

Going global

Why is the International Road Federation (IRF) moving into the ITS sector? Caroline Visser, road finance specialist from the IRF's Geneva Programme Centre explains



Caroline Visser is responsible for the Public-Private Partnerships and the Intelligent Transport Systems programmes at the IRE.

Before joining the IRF in January 2008, she worked for the Ministry of Transport in the Netherlands in several posts. Visser is experienced in the ITS field, having worked as a Dutch representative in the European CENTRICO project, a European Commission co-funded project in which road authorities cooperate to achieve harmonised ITS deployment on the European road networks. She also worked as the executive

secretary to the Minister's Advisory Committee on the development and delivery of traveller information in the Netherlands, as well as holding posts as policy advisor on procurement and public private partnerships.

In 2006, Visser was seconded to the Direction des Routes of the French Transport Ministry in Paris, where she worked on the management of Road Concession Contracts.

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During last November's ITS World Congress in New York, the IRF staged the launch meeting of its Policy Committee on ITS, which was moderated by Caroline Visser.

Since its foundation in 1948, the International Road Federation has been instrumental in providing leadership for global road infrastructure development. It is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to encourage and promote development and maintenance of better, safer and more sustainable roads and road networks.

Against that mission, the IRF's focus on the ITS sector is both logical and a reflection of the changing face and complexity of modern transport infrastructure. As Visser points out, the IRF's slogan is better roads for a better world.

Important role

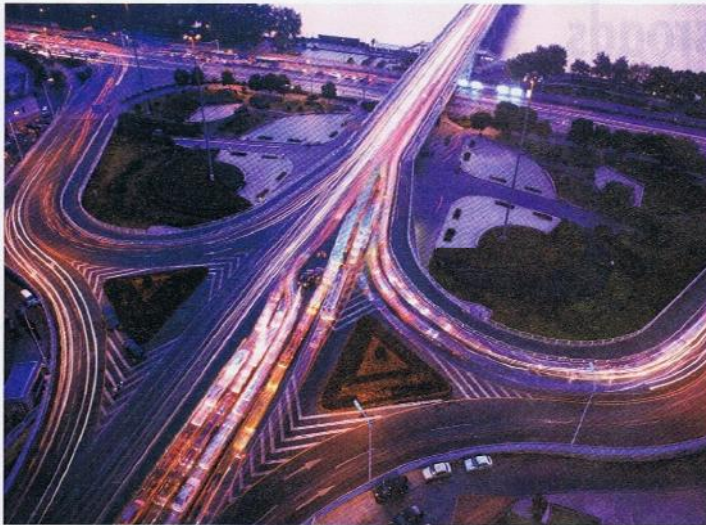
"That means greener roads, safer roads, more efficient roads," she says. "We believe ITS plays an important role in achieving those aims and we think it needs to be acknowledged."

As the IRF sees it, ITS contributes to all major road transport policy objectives. It plays an important role in safer roads and safer driving by helping to prevent accidents and mitigating their impacts. In addition, ITS applications also contribute to the enhanced operational sustainability and the environment. Road networks can be operated and used more efficiently as an integrated transport network.

Despite a positive track record, Visser points out that ITS is suffering both from a lack of understanding and visibility to politicians and policy-makers, and the wider public. In short, ITS has not fully been integrated in transport policies. In so saying, Visser points out that the IRF Policy Committee on ITS does not intend to supplant, or compete with, national and regional ITS Associations. Quite the opposite, in fact.

Global and neutral

"The IRF, as the principal global, and neutral, road industry



association, can, and should, play a role in raising the profile of ITS with high-level decision-makers," Visser says. "Our network has always been an invaluable point of access to ministers of transport and other key figures in the policy formulation process. Moreover, ITS benefits should be made more widely known. The IRF can assist ITS associations and other ITS agents in this effort."

But that's in the future: it's only a few short months since the unveiling of the IRF Policy Committee on ITS, and its founding members Josef Czako, Kapsch TrafficCom, Mohammed Serroukh, ITS Arab, and Richard Harris, PIARC.

However, it is significant that the launch, at the ITS World Congress in New York, attracted some 35 high-level officials, representing the various stakeholders in the ITS arena, including policy-makers from supranational governments, politicians, the automotive industry, national and regional ITS associations from around the globe, the Network of ITS National Associations, and several private sector businesses active in ITS.

Added value

Specifically, Edgar Thielmann, Head of Unit at the European Commission, DG TREN welcomed the IRF initiative at the launch meeting, as did Nico Anten, of Connekt/ITS Netherlands, and

chairman of the 30-strong Network of National ITS Associations. Indeed, Anten stated that the link between the IRF and the Network can bring a clear added value by connecting national policy on a European level.

Positive contributions during open discussion on the scope and activities of the Committee were made by Hermann Meyer, CEO of ERTICO/ITS Europe, Rui Camolino, ASECAP, Peter Bentley, ITS Australia, Steven Bayless, ITS America and Leonid Kozlov, Russian International Congress of Industrials and Entrepreneurs.

What arose out of discussions at the launch meeting was agreement on the way forward. Three main areas of activities were defined.

The first, benchmarking the implementation of ITS throughout the various global regions, was particularly well received.

ITS audit

"Though the detail of the benchmarking activity is still being refined for presentation in the Activities Programme, I guess you could describe it as an ITS audit, country by country and region by region," Visser explains. "So, for instance, it would enable countries to understand where they are, relative to other countries, in terms of ITS deployment. That could also be a valuable tool in stimulating ITS developments. And related to this would be the development of an

implementation road map which can serve in two ways. It can guide governments in understanding the actions they need to undertake and the structures they need to put in place to progress."

It's a pragmatic strategy to address a situation where politicians and policy-makers are too often reluctant to invest in ITS and what needs to be done to develop effective implementation strategies. It recognises that the vast variety of possible ITS applications can overwhelm them, the financing required may be challenging and the technology label attached to ITS may be a constraint. These factors might blur their view of the positive

contribution ITS can make to major transport policy objectives in road safety, sustainability and keeping traffic moving.

Global forum

The second area of activity defined at the New York launch is to create awareness with high-level policy-makers on what ITS is and what benefits can be gained, while the third activity area centres on providing a global forum to discuss issues related to the legal framework and business models for ITS to help advance deployment.

The launch meeting in New York set the direction for the IRF Policy Committee on ITS. On 2 April, a follow-up meeting will be held in Geneva. "That is where we will approve the Activities Programme," Visser says, adding that she would also like to see that meeting identify champions to take on board some of the actions and drive them forward. The plan is that by the time of the next ITS World Congress, in Stockholm in September the Committee will be ready to begin serious implementation of its aims.

For Visser, and the IRF, this is not a daunting task. "The IRF, as an association, is already uniting all kinds of stakeholders in the road industry, throughout 80 countries on six continents. For 60 years we have provided a unique global platform that brings together governments, public and private entities committed to road development. And today, road development means a lot more than pouring concrete or laying asphalt; ITS has increasingly become an integral part of it."

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IRF Policy Committee on ITS aims

- To advocate the role of ITS in reaching transport policy objectives with national and supra-national governmental institutions and politicians and to formulate recommendations for integrating ITS in general transport policies.
- To develop ITS deployment policies on international and national levels and assist governments and other institutions in formulating potential road maps for implementation of ITS systems.
- To support the development of financing models for ITS.
- To enhance the acceptability of ITS by the larger public and governments.
- To enhance knowledge exchange about ITS in general and evaluation outcomes of ITS systems in particular.