


the review

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Interview with Pierre Laconte, UITP • How can rail increase its market share?
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What does Eddington mean for the future of transport? 



An interview with Pierre Laconte

In each edition of *The Review*, we feature an interview with a key transport figure. For this issue, Marion Gourlay spent time with Dr Pierre Laconte, UITP Honorary Secretary General and President of the International Society of City and Regional Planning (ISOCARP).

Transport is part of the solution to climate change



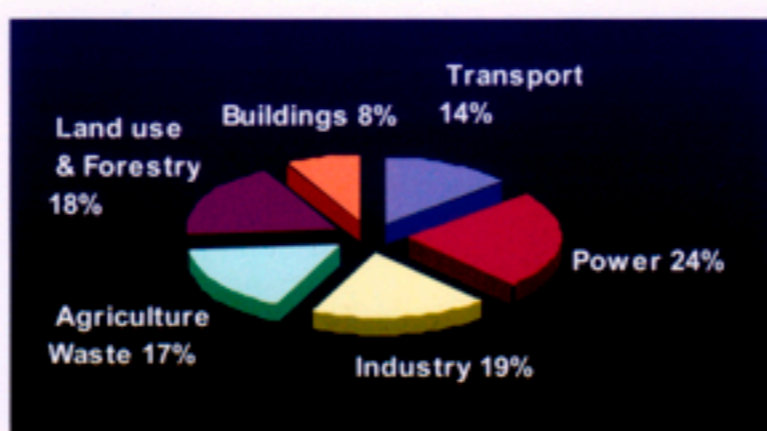
We recently caught up with Dr Pierre Laconte to find out his perspective on how the transport sector can support meeting the climate change agenda.

Laconte represented his native Belgium at the United Nations Kyoto Convention in 1997. It was here that Kyoto set out legally-binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mainly CO₂). The target amounted to a cut in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 5% from 1990 levels by 2008 to 2012. Whilst we are still a long way from achieving this, Laconte believes it is still possible.

Climate change is a topic Laconte is passionate about. He draws comparison with the tobacco lobby, which, like the current sceptics of climate change, refused to make the obvious links. He believes it's now public opinion that is leading the climate change agenda.

Transport is responsible for 14% of all CO₂ emissions (see figure 1 for industry breakdown). At a regional level, North America contributes the most transport CO₂ emissions (39%), closely followed by Europe (19%). However, with China's rate of projected growth in car ownership, it will not take the country long to overtake North America's contribution.

Figure 1 CO₂ emissions by sector



Mitigation of the impacts is vital. Even with the prospect of cleaner vehicles, the projection of increased use in industrialising countries such as India and China will outweigh any progress made through fuel efficiency gains in the West. Moreover, simply using cleaner vehicles will still impact on the day-to-day liveability of cities and the viability of public transport networks.

According to Laconte, integration of urban planning and transport is essential. As a founding partner of the Groupe Urbanisme-Architecture, which produced and co-ordinated the implementation of the master plan for the new town of Louvain-la-Neuve, he is more than qualified to make this statement. The town, which is situated 30 minutes from Brussels, is now home and a place of work to some 40,000 people.

The key to the success of Louvain-la-Neuve has been the combination of high density housing and jobs. They are much less energy consuming and reduce the overall need for motorised transport.

As the European Environmental Agency's Scientific Committee member in charge of urban matters, Laconte has recently helped produce the 'Urban Sprawl in Europe' report.

He explained that sprawl threatens the very culture of Europe, as it creates environmental, social and economic problems for both city and country areas. Further, it seriously undermines efforts to meet the global challenge of climate change.

Urban sprawl, Laconte explained, is synonymous with unplanned incremental urban development and is characterised by a low density mix of land uses on the urban fringe. Classically, it's a US phenomenon associated with the rapid low-density outward expansion of cities, fuelled by the rapid growth of car ownership and individual's preference for detached houses with gardens.

For decades, the impacts of urban sprawl have generated debate amongst scientists and practitioners, however this has not made an impact with policy-makers and government. Laconte hopes this report will play a key role in raising awareness of an issue crucial to Europe's climate change solution agenda.

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