

# No shortage of work to do

At the end of 2007, **John Miles** steps down as Chair of the PIARC (World Road Association) Technical Committee C1.4 on Management of Network Operations which covers ITS. **ITS Solutions** quizzed him on his four-year term and his thoughts for the future.

**ITSS:** What achievements are you most proud of?

**JM:** First, publication of the 2nd edition of the PIARC *ITS Handbook* in four languages: English, French, and Chinese (launch at the 2007 ITS World Congress in Beijing) with a Spanish edition in the pipeline. Widely acclaimed as one of the best introductions to the subject, this is a complete update designed to highlight the full breadth of ITS capability, and the Chinese edition will significantly multiply its audience.

Second, the publication – in CD-ROM format – at the 2007 PIARC World Road Congress in Paris of the PIARC *Network Operations Handbook* in French and English to complement the *ITS Handbook*. We are anxious to reach a much wider audience than is possible with conventional publishing, so we are also negotiating for PIARC to have this up and running on the internet in future.

**ITSS:** What do you see as the key strategic themes for PIARC?

**JM:** First, I think, outreach to transport professionals (especially young ones) and students in developing countries and those with economies in transition. Second, the 'big picture' of transport futures - mega-cities, the environment, sustainability and energy.

On outreach, we need more international seminars like those in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (August 2006) and Santiago, Chile (in conjunction with PIARC's Road Safety Committee, April 2007). Kuala Lumpur produced three key conclusions:

- We need international standards of practice for ITS to regulate planning and deployment worldwide;
- ITS project planning must give due consideration to regional collaboration and integration between key agencies, and integration between regional multi-jurisdictional traffic management systems; and
- ITS should play a more important role in road safety and achieving key performance indicators to meet customer satisfaction goals.

The Network Operations Handbook CD-ROM shows the way forward on all three of these, but there is still a long way to go.

Santiago, one of PIARC's first international seminars in Latin America, was very successful,



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with 250 delegates and a high standard of technical papers. Outcomes include the Chilean Government's sponsoring of the Spanish translation of the *ITS Handbook*; and the two PIARC committees agreeing to collaborate more closely on ITS' contribution to road safety. ERTICO, and its fellow world-regional ITS organisations, are natural partners for future such events.

We also need more training sessions of the kind we held for post-graduates and final-year undergraduates in Cape Town, South Africa, in May 2005, which proved very lively and well-attended. For 2007, we have planned a complete half-day awareness-raising session on ITS at the 2007 ITS World Congress in Beijing, linked to the launch of the Chinese edition of the *ITS Handbook*.

Our decision to develop the *Network Operations Handbook* on CD-ROM aims to keep down costs and make the committee's expertise

more widely available. At Kuala Lumpur, PIARC faced heavy criticism for the cost of the *ITS Handbook*, which is well beyond the reach of the many potential users in developing countries.

The Chinese edition will sell at around €10 (US\$15) as compared with €52.5 (US\$65) for the English edition. PIARC will need to look for external sponsors in future to keep down costs.

On the 'big picture', it is vital that PIARC strengthens its work in all these areas, to prepare roads authorities around the globe for the challenges they face. These range from energy-efficient road construction and maintenance through to the implementation of congestion charging and demand management.

**ITSS:** What do you see as the future priorities for C1.4?

**JM:** In addition to outreach and education, within the overall PIARC context, network operations policy and practice, and cost effectiveness or cost/benefit evaluation in network operations. The three go hand-in hand, and I hope my successor, to be appointed early in 2008, can build on our achievements.

Again, exchanges of information and practical experiences between our members are extremely valuable in themselves. But the benefits go much wider.

One of C1.4's main activities is to review developments in ITS and road transport as these affect roads authorities, and then make recommendations on good practice. This is a natural development of work carried out over the past 12 years, which has already produced two well-researched handbooks.

**ITSS:** How do you work with IBEC (the International ITS Benefits, Evaluation and Costs working group)?

**JM:** There is already a good deal of constructive overlap and I have sought to establish still closer links. IBEC was strongly involved, for example, in our training sessions in Kuala Lumpur, and I see such collaboration continuing because of our high levels of common interest.

I expect, for example, C1.4 to continue to call on IBEC experts to peer review its reports. Similarly, IBEC will no doubt be interested to hear how C1.4 is progressing with its recommendations on good practice.

At a practical level, Traffic Wales supports



**Integrated multi-modal network operations in Istanbul, Turkey (photo courtesy of Richard Harris, WSP). C1.4 defines an 'integrated' network as one that has its geographical limits defined according to road users' needs; may be multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional, multi-national (local, regional, national authorities and concession-holders); possibly uses different levels of infrastructure (rural, local or national roads hierarchy); and involves interaction and inter-agency cooperation on traffic management and traffic information**

IBEC at the instigation of Robert Cone of the Welsh Assembly Government, the senior UK delegate to C1.4. Paris-based consultants ISIS Group provide the French delegate to C1.4 in the form of Martial Chevreuil, whose colleague, Steve Morello of Egis, currently chairs IBEC – so the links are very strong.

**ITSS:** What are the main technical issues facing PIARC?

**JM:** Sustainable development in road transport will only be feasible if we can successfully handle issues such as depletion of fossil energy sources and reduction of gas emissions, while continuing to respond in the best way we can to people's needs for mobility. Achieving this balance demands the implementation of radically new concepts and technological solutions.

**ITSS:** What are the main organisational challenges facing PIARC?

**JM:** The traditional business model for PIARC technical committees is stretched to the limit. Public authorities and private businesses alike are much more cost-conscious, and 'non-essential' activities come under close scrutiny by budget-holders.

Individuals struggle to devote time to committee work and fund long-distance travel.

Responsibility for committees' outputs therefore falls disproportionately on a handful of highly-motivated people.

I think PIARC must do much more to raise its profile and demonstrate the benefits of participation, or it will gradually lose support. There needs to be much more clarity about the focus of its mission and the effectiveness of its work.

For this to continue, we need funding or sponsorship. Opportunities for commercial organisations could be of great benefit if handled openly and transparently, in ways that do not compromise PIARC's independence and authority.

One problem for C1.4 is that many members never attend meetings, while there is very little input from corresponding members. We need to find better ways of tapping the expertise of our 'sleeping partners'. There is now some very good experience of using the internet to strengthen international networking between professionals and our committees would benefit from training and support in hosting and animating web-based discussions.

Another problem involves securing long-term participation from developing countries and those with economies in transition, due to their financial constraints. We certainly don't want PIARC to consist just of developed countries sharing ITS experiences amongst themselves!

**ITSS:** How can PIARC work more closely with the ITS community?

**JM:** One way is for PIARC to work more regionally, eg with the EC and organisations such as the Conference of European Roads Directors, at the interface between R&D and mainstream network operations. Another is for C1.4 to collaborate with the lead ITS organisations in the Asia-Pacific, South and South East Asia, Southern Africa and Latin America to showcase its work in the developing world.

PIARC must also strengthen its profile at the big forums where ITS and network operations practitioners meet, alongside transport academics and people who develop transport policy. Examples include the annual ITS World and European congresses, and the US Transportation Research Board conference in Washington DC each January. In addition, I think PIARC could do more to foster the creation of truly international thematic networks like IBEC, using the model we adopted in the ATLANTIC project with EC and Canadian funding.

But I would also like to see more small-scale, invitation-only workshops focussed on the role of ITS in network operations. These could be along the lines of those which were held on a transatlantic basis with EC funding in the STELLA and ATLANTIC thematic networks (see box).

PIARC celebrates its centenary in 2009. Its mission – to act as a leading international forum for analysis and discussion of the full spectrum of transport issues relating to roads and road transport – is more relevant than ever. There is no shortage of work to do on network operations and elsewhere.

But doing it takes time, money and energy – all of which are in short supply. So we need to make the best possible use of our partnerships with and within the ITS community, and to be realistic about what we can achieve.

[www.piarc.org](http://www.piarc.org)

[www.ankerbold.co.uk](http://www.ankerbold.co.uk)

## STELLA & ATLANTIC

ATLANTIC (A Thematic Long-term Approach to Networking for the Telematics and ITS Community) and STELLA (Sustainable Transport in Europe and Links and Liaisons with America) were both thematic network projects within the EC's 5th Framework Research & Development Programme (FP5). STELLA (2002-5) centred around common issues in transatlantic transport research.

[www.crt.umontreal.ca/atlantic](http://www.crt.umontreal.ca/atlantic)

[www.stellaproject.org](http://www.stellaproject.org)

## John Miles

Dr John Miles, of Ankerbold International, is a transport research and management consultant advising on strategic issues in ITS deployment. He spent 28 years in public service in the UK, including a two-year secondment to the EC's Transport Telematics Central Office). In 2004, he was appointed chair of PIARC's Technical Committee C1.4. He is co-editor of the *ITS Handbook* 2nd Edition, jointly with Professor Kan Chen of the University of Michigan, US.