23/11/95 ES. FINALI
INT. CON. ING. → ITA. TESTO ④
LEGGE : BRADY TL = 5'10"

Testo 4

1121/c

ROAD TRAFFIC IN ITALY AND IN THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

01-1121 C fin 5 cou

Verona, 15-17 June 1995

Bert Morris, The Automobile Association, UK

Many towns and cities have adopted conventional traffic management and restraint measures, together with the provision of good bus and train services, to provide an acceptable alternative to cars for travel into and out of town and city centres.

Each town and city is different, so there is no universal tried and tested remedy. In the UK, some of our historic towns have severely restricted access to city centres, achieved simply by rationing the amount of parking available, and by charging high costs to park where it is permitted. Oxford and York, for example, have implemented restricted-access policies. The squeeze on car access in these cities, however, has been linked to the development of park-and-ride services on the urban periphery. Park-and-ride is simply the integration of the car into public transport services, and is a widely accepted and popular means of getting people into town and city centres.

Restricting or banning cars from a town or city centre may sound innocuous enough but in reality it is **people** who are being banned or restricted. All towns and cities need the spending power of car-owning families. If these families cannot get into the centre to spend their money, the city's economy will suffer. If the municipal authority does not provide adequate and acceptable means of access, such as park-and-ride, then the people who are banned or restricted, or who are forced to pay excessive charges, will simply go elsewhere.

This point was highlighted a few years ago by the UK Royal Town Planning Institute: "over the years a few local authorities have as a matter of policy sought to deter car-borne shoppers to their town centres. In most cases such policies are now recognised to be detrimental to the long term vitality and viability of town centres".

One reason why severe restrictions on car access are demanded is because of the effect of vehicle exhaust emissions on air quality. There are some serious misconceptions about the link between poor air quality and exhaust gases, however, and about how technology is providing a solution.

All new petrol-engined cars sold in the European Union have to be fitted with a catalytic converter. The effect of this and other technology over the past 25 years has been

dramatic. A new car bought today produces 90% less toxic gases than one bought in 1970. This gain in air quality depends on vehicles being well maintained and regularly serviced, however. And here lies a problem - about half of the vehicle-generated pollution in urban areas is caused by just 10% of vehicles. Strict measures are necessary to drive these grossly polluting vehicles out of our towns and cities.

London's 33 local authorities are seeking powers to stop vehicles and carry out tests on their exhaust gases. The Automobile Association, which has 8.2 million members in the UK, supports the principle of local authorities carrying out these tests and issuing penalties to offending drivers. But it does not accept tht the municipal officials should be allowed to stop vehicles. The Automobile Association's view is that only police officers, in uniform, should have these powers. This view is confirmed by AA members. In a recent survey, more than 70% were opposed to anyone other than a police officer having powers to stop vehicles on the highway.

The other issue of growing concern is road safety. Eight years ago the UK government set a bold target - to reduce road casualties by a third by the end of the century. Although there has been little improvement in the overall number of casualties, there has been brilliant success in the UK in reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured. Road deaths, for example, have fallen from 5,125 in 1987 to 3,650 last year.

But even more lives could be saved if excessive speed is tackled. Each year in the UK, speed kills around 1,200 people. Pedestrians are more at risk: just 5% of pedestrians struck by a vehicle travelling at 30 km/h are killed; at 50 km/h 45% die; and at 65 km/h death is certain in 85% of accidents.