

# Draft Estrie Transportation Plan in brief

Transports  
Québec 

A transportation system  
in a sensitive environment



## Draft Estrie Transportation Plan in brief

This brochure contains a summary of the longer report entitled *Sommaire du diagnostic et proposition d'un plan de transport pour l'Estrie* (assessment summary and draft Estrie transportation plan).

In the following pages, first the context in which the ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ) embarked upon this vast planning exercise is explained. Then a brief assessment of the current situation of transportation in the Estrie region is given, including the strengths and weaknesses of the transportation system. The assessment has made it possible to pinpoint the transportation challenges of the coming years.

The *Proposition d'un plan de transport pour Estrie* (draft Estrie transportation plan), a culmination of the analyses and thought, supplements the document. You are urged to provide your suggestions and comments on the draft plan.

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## **PLANNING TRANSPORTATION IN ESTRIE, FROM NOW UNTIL 2016**

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In 1997, the ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ) laid the groundwork for, and began to draft, a comprehensive transportation plan for Estrie. The purpose of the plan is to respond effectively to the needs of the public. The plan will have a major impact on the entire population in the next 15 years, and even after that. On the basis of an all-embracing view of the modes of transportation, the natural and human environment, land-use planning and regional economic development, the *Plan de transport de l'Estrie* will determine the priorities for the action of the MTQ until 2016.

Transportation stakeholders and the general public will participate in the drafting of the plan through information and consultation activities. I urge you to read this brochure, which contains a brief assessment of the current transportation situation in Estrie and a summary of the *Proposition d'un plan de transport pour l'Estrie*. It also indicates the ways to participate in the public consultation.

Those who want to learn more about the subject can consult the paper entitled *Sommaire du diagnostic et proposition d'un plan de transport pour l'Estrie*, as well as the other papers prepared in drafting the plan. All these documents are available for consultation at the locations indicated at the end of this brochure.

It is crucial for all organizations, groups or individuals interested in transportation in the Estrie region to examine the MTQ's present proposal and provide the department with their opinion or explain their position on the subject.

Antoine Robitaille, Eng.  
Director

## **CONTEXT IN WHICH THE *PLAN DE TRANSPORT DE L'ESTRIE* WAS DRAFTED**

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### **Why and for whom**

The *Plan de transport de l'Estrie* (the Estrie transportation plan) is part of a comprehensive process of transportation planning in Québec. It will guide the action of the MTQ in Estrie until 2016. The plan takes into consideration the region's socioeconomic development objectives, as well as government and departmental policy directions.

The territory examined corresponds to that of the Estrie administrative region (Region 05) and includes the regional county municipalities (RCMs) of Asbestos, Coaticook, Granit, Le Haut-Saint-François, Memphrémagog, La Région-Sherbrookoise and Le Val-Saint-François. The seven RCMs encompass 101 local municipalities (May 2000). The region has a population of 288 250 (1998) in a total area of 10 183 km<sup>2</sup>.

### **An environment to be protected**

A special kind of land occupancy, inherited from a form of settlement typical of the Eastern Townships, as well as a remarkably preserved natural environment give Estrie residents a living environment of exceptional quality. Proud and aware of the value of this heritage, they fervently want to preserve it. Hence, they nurture the profound hope that their environmental concerns will be considered by the managers of transportation networks and infrastructures of the region.

### **Limited financial resources**

In the last decade, as public finances were put on a sound footing, the financial resources of the Québec government became increasingly limited. In 2000-2001, the total annual budget of the Estrie division was \$61.9 million.

## **CURRENT TRANSPORTATION SITUATION IN ESTRIE**

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### **A network capable of supporting growth**

The many technical analyses and studies conducted in preparing the *Plan de transport de l'Estrie* show that, despite certain shortcomings, and although spot repairs should be made, the transportation system generally responds appropriately to the needs of Estrie's population and businesses.

Because of the good capacity reserve of the Estrie road network and a demographic outlook for very moderate growth in the region's population, it is highly unlikely that, in 15 or 20 years, transportation demand will catch up with current supply.

### **Preponderance of the road network**

Among all the means of transportation, the assessment shows the predominance of the road network for the transportation of people and goods. The assessment also highlights the generally good condition of the main roads, but notes that some roads have major deficiencies. In a number of cases, their condition justifies major intervention, which is not possible, given the current budgetary framework.

### **The environment: a major concern**

Estrie is a region where a natural environment subsists that is remarkably well preserved but sensitive to the actions of human beings. The environment is valued by the public, which wants to protect it at any price. Estrie is, in fact, one of the regions of Québec where the public's environmental concerns are strongest.

Estrie residents acknowledge the importance and need for transportation for the socioeconomic development of their region. But they hope that the management of transportation systems and infrastructures will preserve the quality of their living environment. Their main concerns are as follows:

- ◆ protection of water resources (lakes, rivers, wetlands, etc.);
- ◆ respect for the integrity and diversity of wildlife species and habitats;
- ◆ reduction of road accidents involving white-tailed deer;
- ◆ preservation and development of landscapes and elements of the heritage of the region.

## **STRENGTHS OF THE ESTRIE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

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### **A road network that effectively serves the whole of the region**

Estrie has a road network that reaches every part of its geographic space, including the most remote communities of the Sherbrooke regional centre.

### **Networks that rapidly connect to the other regions**

Autoroutes 10 and 55 provide access to the autoroute networks of the other regions of Québec (autoroutes 15, 20, 30 and 35) and New England (Autoroute 91).

### **A road network with a good capacity reserve**

With the exception of a few problems here and there, the Estrie road network is in no way congested. Its capacity reserve should enable it to easily handle the increase in traffic anticipated for at least the next 15 years.

### **Major road infrastructures in good condition**

The autoroutes, the majority of the provincial roads and most of the regional roads are in good condition. These arteries are the most important for economic development.

### **Appropriate road safety conditions**

Estrie's road safety record compares favourably with that of the other regions of Québec, although the number of collisions with large animals as a proportion of all accidents is the highest in Québec.

### **A collective transportation network that serves the regional centre well**

The City of Sherbrooke and its immediate suburbs (46% of the regional population) are fully served by public transportation, paratransit and taxi transportation, providing, in that urban centre, a true alternative to private transportation.

### **Good access for tourism in the western part of the region**

The road network provides visitors with good access to the western part of the region through autoroutes 10, 55 and 410, and tourists flock to that part of the region.

## **WEAKNESSES OF THE ESTRIE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

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### **An inconsistent road network**

Although most roads are relatively new and in good condition, about 39% of the primary road network<sup>1</sup> is old and has major deficiencies. Some roads must be rebuilt, but, because of the financial resources available, only resurfacing is done at the present time.

### **A highly road-dependent transportation system**

Roads are by far the transportation infrastructure most used. This situation will probably prevail, because Estrie residents have very few alternatives. It is therefore important to give particular attention to preserving roads. In the current context of budgetary constraints, this heavy dependence on roads constitutes a weakness.

### **A system for transporting people that is closely tied to automobiles**

In Estrie, the only means of transporting people throughout the region is the “self-driven” automobile. Outside the Sherbrooke urban area, virtually all personal travel is by automobile.

### **A feeling that cross-town travel is often unsafe**

Estrie is characterized by a great many small urban areas crossed by major roads. Particularly because of the passage of heavy vehicles and the speed of transit traffic, people living in these localities often feel unsafe and complain of a deterioration of their quality of life.

### **Difficult east-west travel south of Sherbrooke**

East-west travel south of Sherbrooke is difficult because of the lack of a periurban artery. Traffic—particularly truck traffic—must take Highway 143 and cross the Lennoxville and Sherbrooke downtown areas.

The intersection of highways 108 and 143 in Lennoxville is already a problem, and projections indicate that the section of Highway 108 located immediately east of Highway 143 will have problems by 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> The primary road network consists of autoroutes, provincial roads, regional roads and collector roads.



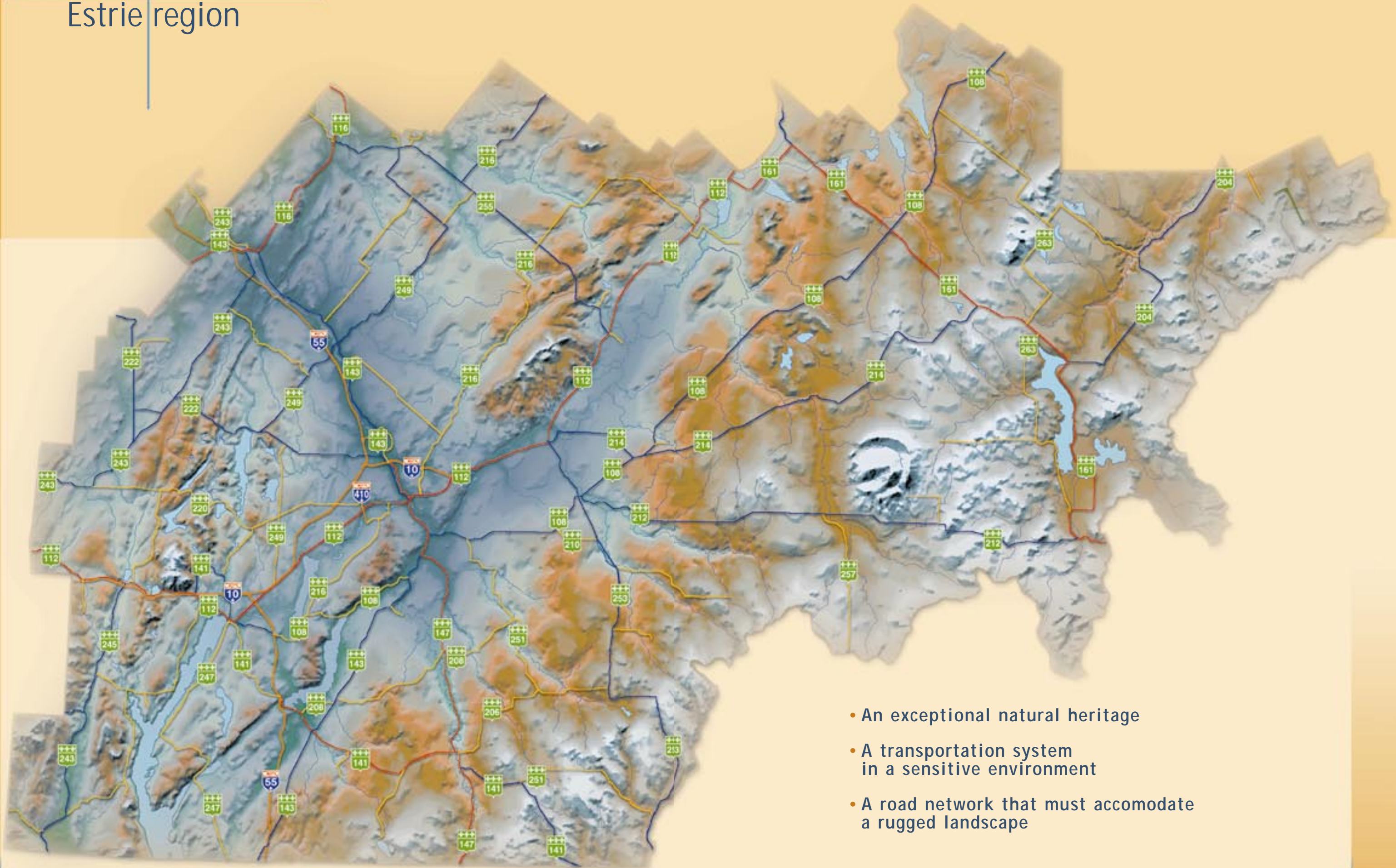
**Road corridors affected by often rampant urbanization**

As elsewhere in Québec, urban sprawl affects the primary road network in Estrie. Rampant urbanization along the network means a proliferation of accesses. This in turn leads to the multiplication of sources of conflict with transit and local traffic, resulting in serious constraints on road safety and proper road use.

**A lack of integration of collective transportation**

The region has all sorts of businesses and organizations responsible for specialized transportation, such as school, public, paratransit, interurban and taxi transportation. But many municipalities are not served by one or more of these modes of transportation. Furthermore, it is doubtful indeed that public transportation outside the Sherbrooke urban area will be substantially expanded.

# The Estrie region



- An exceptional natural heritage
- A transportation system in a sensitive environment
- A road network that must accommodate a rugged landscape

## **MAIN CHALLENGES OF THE COMING YEARS**

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### **Preservation of the road network**

In the coming years, the MTQ must, as a priority, devote its efforts to solving the problem of the accelerated aging of part of the primary road network and of several bridges.

Considering the current budgetary framework and the anticipated increase in traffic flow and trucking, these roads and bridges will continue to deteriorate to the point that their upgrading will use up a major portion of the MTQ's financial resources. Furthermore, during that time, the quality of the service offered users will deteriorate. There is no doubt that the preservation of the road network poses a monumental challenge, and the MTQ may have to make difficult choices.

### **Safety and traffic flow in certain road corridors in urban areas**

Rampant urbanization is already prevalent along several sections of the primary road network, mainly in sectors with high urban subdivision pressure. The anticipated increase in traffic and trucking will only amplify the problems. In addition, demographic increases, even moderate ones, will foster an expansion of urbanization.

### **Southern bypass of the Sherbrooke urban area**

Studies have clearly shown the need for a new link, south of Sherbrooke, that would serve as a periurban artery for local traffic and a bypass route for transit traffic. The RCM of La Région-Sherbrookoise will account for 60% of the increase in population anticipated in Estrie until 2016, and with the inevitable boost in heavy traffic, the current problems linked to, among other things, the large number of trucks in transit through the downtown areas of Lennoxville and Sherbrooke will necessarily be magnified.

### **Rise in the number of requests for socioeconomic development support**

Because of the generally good service provided by the Estrie road network, few development projects should arise in the medium term. However, of late, there has been a rise in the number of requests for development of the network with a view to supporting projects of an economic nature.

Hence, the MTQ should increasingly incorporate socioeconomic considerations into its approach to project analysis. Given its financial resources, it should also develop a partnership approach to be taken with the promoters and beneficiaries of these projects with a view to sharing responsibilities and costs.

### **Special needs of an aging population**

The aging of the population will boost demands for better services. Older persons are more aware of the various elements of the road, such as the condition of the pavement, markings, vertical signs, lighting and winter maintenance.

In urban areas, older persons are the most affected by traffic: noise, speed, vibrations, dust, a feeling that they are not safe and so on. The number of complaints about nuisances and lack of safety is already on the rise in Estrie and should escalate with the aging of the population.

Moreover, with the aging of the population, the number of people with reduced mobility will balloon. This will mean an increase in requests for better adapted transportation services.

### **Greater environmental concerns**

Estrie residents are already sensitive to the quality of their living environment, and that awareness will increase even more in the years to come. The environmental education of young people, the aging of the population, the availability of better information, the vitality of environmental groups and organizations, and the expansion of general environmental awareness work together to shift perceptions in this regard.

Estrie residents are aware of the potential impact of transportation activities on the environment and increasingly challenge the MTQ and local municipalities with a view to better environmental management of transportation.

## **DRAFT ESTRIE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

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The *Plan de transport de l'Estrie* hinges on five main policy directions, with a major environmental concern as a backdrop. Each policy direction has specific objectives, with a number of intervention thrusts and means of action. As a whole, it forms the *Proposition d'un plan de transport pour Estrie*. In the following pages, the five main policy directions are briefly summarized. A table in the appendix provides an exhaustive overview of the plan.

### **Reconcile transportation infrastructures with the environment**

The MTQ is already very sensitive to the quality of the natural and human environment of the region, and it intends to step up its efforts to incorporate environmental protection even more into transportation management. To this end, it makes a commitment to take into consideration the environment concerns of Estrie residents in regard to transportation.

These concerns were voiced by the main regional partners in environmental matters at a consultation meeting held in the first stage of preparation of the *Plan de transport de l'Estrie*.

### **Prioritize intervention to preserve and improve current transportation infrastructures**

This policy direction gives priority to the preservation and improvement of existing transportation infrastructures and facilities, as opposed to developing new ones. However, this approach does not exclude the creation of new links when justified by conditions and needs.

### **Improve safety**

Road safety remains an MTQ priority. This is why it has been agreed, in particular, to pursue efforts to establish safety conditions consistent with road function. Moreover, the MTQ intends to continue its analysis of the safety of cross-town links; it plans to develop a partnership approach with the municipalities in order to set up traffic management programs in problem cases.

In addition, the MTQ hopes to develop, with the partners concerned, monitoring mechanisms for the sound management of road corridors, particularly through better control of urbanization and road access.

Lastly, the MTQ has resolved to combat the very serious problem of collisions with white-tailed deer. In Estrie, outside Sherbrooke's urban zone, one road accident in three on the primary road network involves that animal.

### **Support the socioeconomic development of the Estrie region**

The transportation system is an excellent instrument for supporting socioeconomic development, provided it is adapted to the needs and aspirations of the public and businesses. Hence, the MTQ will pursue its research aimed at providing a better knowledge of the needs of the Estrie region in terms of the transport of people and goods.

Moreover, action on the network will be planned so as to maintain and improve the quality and performance of the region's major roads, while supporting, as a priority, projects with a substantial socioeconomic impact.

The MTQ also makes a commitment to promote the development of the tourism industry, particularly by ensuring an efficient link with the region's major tourism poles.

### **Strengthen alternative means of transportation**

Through this policy direction, the MTQ seeks to facilitate the implementation of alternative means of transportation. Among other action, it intends to support and promote rail transportation, encourage the integration of collective passenger transportation, foster bicycle use as a means of transportation and facilitate pedestrian travel in urban areas.

## NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

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Preparation of the *Proposition d'un plan de transport pour l'Estrie* highlighted the fact that the funds required to respond to the needs demonstrated exceed the anticipated financial resources. Hence, a consultation of the public and of the main regional partners is crucial if Estrie is to have an effective transportation plan that reflects the needs of the region and is realistic as regards the resources available.

It is in this context that the Estrie division submits the *Proposition d'un plan de transport pour l'Estrie* to public consultation. It hopes that from that consultation will stem enlightened and feasible choices that will guide management of the transportation system in Estrie for years to come.



## TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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The draft transportation plan stage includes a process of consultation with the main transportation stakeholders and the general public.

### **Main transportation stakeholders**

The main transportation stakeholders will be consulted in special meetings to be held in 2001. The content of the draft plan and the terms of the consultation will be given to them at those meetings. Participants can then ask questions and make comments about the draft plan. Subsequently, they can submit written opinions, reports and briefs explaining their position on the draft plan.

The transportation stakeholders to be consulted more specifically are as follows:

- ◆ the advisory committee for the Estrie transportation plan (composed of various representatives of the transportation sector);
- ◆ provincial MNAs from the region;
- ◆ regional county municipalities (RCMs);
- ◆ the Conférence administrative régionale (CAR), the regional administrative conference;
- ◆ the Conseil régional de développement de l'Estrie (CRD-Estrie), the Estrie regional development council;
- ◆ collective transportation organizations;
- ◆ environmental partners.

### **General public**

With regard to the public consultation process, any interested person can examine all the documents prepared as part of the *Plan de transport de l'Estrie*, and then send comments in the form of a written opinion, report or brief. The table in the appendix gives a list of the documents available and the locations where they can be consulted. The consultation locations are shown on the map on the back of the brochure inserted in the pocket of this document.

## **Schedule**

All opinions, reports and briefs must be sent before November 16, 2001 to:

Ministère des Transports  
Direction de l'Estrie  
200, rue Belvédère Nord, bureau 2.02  
Sherbrooke (Québec) J1H 4A9

Telephone: (819) 820-3280  
Fax: (819) 820-3118  
E-mail: [dte@mtq.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:dte@mtq.gouv.qc.ca)

Following the consultation period, the MTQ will prepare a report providing a summary of the opinions and comments gathered. In early 2002, the *Plan de transport de l'Estrie* will be made public. It will reflect the results of the MTQ's work and of the public consultation.

**AVAILABILITY OF CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS**

<b>Estrie transportation plan</b>					
<b>Consultation location</b>	<b>Technical studies<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Summaries<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Assessment<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Sommaire du diagnostic et proposition d'un plan de transport pour l'Estrie<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Draft Estrie Transportation Plan-in Brief<sup>4</sup></b>
Estrie division (MTQ)	√	√	√	√	√
Service centres (MTQ)			√	√	√
Website (MTQ )			√	√	√
RCMs			√	√	√
Municipalities				√	√
Public libraries				√	√
Communication-Québec				√	√
Documentation centres (MTQ)			√	√	√

1 The technical studies consist of some 40 documents (10 to 50 pages each) and 104 maps dealing with the various aspects of transportation in Estrie. They are useful for understanding the details of the particular themes.

2 Each summary contains an account of the technical studies conducted for a specific theme. There are seven documents of 100 to 200 pages each.

3 This 120-page document contains an assessment of the situation of transportation in Estrie. It is accompanied by 62 separate maps.

4 This 100-page document contains a summary of the assessment summary and presents the *Draft Estrie Transportation Plan*. It is strongly recommended that it be consulted.