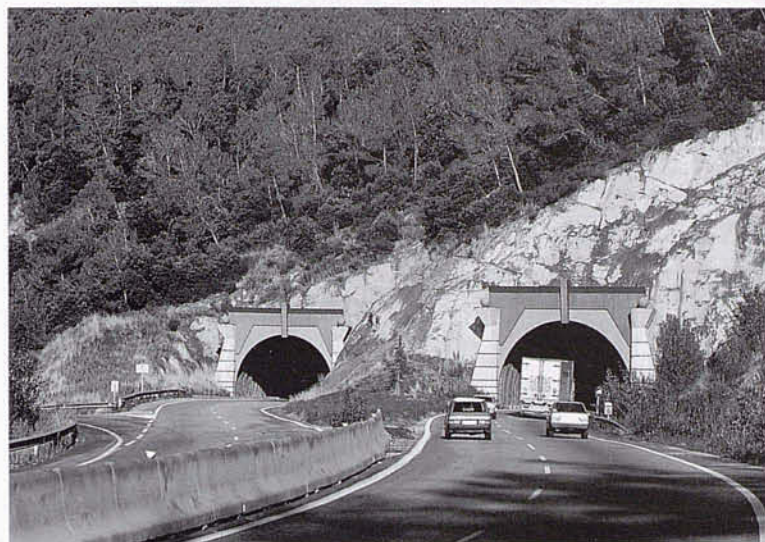


CATALONIA: A NEW ROAD MAP



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THE MAP OF THE CATALAN ROADS AND MOTORWAYS HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY IN THE LAST FEW YEARS. NOT ONLY HAVE BAD ROADS BEEN REPAIRED, BUT MANY NEW SECTIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN BUILT.

JOAN SUBIRÀ | ROCAMORA JOURNALIST

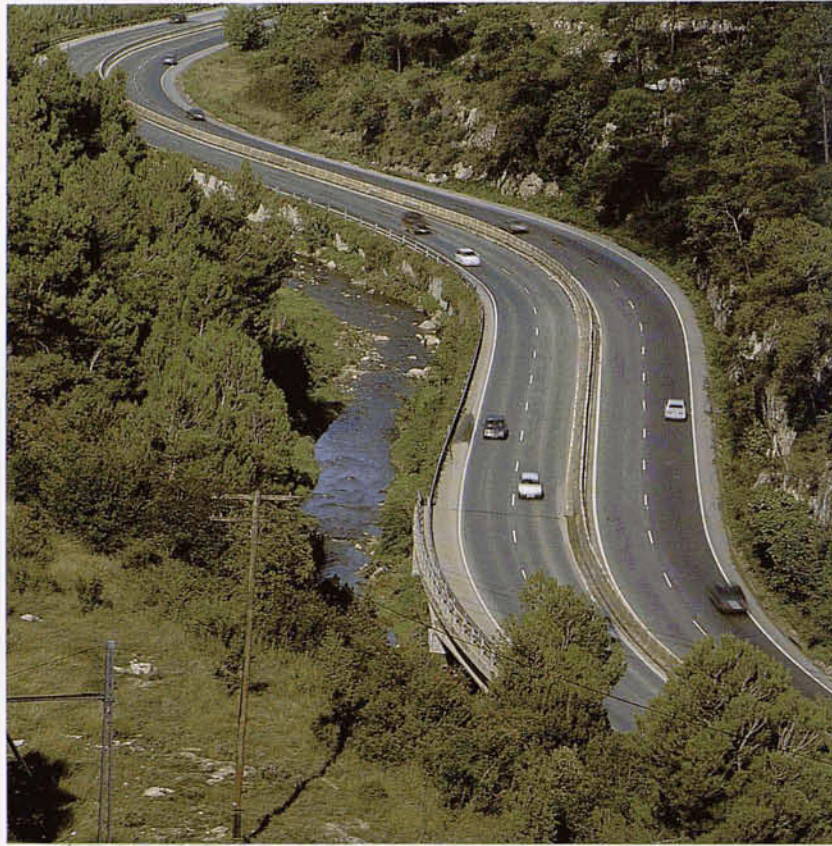
The map of the roads and motorways in service in Catalonia has improved substantially in the last ten years. Not only have many bad or narrow roads been straightened or widened, but a considerable quantity of new sections have also been built. The amount of building work put into roads in Catalonia in ten years must be much higher than that of the preceding forty years. But the most innovative aspect of this work—most of which can be attributed to the Ministry of Public Works and to the Generalitat—is that it has been adapted to planning established by the Catalan parliament. Now there is an official road map that breaks with the previous radial pattern and, essentially,

returns to the grid system planned in the time of the Generalitat of the Second Republic. The plan now being executed ensures that all the towns and villages of Catalonia are linked by road to a city or important town of more than 10,000 inhabitants and less than three quarters of an hour away by car.

Ten years ago, Catalonia had three radial motorways from Barcelona: to Mataró (A-19), to Granollers (A-17) and to Terrassa (A-18), respectively; and two motorways that linked up with those outside the Principality: the A-7, from the French border to the País Valencià—passing through Girona and Tarragona—; and the A-2, from Barcelona to Saragossa, passing through Lleida. As a

curious case, a good stretch of the A-2 coincides with a stretch of the A-7, from El Papiol to La Bisbal del Penedès. The stretch of the A-2 between El Papiol and Barcelona, along with the A-17 from Barcelona to Montmeló, means that the A-7 motorway, parallel to the coast, is practically a radial road centred on Barcelona. The N-II road, from Lleida to Girona and the border, also goes through Barcelona following a radial criterion with respect to the capital of Catalonia.

The radial course of the A-7 motorway, lying close to the coast, has been both a cause and an effect of the demographic and industrial concentration along this strip of land. From the Pyre-



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N-152 ROAD FROM BARCELONA TO VIC

nees to the Ebro, in a corridor less than fifty kilometres wide, is concentrated three quarters of the population of Catalonia.

So as to balance the country and improve communications with the interior of Catalonia, the roads plan laid out north-south axes and transverse axes. The first of these to begin to take shape was the Llobregat Axis, from Barcelona to Puigcerdà, which forms part of the European itinerary E-9. Its most emblematic engineering work, a landmark in the Catalan communications network, was the Cadí tunnel and its accesses. The tunnel not only communicated the Bages, Berguedà and Cerdanya regions, but also eliminated a natural barrier between the Llobregat and Segre valleys. And, at the same time, between the Barcelonès region and the Pyrenees, following the most direct route to Paris.

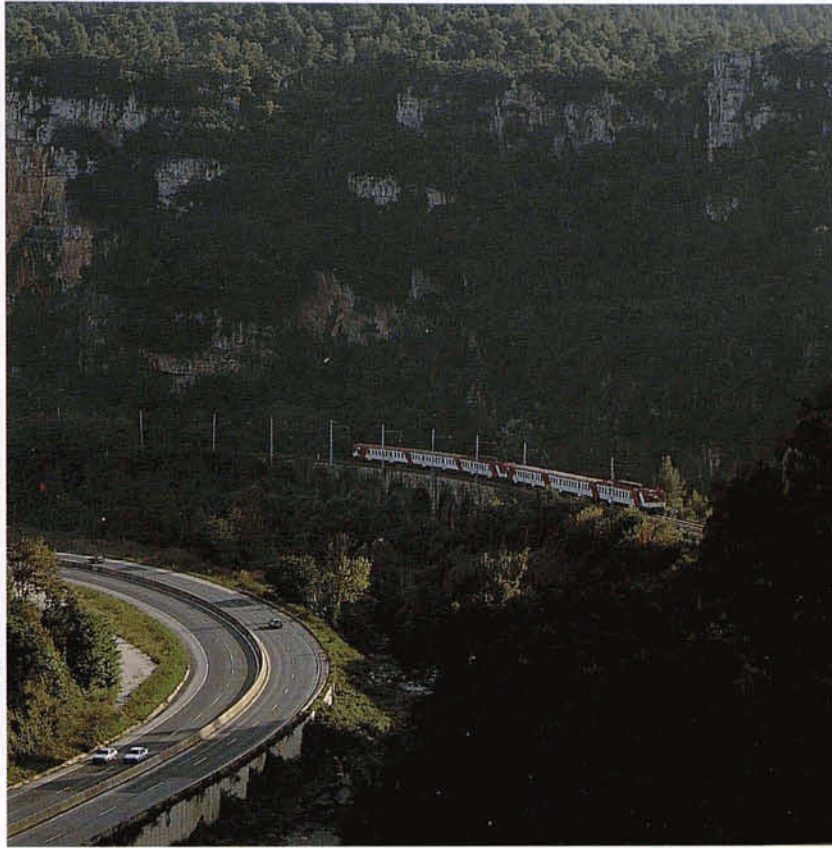
The Llobregat Axis has been backed up with the improvements to the C-1411 road from Arbrera to the Cadí tunnel. All the roads through the towns and

villages along the Llobregat, including Manresa and Berga, have been diverted along two-lane by-passes which can be widened to four lanes. In addition, the Montserrat toll motorway has been opened from Manresa to Terrassa, Rubí and Sant Cugat del Vallès. At Sant Cugat it connects with another emblematic achievement of recent public works—the Vallvidrera tunnels, which open up a new route from the Vallès to Barcelona via Sarrià. The success of this last section of the Llobregat Axis—the five Vallvidrera tunnels—has even taken the promoters by surprise. On the other hand, the motorway from Sant Cugat to Rubí and Manresa has less demand.

The second north-south axis, which is almost completed, with two lanes in either direction, is the N-152 from Barcelona to Vic. Widening this road has called for important engineering works such as the twin tunnels at El Figueró and the crossing of the bed of the river Congost at El Figueró and Aiguafreda, as well as a series of large by-passes

like the ones at Mollet del Vallès and Tona. North of Vic, the road has not yet been straightened, but improvements have been made to the section known as El Purgatori and are now being carried out on the curves of Orís and Terradelles as far as Ripoll, with a tunnel at the bend at La Farga de Bebiè. Previous to this, the Ripoll by-pass had been built, linking up with the improved stretch of the road from Ripoll to Ribes de Freser.

To the west, the route most improved by engineering works to straighten and widen the road has been the Ebro Axis. This has been practically completed between Amposta and Maials. Before long it will reach Lleida. To the north of the capital of the Segrià the work of widening the road from Balaguer to Sort is almost finished. This road crosses two impressive gorges, that of Terradets and that of Collegats. In each case, tunnels have been built, one in either direction, so as not to damage the landscape. The Collegats section is the responsibility of the Ministry of



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ROAD AND RAILWAY FROM BARCELONA TO VIC

Public Works, because it forms part of the Pyrenean Axis; the Terradets section is the responsibility of the Generalitat. The work that will do most to change the radial layout of the main roads of Catalonia is the Transverse Axis, which will link Girona and Lleida without having to go through Barcelona. At the eastern end, the Generalitat has started work on the section between Girona and Vic, after many years of doubts and discussions over the route it should follow. But it is at the western end where the work is most advanced, because between Lleida and Cervera it coincides with the straightening of the N-II and is the responsibility of the Ministry. The sections between Lleida and Tàrraga are already in use. Work is now in progress on the Lleida by-pass, which will divert traffic to the north of the city, the Cervera by-pass and the road between Cervera and Tàrraga. The N-II has also been straightened between Igualada and Martorell, with a second Bruc tunnel for the west-east traffic and a by-pass at Esparraguera

with important viaducts. The River Llobregat is about to be canalized between Martorell and Molins de Rei, which will serve to continue the straightening of the N-II, with four lanes from Martorell to Barcelona's coastal ring-road. This will complete the southernmost section of the Llobregat Axis. Another important construction now in service is the Garraf motorway (A-16) from Castelldefels to Sitges. The terrain and the importance of protecting the countryside have called for the construction of a series of tunnels and viaducts. In the very near future this toll motorway will continue as far as El Vendrell. It is worth mentioning other important improvements to the roads, such as some along the Costa Brava, with by-passes to avoid traffic jams in the summer. The Pyrenean Axis has improved between Puigcerdà and Seu d'Urgell, also between Besalú and Olot; and work has started on the Capsacosta and Bianya tunnels. The section of the C-152 between Pasteral and Amer has

been improved, as well as the section between Girona and Banyoles, which now by-passes the capital of the Pla de l'Estany; and those between Valls and Montblanc and between Igualada and Capellades; the C-1313 has been rerouted round the reservoir of Rialb. At the same time as the A-7 motorway is being widened with an extra lane in either direction between Granollers and Hostalric, the Generalitat has started a new motorway which will link Granollers and Mataró, with a tunnel under the Coll de Parpers. This new communications route between the Maresme and the Vallès Oriental will be the first section of Barcelona's future "fourth ring-road", which will go through Sabadell, Terrassa and Martorell. The Ministry, for its part, has started the Mataró by-pass, which will form part of the Maresme motorway, a continuation of the A-19 as far as Palafolls. This prolongation, which was conceived as an alternative to the N-II and therefore free of charge, like the main road, will finally be a toll motorway. ●