello Viglierchio
Com. Spontaneo Chianocco-San Didero-Bruzolo		Person in charge:	Elena Succo
Associazione Valsusa Filmfest	Condove	Person in charge:	Chiara Sasso
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