

# The infrastructure development - a key issue by reforming the Bulgarian transport sector

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## 1 The new socio-economic context

Bulgaria belongs to the East European countries which in 1990 started reforming fundamentally their socio-economic and political systems. While the development was quite successful in the political area - the current political system meets all the requirements of the European standards - the economy restructuring went very slowly until 1997. The consequence was a drastic economic recession which affected significantly the national transport system. (Fig. 1). Nevertheless, a number of important steps have been made in reshaping the whole financial and economic system. Moreover, the actual Government is doing serious efforts to speed-up the country development and to accelerate the achievement of the long-term aim of the Bulgarian foreign policy - which has been set by national consensus - the full membership in the EU. The main priorities in the related economic plan are:

- further stabilization and development of the financial and banking sectors;
- removing the remaining legal and administrative obstacles to market development and foreign investment;
- bringing the privatization in the industrial sector up to planned 72% by 2000 (in 1997 approximately 50% of the GDP was generated by the private sector);
- acceleration of the land reform;
- reform in the health care and the budgetary sphere (education, army etc.).

One of the key issues in this plan is the reform of the transport branch.

## 2 The main characteristics of the Bulgarian transport system

### Road transport

The total length of the national road network is 36 533 km

*The national strategy for development of the transport infrastructure of Bulgaria has been presented. The main characteristics of the Bulgarian transport system has been given with analysis of the most important socio-economic factors influencing its development. The impact of the economic recession during the transition period after 1989 has been pointed out. A survey of the main issues of the on-going reform in the transport branch has been given. Some data have been indicated from a general forecast study carried out in the framework of the EU funded TINA project. A strategic plan for development of the infrastructure of all types of transport – road, rail, water and air – has been presented containing data about the main projects. An emphasis has been put on the development of the sections along the European corridors crossing the country which are among the Government's priority in this field.*

(Fig. 2). The average density is 0.33 km per square kilometer. Approximately 90% of the roads are with asphalt surface. Their distribution in various categories is illustrated on Fig. 3. Prevailing are the two lane roads with overall size 6.00 up to 7.50 m.

The major part of the motorway sections that are in an advanced stage of construction with total length of 25 km will be completely constructed and put in operation till the end of 1999.

During the recession following the transition to the market economy the lack of finance for the road infrastructure brought to a general deterioration of the roads operating condition. More than 28% of them are in poor state and regardless of the fact that in this group are mainly sections with lower grade, they present a serious problem.

The road administration in co-operation with the Bulgarian Government works hardly to stop this negative development.

Before 1989 the road transport had been under the control of a

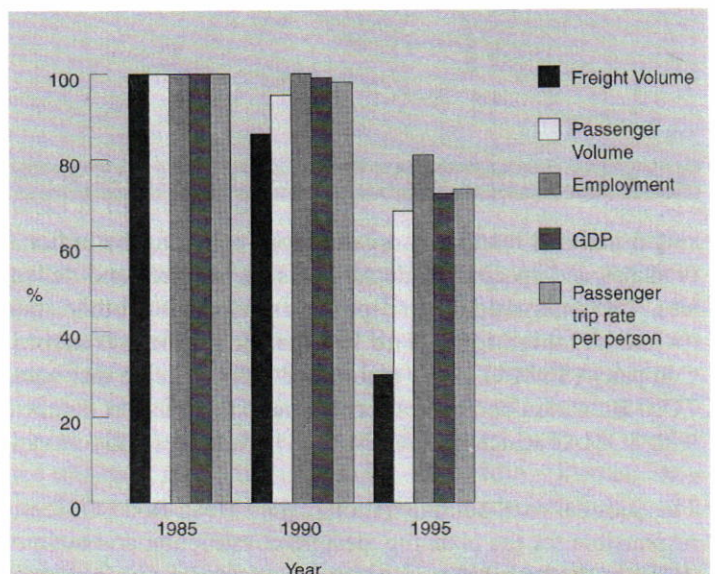


Fig. 1: Some transport and economic indicators