NEWS RELEASE

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Local Road Safety Initiatives Deserve European Boost

***22 November 2007, Paris* – Together the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) [1] and the French NGO *Prévention Routière* [2] highlight the importance of local road safety initiatives. Today the two organisations held a Transport Safety Lecture in Paris on the occasion of the *Echarpes d'Or* (Golden Sash) 2007 ceremony, during which seven French communities, from villages (under 1,000 inhabitants) to large cities (over 1 million), were fêted for their remarkable road safety initiatives undertaken at grass-root level. [3] The awards were handed out by the State Secretary for Transport Mr Dominique Bussereau.**

Started in 1990, the *Echarpes d'Or* is a competition for France's local communities on road safety improvement and accident reduction. During the past 17 years it has grown into the leading national platform for promoting local initiatives in key areas such as infrastructure management and raising compliance with traffic law. There is a special prize dedicated to children and young people which awards measures suggested and implemented for the young, by the young.

The importance of urban localities for road safety cannot be underestimated. According to Jean-Yves Salaün, Deputy General Manager of *Prévention Routière* : *"In France, two thirds of road collisions, half involving injuries and a quarter resulting in road deaths occur in the urban areas. Of all the road accident victims, 80% are killed or injured in their own localities. Local action by local citizens is crucial ."*

To date over 1,600 local French communities have taken part in *Echarpes d'Or* contests and 157 of them have been awarded for their innovative contributions. The *Echarpes d'Or* competition has brought to life a new pro-active road safety culture led from the streets of France. The competition also encourages local authorities and residents to compete with each other for a safer environment. Jean-Yves Salaün suggests: "the next logical step would be to develop it into an international competition among local communities in Europe".

A pan-European perspective was given with presentations at ETSC's annual Transport Safety lecture by France's neighbours, Belgium and Spain. Peter Vansevenant from the City of Ghent in Belgium shared his experience of successful measures implemented in Ghent such as introducting multiple 30 km/h areas and launching free night buses. Cristina Pou from Barcelona City Council in Spain spoke of how the city was tackling the problem of motorbike collisions.

"Today's exchange removes any doubt that road safety can't and shouldn't be the responsibility of governments alone," said Antonio Avenoso, Deputy Director of ETSC. *"In order to mobilise the support of citizens to take a personal interest in road safety we must involve every individual road user in finding solutions to traffic hazards. Community action creates a feeling of commitment and responsibility that resonates with everyone at the local and regional level."*

France is also home to one of the most amazing road safety success stories and has reduced road traffic deaths by 35% in the past 4 years. The new French President Nicolas Sarkozy has adopted Jacques Chirac's legacy of making road safety a number one priority. This emphasis should also push forward the European road safety agenda next year when France takes over the EU presidency.

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Notes to Editors:

(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of transport crashes and casualties in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. It brings together 38 organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.be

(2) Since its creation in 1949, *Prévention Routière* has built up and fostered relations with over 36,000 local communities in France acting through its extensive regional network. This process has gone hand in hand with the growth in competence of local mayor's offices in the area of road safety after the adoption of decentralisation laws in the country. www.preventionroutiere.asso.fr

(3) Winners of the *Echarpes d'Or* 2007 competition:

- **Urban conglomeration of 1 000 residents:** SAINT-MARS-LA-REORTHE (Vendée), 850 residents
- **Urban conglomeration of 1 000 to 5 000 residents:** LA GACILLY (Morbihan), 2 277 residents
- **Urban conglomeration of 5 000 to 10 000 residents:** LOUDEAC (Côtes-d'Armor), 9 300 residents
- **Urban conglomeration of 10 000 to 50 000 residents:** MARTIGUES (Bouches-du-Rhône), 44 256 residents
- **Urban conglomeration of more than 50 000 residents:** COMMUNAUTE URBAINE DE STRASBOURG (Bas-Rhin), 451 240 residents
- **General Councils or Regional Councils:** CONSEIL GENERAL DE SEINE-MARITIME (Seine-Maritime), 1 300 000 residents
- **Special Prize for the Children and Youth Councils:** CAPBRETON (Landes), 6 667 residents
- **Special Prize of the Jury:** CARCASSONNE (Aude), 46 216 residents