

# Centrico BRIEFING NOTE

Using ITS to manage Europe's busiest roads



## The Arc Atlantique Freight Portal

### SUMMARY

Local authorities, ports and road operators have a desire to better serve the increasing volumes of HGV traffic along and across the Channel Sea. These organisations have implemented an Internet portal targeted towards freight users. It now covers North and West of France, the South East of England and Flanders.

### GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The Arc Atlantique corridor serves freight traffic heading for the channel ports and provides an attractive alternate for north - south traffic wishing to avoid the Paris area. Furthermore, the current levels of HGV traffic are likely to increase as a result of ongoing modernisation of selected ports and the completion of new motorway trunk sections.



### USER NEEDS STUDY

Local highway authorities, cities and ports in the Arc Atlantique corridor undertook a detailed study of HGV user needs. Interviews were conducted with HGV drivers and freight company managers in order

to understand their specific requirements for information and their preferences in terms of how such information should be made available. More than 342 lorry drivers participated in face-to-face interviews at motorway rest areas and approximately 140 freight company managers were contacted by telephone.

The survey showed that communication between drivers and their managers is principally related to the location of the vehicle, navigation, and information on events and congestion. Preferred methods of obtaining such real time information were VMS, 107.7 FM highway radio and interactive voice recognition telephone services. Mobile Internet devices were considered too expensive and drivers lacked familiarity with these systems.

### THE FREIGHT PORTAL

As a result of the study, the SAPN and the participating local organisations decided to develop a dedicated Web portal towards the freight community.

The service is being made available online as well as through dedicated information terminals that are being installed at selected motorway service areas frequented by commercial vehicles.



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The portal takes advantages of existing sources of online information, available through different web services, and provides an interface that is easy to use for those that are not familiar with the Internet. Navigation and access to information is intuitive and possible either through menus or interactive maps.



The service, which is available in French, English and Dutch, includes links to:

- Real time traffic information (network conditions, events, traffic forecasts, scheduled events)
- Multi-modal information (ship calls at harbours, ferry schedules)
- Maps (interurban and urban areas, business parks)
- Specialised services (parking space availability, road side assistance)
- Road restrictions (height/weight)

Its design allows the selection of international routes and the research of the desired information/services along the full routes and its particular activity poles, such as cities, harbours, airports, etc..

## ROAD MAP

The service has been initially implemented by the SAPN in France, and later expanded step by step to the South East of England (2005) and to Flanders (2006). This progressive and pragmatic approach was decisive to gain international consensus, to allow rapid implementation and to minimise specification and development costs.

The portal architecture is highly flexible, allowing additional types of information to be added and the

geographic area of coverage to be extended. This flexibility enables the site to expand with very limited development costs, in order to provide information about conditions in adjacent regions, thus supporting the needs of cross-border traffic.

## COMMUNICATION AND EVALUATION

In England, the Highways Agency has launched a specific communication campaign to raise awareness of the site. Leaflets have been distributed by the Highways Agency in various strategic points to inform the freight community, going through southern England, of the launch of this new service.



Statistics of visits are analysed and consultation with the freight industry will be performed regularly to assess the usage of the site, and to refine the information that is made accessible within this international Internet Portal.

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For further information on other CENTRICO activities visit:

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