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# Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991)



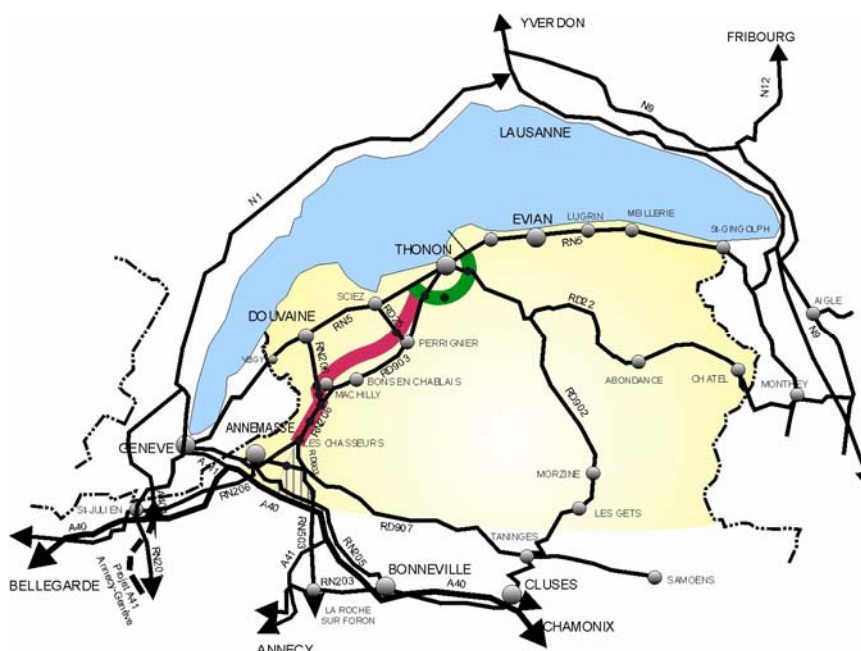
## CASE STUDY FACT SHEET #3

### Thonon-Annemasse Road, France, close to Switzerland

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#### BACKGROUND

For many years, steps have been taken to open up the Chablais, a mountainous area between Lake Lemman (Geneva) to the north, the Swiss border to the east and the Chablais hills to the south. The demographic, economic and tourism dynamism that this region has experienced since the beginning of the 1980s, has led to a significant increase in road traffic in the area. To respond to the resulting transport difficulties, a multimodal scheme for opening up the Chablais was approved in 1999. It comprises a €192-million road link and a €25-million rail link, the former being the subject of this section.



#### PROJECT

The road link will eventually consist of a dual-carriageway road between a point south of Annemasse, to join the existing A40 motorway, and a point east of Thonon. The link is to comprise three sections:

- A section between the A40 motorway and the Chasseurs crossroads, which would, along with the A40, provide a by-pass around Annemasse. This section is at the preliminary study stage.
- A section between the Chasseurs crossroads and the Thonon by-pass. Pre-project feasibility studies have been completed and a 'declaration of public interest' is awaited shortly. This declaration is needed to allow for detailed studies and for land acquisition. It is at that stage that consultations with the Swiss authorities took place.
- The Thonon by-pass, with the General Council of the Haute-Savoie département being the project proponent. The declaration of public interest was made in 2004 and construction works have begun.

## CONSULTATION OF THE SWISS AUTHORITIES WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF THE ESPOO CONVENTION

The Espoo Convention was ratified by Switzerland in 1996 and by France in 2001. The Convention requires the notification of the affected Parties for an activity likely to have a significant transboundary impact (art. 3).

The Roads Department of the French Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure, Tourism and the Sea transmitted the documentation to the Swiss federal authorities by post on 2 December 2004. The Cantonal EIA Service of Geneva and the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment confirmed by post, on 14 and 17 January 2005, respectively, their wish to participate in the EIA of the project and to organize a public inquiry. A public inquiry was held by the Canton of Geneva between 19 January and 2 March 2005. The public of Geneva made no comments. The competent Swiss authorities carried out an evaluation of the environmental impact and sent a summary of their opinions, by post on 16 March 2005, to the French Roads Department.

The Cantonal EIA Service of Geneva gave a favourable response to the project but asked that their observations be taken into account. Those observations were primarily:

- *The risk of competition between road infrastructure and public transport, resulting in:*
  - *A reduction in the current modal shift towards public transport.*
  - *A significant increase in traffic.* However, the link between the Chasseurs crossroads and Thonon is part of the scheme for opening up the Chablais, and the scheme design took into account the road link and public transport. The analyses carried out showed that these two approaches were complementary, given the current level of public transport and the demand for transport in general.
  - *An increase in pollutant emissions (Geneva's territory).* However, the impact assessments presented at the inquiry included an air quality analysis. The definition of the geographical area covered by this analysis complies with the regulations in force. The extension of the geographical area to include the Geneva conurbation (particularly the local road network) in this type of analysis might be envisaged within the framework of current cooperation in studying transboundary transport. Such steps are beyond the strict limits of the project under consideration. The project proponent might communicate any information required for such studies, as necessary.
- *The risk, due to fragmentation of the land, of undermining:*
  - *The conservation of fauna corridors.* The project proponent has taken note of these requests and a passage under the road for fauna has been added in response. At the project level, the Swiss authorities concerned, along with the other actors, will be involved in defining construction measures.
  - *The protection of watercourses and wetlands.* The project proponent reaffirms his preoccupation with the protection of watercourses and wetlands. The measures foreseen at present assure the preservation of these features, either by avoiding them or by taking special construction measures (crossing works, etc.). Again, at the project level, the Swiss authorities concerned, along with the other actors, will be involved in defining construction measures.

The project proponent is committed to a continuing dialogue with the Swiss authorities at the project level. In addition, and in compliance with article 7 of the Espoo Convention (post-project analysis), it is agreed to involve the Swiss authorities in future environmental studies of the project.

For more information, see <http://www.unece.org/env/eia/studytour2006.htm>.

Source: *Background materials for a study tour of projects in the Geneva area with transboundary impacts*  
6 April 2006, UNECE, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment  
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