

RAILWAY TUNNEL UNDER MONTGENEVRE



EDITORIAL

A tunnel under Montgenevre - an obvious solution...

From above, the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region appears to be the link, not only between the Alps and the Mediterranean and between all southern European regions from east to west, but also between Europe and Africa via the port of Marseille.

From close up, the Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region is less of a link but a destination in itself, a place for holidays or to spend your retirement years.

Today, however, the main access routes are still those from Roman rule, namely the Rhone Valley and the coastal roads. These two roads are at saturation point today.

No high speed route crosses through this region.

For centuries now, the Montgenevre Mountain Pass has been the natural crossing point between France and Italy, as confirmed by the great number of tourist vehicles and lorries which, not without some difficulty, pass over daily. Thanks to the "Grenelle" Environment Round Table, this crossing point has once again come under review and drawn interest.

The mission of SETUMONT, with the backing of all of its members, is to construct a rail tunnel under Montgenevre for the development of the Southern Alps and to reduce distances for south European trade.

This first Review shows SETUMONT's commitment to ensuring inclusion in the list of European projects of the construction of a rail tunnel under Montgenevre, as well as a fast rail link in the Durance Valley joining the metropolis of Aix-Marseille to Turin and beyond, to Lisbon and Budapest.

Maurice BRUN
President of SETUMONT



A SHORT HISTORY

At the end of last century, a rail crossing via Montgenevre had already been considered and once again today, the transalpine link between the Briançon and Piedmont regions is a pressing issue. In 1861, Faure, MP for the Hautes-Alpes, called for the construction of a railway line between Marseille and Turin via the Durance Valley and Montgenevre to complete "the long diagonal line running between Spain and Italy and passing through Avignon". During an international congress on 18 August 1907, French and Italian representatives, with moral support from major administrative bodies, put forward the following argument: -"You just have to glance at a map of France to realise that it is essential for the line from Marseille to Briançon to terminate in the Susa Valley. Only a few kilometres separate the French line, which terminates in a dead end, from the Italian line descending from Cenis and this missing link is so detrimental to the interests of Briançon and this entire French region that we have had to compensate for it by car and automobile services.

One century later...



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■ 1988

SETUMONT was set up in 1988 to put forward a project for the construction of a tunnel in the Hautes-Alpes, linking the Briançon area to Italy. The Hautes-Alpes and Marseille Provence Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the communes of Marseille, Gap, Montgenevre, Nevache, Manosque, the Departement of the Hautes-Alpes and the Provence-Alpes-Cote-d'Azur region all joined SETUMONT in supporting the project.

Three different road tunnels were studied: - the Montgenevre tunnel, a tunnel under Echelle, and a variation of the latter "Plampinet - Beaulard", bypassing the town of Bardonnechia. In July 1990, the Ministry for the Environment declared its intention of making the whole of the Claree Valley a listed site, thereby ruling out construction under Echelle and working in favour of a tunnel under Montgenevre.

■ November 1991

Road saturation has been forecast for 2010 in the Northern Alps. Therefore, the Legrand report recommends either :- a railway motorway in conjunction with the planned Lyon-Turin TGV line under Mont Cenis, capable of carrying 8000 trucks per day, or if this proved technically or financially impossible, dualling the Frejus road tunnel. In the Southern Alps, a road tunnel under the Echelle was recommended as the easiest solution both technically and financially. If, for environmental reasons, this solution were to be ruled out, the report retained the possibility of constructing a road tunnel under Montgenevre.

■ July 1992

The Minister of the Environment signs the decree to make the whole of the Claree Valley a listed site.

...from road to rail

■ September 1996

The TGV makes it possible to travel from Paris to Oulx in under five hours.

■ April 1999

The Franco-Italian cross border conference decides to submit the project for a rail tunnel under Montgenevre as a complementary link to the Lyon-Turin tunnel.

■ March 2000

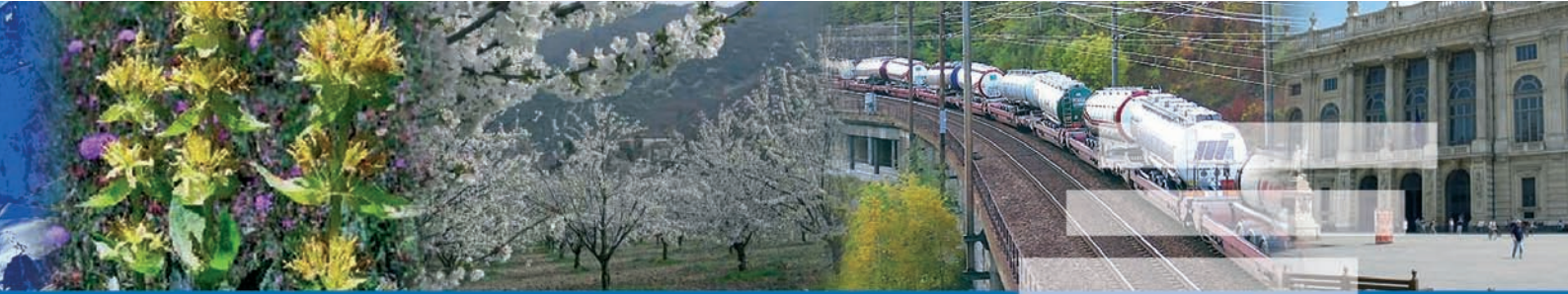
The PACA regional council passes the State-Region CPER 2000-2006 contract proposal.

The State and the Region "decide to give priority to studies concerning (...) **updating and electrifying the existing Durance Valley line (...) in view of constructing a rail tunnel under Montgenevre**".



■ July 2000

The Hautes-Alpes General Council, Setumont and their Italian partners carry out a feasibility study for the project for a tunnel under Montgenevre. In Italy, the Province of Turin is in charge of the study based on the construction of rail or road links. All modes of transport are considered including the possibility of lorry rail.



■ December 2000

The rail option is favoured with the route remaining to be defined. The feasibility study carried out at the request of the PACA region puts forward several scenarios. It is presented to an intergovernmental summit and concludes that the best solution for greatest economic profitability of the tunnel is to construct a lorry rail line.

A project listed in national development plans

■ July 2001

The Interministerial Committee for Territorial Planning and Development (CIADT) meeting at Limoges, approves the 2020 Development Plans for Public Services for France. These are published on the 18 April 2002 by decree 2002-560. Annexe 5, Chapter 23.4 of this decree **confirms the choice of the Montgenevre tunnel**. This decree also specifies that "a **complementary study on improving ground transport between La Batie Neuve and Montgenevre would be set up with the aim of limiting heavy goods traffic and giving priority to rail or mixed transport (lorry rail, combined transport).**"



■ October 2001

A letter to the councillors from the French Transport Minister confirms that the French Government is **in favour of the tunnel construction**.



■ November 2001

At the Franco-Italian summit at Perigueux, French and Italian Governmental authorities demand that the Intergovernmental Commission (CIG) for Improving Franco-Italian links in the Southern Alps puts forward "concrete proposals for opening up the Southern Alps, in particular by studying a project for rail through Montgenevre"

■ June 2003

The Marseille-Provence Chamber of Commerce and Industry presents a study for a rail link between Marseille and Turin via the Durance Valley and the Montgenevre tunnel. Franco-Italian partners are unanimous in their preference for the deeper variations proposed.

Regional opinions...

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■ November 2003

The CESR (Regional Economic and Social Council) declares that it is in favour of the construction of a rail tunnel under Montgenevre.

■ April 2005

Mercedes BRESSO, President of the Piedmont Region and Euro - MP, announces that her first political action is to support the rail tunnel under Montgenevre and that this construction will be given priority during her term of office. She accompanies the President of the PACA Region and the Hautes-Alpes representative to Brussels with the objective of defending this project with the European Transport Commission.

■ November 2005

Franco-Italian meeting at Turin with the President of the Turin Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Trade and Agriculture, representatives from the Province of Turin, the President of the Provence-Alpes-Cote-d'Azur and Corsica Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CRCI) and the President of the Hautes-Alpes Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This meeting served to broach the problems of the Mediterranean Basin in prospect of opening a European route Barcelona-Marseille-Turin-Milan and beyond towards the Eastern European countries.

...for inclusion in regional and interregional official documents

■ May 2006

Meeting with socioeconomic representatives from the PACA and Piedmont regions, initiated by the Hautes-Alpes Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), to define an institutional communication and lobbying programme "for the endorsement of this new transport infrastructure". The aim is to interest National and European authorities in this project so that it can be carried out in the shortest time possible.

■ June 2006

The Interregional Scheme for Alpine Planning and Development (SIMA) is adopted. The necessity for constructing a tunnel under Montgenevre is highlighted. The Alpine Committee calls for (...) the inclusion of the Montgenevre tunnel in Corridor 5 of the European transport network.

■ November 2006

The Minister for Territorial Planning announces that studies on freight and passenger transportation via a tunnel under Montgenevre will be included in the next State-Region contract proposal.





■ December 2006

The Regional Scheme for Territorial Planning and Development (SRADT) is endorsed by the PACA regional council "... **the tunnel under Montgenevre, combined with developing a railway line from the PACA region towards the Turin region, is a major step in terms of infrastructure**". Opening such a railway line opens up the opportunity of transferring some of the road transit flow between Piedmont in Italy, the Provence-Alpes Cote D'azur and Languedoc Roussillon regions in France and Catalonia in Spain. A Railway Motorway also allowing use by conventional freight trains could form the link via Montgenevre.

■ March 2007

The PACA Regional Council passes the State-Region contract proposal. **The State and Region agree to carrying out "economic and technical feasibility studies for constructing a railway tunnel under Montgenevre" in this Contract (CPER)**. They also commit to "modernizing the railway in the Alps from Aix to Briançon". A sum of 20 million euros to finance complementary studies and a public inquiry for the construction of a tunnel under Montgenevre is also agreed for the State-Region 2007 -2013 contract proposal.

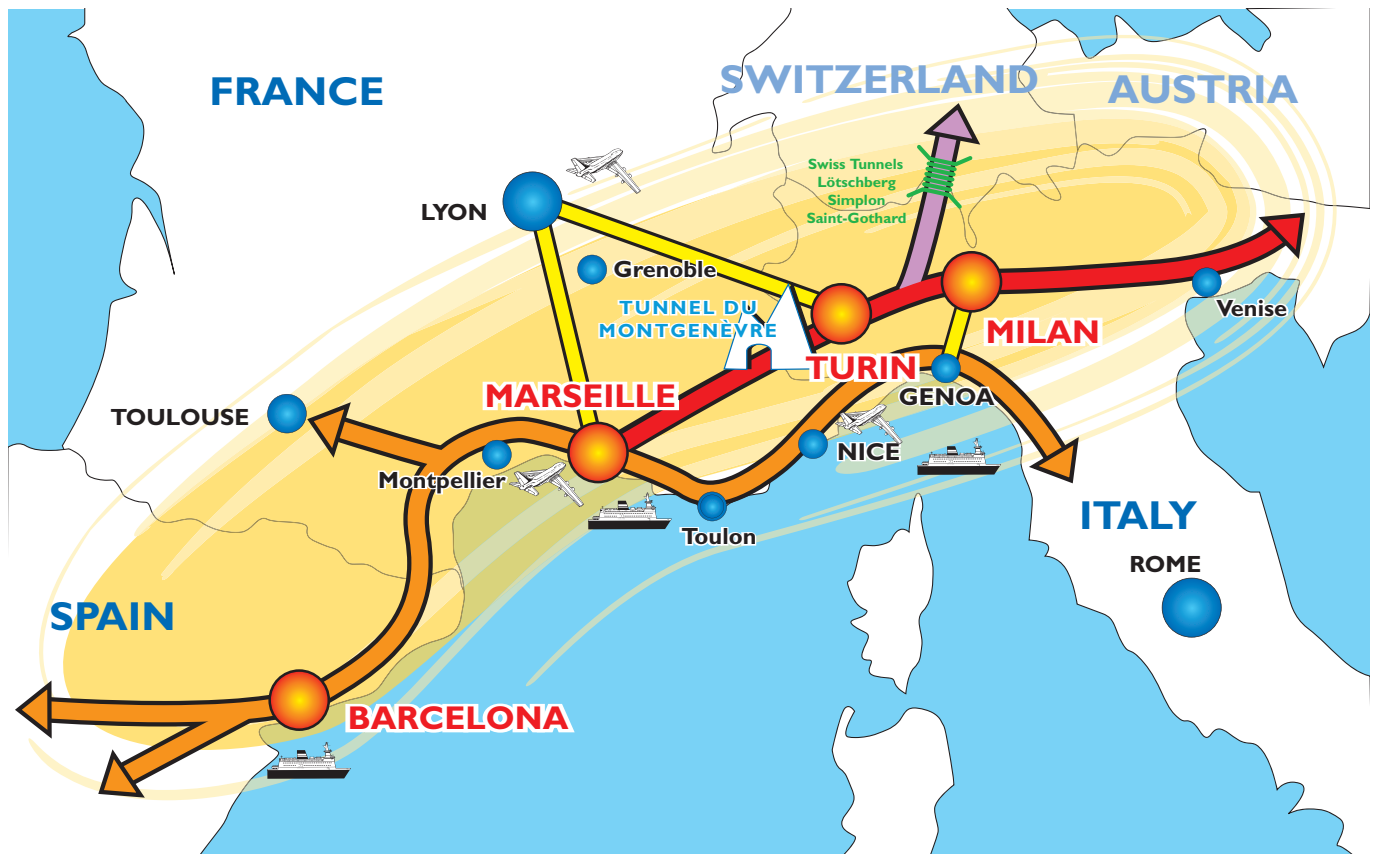
■ May 2007

First regional conference "from commitment to action" and start of the studies decided by the CPER.

■ November 2007

Grenelle Environment Round Table: priority granted to rail for new infrastructures. According to Mr Dominique Bussereau, Secretary of State for Transport, "Plans for reduction in heavy goods transportation via the Montgenevre mountain Pass and the new projects for the Southern Alps correspond exactly to the Government's intentions. **These projects will appear on the next infrastructure map**".





Map from : Agence d'Urbanisme de Marseille

From the Region to Europe: the stakes

■ The Main Issues

Since 1995, the flow of goods through the Alps and the Pyrenees has changed, resulting in a profound shift of transit traffic towards the alpine routes as confirmed by the Ministry of Transport (summary SESP no. 163 - December 2006). Three major points arise from this analysis:

- on the north-south route running between central Europe and northern Italy, use of the "shortcut" through Switzerland has increased, transporting the flow from Central Europe to the east of France. This evolution will rise with the opening of the Swiss rail tunnels,

Loetschberg in June 2007, and Saint-Gothard in 2013.

- shift of transit flow on the east-west route has increased, in favour of the logistical Mediterranean coast route : the amount of road traffic tonnage has increased by 46% over 5 years.
- the decrease of transit flow is continuing on the Lyon-Turin route; -28% for road transportation and -36% for rail freight over a period of 5 Years (6 Mt via the Mont Cenis tunnel in 2005). This route has become too outlying for south European flow and now is mainly used for trade between neighbouring areas.

Cost and Timescale

Length of tunnel: from 22 to 23.9 km depending on depth variations

Maximum gradient: from 0.74% to 1.38%

Period of construction: from 5 to 6 years depending on choice of solution taken, excluding time taken for studies, preparation and setting up of the project

Cost: 1.1 thousand million Euros (estimated in 2003) for a deep underground solution, - the most difficult but with virtually no impact on the environment.



SETUMONT REVIEW

In this new context, **opening up the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur region towards Italy and central Europe has become a strategic necessity for south-east France.** The Durance Valley which runs south-west to north-east, together with the Montgenevre tunnel is the best solution, linking south-west Europe directly to the zone where south-European flows centred on Turin and Milan cross.

The rail tunnel under Montgenevre meets a double objective: direct access from the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur region and the Durance valley to the Swiss tunnels (north-south flows) and to the panEuropean corridor No. 5 in the Po plain (east-west flow).

■ The Stakes

The importance of the stakes and the expected services make the rail link Provence-Piedmont, via the Durance valley and the tunnel under Montgenevre a priority:

- **opening up the Southern Alps :** interconnection of French and Italian networks will allow the opening up of the southern Alps favouring economic activity, largely resulting from tourism and developing winter sports.
- **lorry rail option:** the construction of a rail road terminal to the east of Gap will be the equivalent for the southern Alps to the Bourg-Neuf - Aiton terminal in the northern Alps. A secure rail shuttle service will run in all seasons, between Gap and Turin-Orbassano, as well as between Bourg-Neuf - Aiton and Gap if necessary. This new capacity, complementary to the coastal terminals, meets the measures of the Alpine Convention in favour of developing

modes of transport alternative to roads.

- **developing trade in the Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur region:** Italy is the PACA region's leading partner. It is therefore essential to have safe and efficient logistical links with this country. In particular, creating and maintaining jobs in Mediterranean coastal zones of activity and the logistical platforms of the lower Rhone valley require a viable link with northern Italy.



- **the extension of Marseille port hinterland:** the Marseille- Fos port possesses both land and nautical assets decisive as regards the competitors of northern Europe and the Mediterranean. At a time when important investments have been made to increase the traffic of containers (Fos 2XL), land service for before and after shipments need more hinterland space to receive this new traffic. The type and volume of this trade makes rail a necessity.
- **fluidity of international transit:** the great increase in trade between the Iberian peninsula and Eastern Europe has greatly added to the congestion of the main coastal roads. The economic development and structuring of the Mediterranean basin relies on transport networks which offer fluid traffic for both passengers and freight. By creating a direct access to the Swiss tunnels, the tunnel under Montgenevre will allow a significant modal shift and a viable alternative in all seasons, reducing offloading and complementing the short distance sea transportation (TMCD) option.

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