

ORAL QUESTION H-0781/05
for Question Time at the part-session in October 2005
pursuant to Rule 109 of the Rules of Procedure
by Jacky Henin
to the Commission

Subject: Review of the Transport White Paper

Rising oil prices, the fight against atmospheric pollution, the fire in the Frejus tunnel, road safety, the cost of infrastructure deteriorating under the impact of road freight – everything today points to the absolute priority that must be given to developing rail transport in order to counteract the saturation of our roads.

The review of the 2001 Transport White Paper is getting off to an inauspicious start. Not only are the major rail infrastructure projects at a standstill from lack of funding, but also, on 12 July, the Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot attended a meeting of the road transport employers' association which was clearly intended, in the run-up to the review of the White Paper, to promote the roads at the cost of the railways.

Mr Barrot is alleged to have said at the meeting, for example, that he would 'pay more attention to the relevance of investment in the railways', and that he would not be opposed to the new Member States' investing in motorways, while indicating that road tolls for lorries weighing over 3.5 tonnes should be very reasonable.

So is the Commission really going to encourage a proactive policy of developing rail freight, based on cooperation among the great European public-service railway companies?

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