

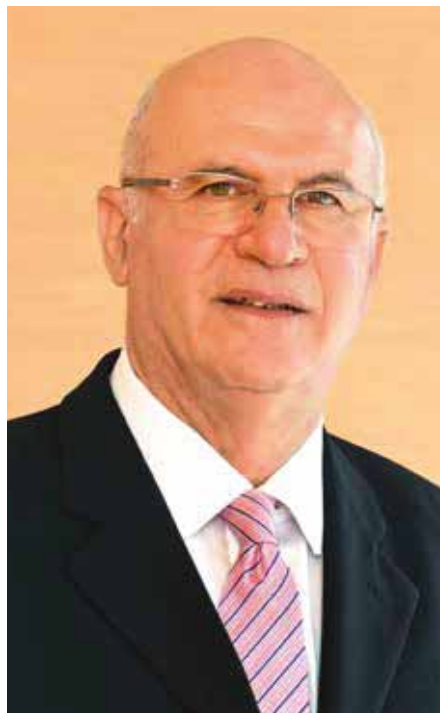
# Roads to Recovery

IRF president **Bill Halkias** shares the Federation's view on post-Covid

The COVID-19 pandemic is having extensive ramifications for the entire planet, resulting in an unprecedented disruption of transportation. The halt in production and decline in consumption has resulted in the steepest economic downturn of modern times. The International Labor Association estimates that up to 305 million full-time jobs could be lost. These devastating effects have also taken their toll on the transport sector, which has been significantly impacted by reduced mobility in urban and interurban networks.

During the March/April lockdown, some European toll operators lost up to 90% of traffic and 80% of revenue.

To counteract the grave cross-sectoral economic impacts, governments have already started to release significant stimulus packages. Many of these packages are being directed into infrastructure, known to provide significant short-term benefits such as job creation, whilst further providing wide societal benefits in the long term. With estimates that 1% of GDP invested in infrastructure delivers an economic output increase by 0.4% in the same year and by 1.5% in four years, these choices are easy to comprehend. The effect is even greater for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), which are estimated to be able to deliver a US\$4 return to every \$1 invested in infrastructure.



The "return to normal" may never come, as the post-COVID-19 "normality" is likely to differ from anything experienced thus far. Recovery provides opportunities and could become a catalyst for positive change. Policy interventions, the speed and scale of which were previously unimaginable, are being implemented to save lives and force a re-

evaluation of how best to operate. There are learning factors to draw from in order to shape a sustainable recovery.

As the stimulus packages are being deployed governments must be well informed in order to design their recovery and reset the transport sector onto a more sustainable and resilient path, ensuring more accessible and inclusive mobility. The road sector can play an important role by ensuring the desired reset and by supporting the economic recovery process overall.

The collective task should be to create a truly safe, sustainable and efficient multimodal transportation system. Roads are a fundamental piece of this multimodal ecosystem; hence it is important that recovery includes road investments.

**Here are some good reasons to do so:**

**1: Efficient and well-maintained roads are a necessity**

Under lockdown, essential workers and the delivery of goods had to be ensured. As national borders closed and border controls were reintroduced, many facilities, such as fuel stations, truck stops and overnight accommodation were closed, making it a challenge for truck drivers to plan their journeys. More locally, in many countries demand has surged for home deliveries. Indications are that this demand is unlikely to recede once lockdowns are lifted and we need to account for this change.

Figure 1. Percentage change in road deaths in April 2020 compared to road deaths in April 2017-2019 (three years average) and corresponding percentage change in traffic volume.

ES\* - data on road deaths on non-urban roads and represent road deaths within 24 hours only. IT\*\* - data on road deaths at the site of the collision only. SK\*\*\* - road deaths within 24 hours. BE† - an estimation of road deaths over the period between 15/03 and 30/04 based on a survey by VIAS in 13 police zones. NL‡ - data based on police records and not comparable with BRON (Statistics Netherlands) publication.

