

# REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON URBAN TRANSPORT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

## QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMPETITIVENESS OF CITIES: A CHALLENGE FOR PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

JANUARY 22 & 23, 2008 – SKHIRAT - MOROCCO

### CONTEXT

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In Africa and the Middle East, fast growth and expansion of urbanization have triggered a high demand for urban transport. This demand is accompanied by an alarming increase in motorized transport with the resulting high levels of congestion, obstacles to economic development, pollution peaks and elevated costs for energy, which is often imported. Moreover, proliferating uncontrolled informal or small-scale transports and shared taxis of different sizes, and the exhaustion, not to say the collapse of public agencies and private companies aggravate difficulties and intensify social exclusion for those who do not have access to transport services or who do not have the means to pay for motorized transport. Thus, decision makers—central and local authorities—must deal with complex situations that lead them to undertake ambitious urban transport policies, both technically and financially, concerning particularly public transport infrastructure (for example, the RFR network in Tunis, the light metro in Cairo or in Algiers, or the tramway project in Rabat).

Urban transport management has become a vital issue, all the more necessary now in the fight against global warming. Urban transport management will also help control city expansion, stabilize energy demand, preserve the environment, and in general maximize the economic and social benefits of urbanization. Central governments and local authorities have mobilized resources and have taken many initiatives in these areas. International institutions and development aid associations lend their support to these efforts, which are carried on more and more often by decentralized cooperation.

However, decision makers and professionals in charge of urban transport issues often lack perspective. Opportunities to develop experience sharing and knowledge exchanges are far too scarce in the region. There are practically no local networks on these subjects even though innovative initiatives have already started in some countries.

In view of the situation, CODATU, the World Bank, UNEP/Blue Plan, the Europe MENA networks of cities supported by the city of Marseilles, and MedCités have decided to organize a regional workshop on urban transport in the Mediterranean region intended to become a regular event. Every two years, decision-makers, local officials and professionals in charge of urban transport could meet in one of the Mediterranean countries to take stock of these issues and to benefit from debates and analysis in different countries worldwide.

The Government of Morocco, eager to implement a new urban transport policy, has offered to host the first regional workshop.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

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The objective of the workshop is to **develop open and constructive exchanges on new ways to approach urban mobility in Mediterranean cities to face the challenges of sustainable development: quality of life and competitiveness of cities**. Decision-makers, high government authorities, and local officials in charge of urban issues, more particularly urban transport, will have the opportunity to meet and to share their experiences, to confront their points of view, and to determine points of reference that will guide their actions.

Within this framework, a draft guide of recommendations will be presented and discussed as a conclusion to the workshop.

## **WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION**

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### **Thematic Framework:**

Institutional matters, just as much as the types of investments and technical considerations, are key issues in urban transport. In view of this context, the workshop will focus on the **organization, planning, and financing of urban transport**.

Workshop sessions will be organized around four specific topics:

- Institutional organization, planning, and citizen participation
- Economic issues, financing (public, private, PPPs), and fares/pricing
- Transport modes for quality services (bus, tramway, metro, etc.)
- Traffic management and parking policy

As an introduction to the workshop, the current situation of urban transport in Mediterranean countries will be assessed. Experts will then present case studies, theoretical analysis, and field studies. Case studies will not be limited to Mediterranean cities and will include reports on other cities in Europe and South America.

### **Date, Duration, Location, and Languages:**

The **two-day** workshop will be held at the **invitation of the Government of Morocco** on **January 22 & 23, 2008**, in **Skhirat**, Morocco, a few kilometers south of Rabat.

French, English, and Arab will be the languages used during the workshop with simultaneous translation available for all.

### **Participants:**

The workshop is addressed to **decision makers, professionals, high public officials (State and local), elected representatives, and persons in charge of urban transport**.

Besides Moroccan participants, 60 to 70 persons are also expected to participate from countries in the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia), the Middle East (Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Yemen, etc.) and from European countries.

### **Follow-up:**

A guide of recommendations will be distributed to decision-makers and persons in charge of urban transport. The guide will take into account the discussions carried out during the workshop and will be based on preparatory and associated work, supervised by a scientific committee and including mainly case studies prepared by UNEP/Blue Plan, the French Development Agency and the World Bank. Training sessions could be organized using the abundant material collected. All the participants will receive a CD with all the presentations, photos/videos of debates, and the guide of recommendations. The information will also be available on the Internet at [www.euromedina.org](http://www.euromedina.org)

## **URBAN TRANSPORT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION (EAST AND SOUTH)**

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### **1 Urban Transport Diagnosis**

According to population studies, the urban population of eastern and southern Mediterranean countries currently estimated at 165 million will increase annually by 4 million for an average annual increase of almost 2.5%. Urbanization should rise from 64% in 2004 to almost 75% in 2025. All in all, by 2025, the urban population in the region will have increased by approximately 80 million. In addition to this population growth, widespread spatial expansion, sometimes due to illegal extensions but also to a type of horizontal habitat, results in extremely different densities in urban centers and peripheral areas. Cairo spreads over a surface of 46 km (north-south) by 35 km (east-west) while Istanbul covers an area of almost 100 kilometers. Moreover, urban mobility has now a metropolitan scope with neighboring cities sharing the same space for daily transports. Consequently, the limits of the central urban area are no longer applicable for a relevant approach of urban transport issues. These changes in territorial scales, which characterize urban expansion and the metropolization process, entail additional difficulties for urban transport management, particularly at institutional levels.

#### **Lower, yet increasing, levels of urban mobility**

Levels of urban mobility in large cities south and east of the Mediterranean seem relatively low compared to North Mediterranean cities and other regions of the world. By the year 2000, rates for motorized transport per person per day ranged from 0.75 in Algiers to 1.2 in Tunis. However, individual transport is increasing due to several factors among which economic growth plays a determining role.

Walking remains the most common means of transportation accounting for 30 to 50% of the trips surveyed. Besides being a natural mode of transportation for short trips, pedestrian transport is sometimes used for longer distances in replacement of deficient public transport, or by certain underprivileged groups whose purchasing power is too low to pay public transport fares. Contrary to other regions in the world, there are practically no bicycles, but in some cities (Sfax in Tunisia, Moroccan cities, etc.) motorized two-wheelers are present, even if their use tends to decline.

#### **Relatively low and uneven levels of motorized transport**

Levels of motorized transport (number of private vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants) in countries south and east of the Mediterranean are on the whole relatively low (between 70 and 160 vehicles per 1,000 inh. in 2003) compared to the North Mediterranean region (490 vehicles per 1,000 inh. in 2003) and to other regions in the world. The situation, in constant evolution, varies slightly depending on the city. Beirut is the exception with a very high rate of 350. A trend towards a strong increase in motorized transport is observed in most cities due to policies for liberalization of imports, higher incomes, and aspirations of middle classes eager to own an automobile.

#### **Less public transportation users... more private vehicles**

In some Mediterranean cities, the number of private vehicles has increased to the point of accounting for 50% (and in some cases even more) of all motorized transport. Even if public passenger transport is still in the leading position in most cities, its predominance is gradually being threatened, particularly in Algiers, Casablanca, Tunis, and Teheran. Beirut, where private vehicles account for almost two thirds of urban trips, is atypical in this sense.

It appears in fact that the supply of public passenger transport, particularly that of the formal sector, cannot satisfy the ever-increasing demand. The consequences of the resulting low service levels of public urban transport systems are:

- Overcrowded vehicles, unsuitable for passenger comfort
- Long and uncertain waiting times, affecting the reliability of programmed activity schedules, particularly for work
- Long trips with the resulting fatigue and detrimental effects on quality of life
- And sometimes even no service available in certain urban areas

Deficient public transport services encourage users to seek other transportation modes: more adequate small-scale transports, or individual transport modes for those who can afford them.

## **The key role of small-scale public transport**

During the last several decades, small-scale transports have developed amid public transport modes. Depending on the city, these include shared taxis and different types of mini or minibuses in Morocco, Cairo, or Damascus, vans in cities in Algeria, services in Beirut, etc. These modes of transportation actually play a key role in public urban transport with several thousands of vehicles in each city and account for a significant number of motorized trips, urban and periurban. Tunis is an exception in that minibuses (rentals) are only used for interurban trips.

Their success stems from their capacity to adapt to users' needs; however, they also contribute to traffic congestion and pollution in high-density urban zones and their fees weigh down family budgets.

## **Maintaining or developing special bus services for employees**

Difficulties encountered by public transports to meet the increasing demand have led to development of alternative transport services and modes. Private operators providing special transport services for employees and students have flourished to the detriment of public services.

## **Increasing congestion of urban roads**

The urban road network has many problems in terms of capacity, structure, and management of intersections. The diagnosis reached for a city in Morocco could apply to most Mediterranean cities:

- Inadequate capacity of the main axes of the primary urban road system
- Lack of bypass roads
- Unstructured network (no defined road hierarchy)
- Bad traffic management in urban centers (deficient operation of intersections, inadequate signs and signals)
- Lack of a parking policy

## **Authorities in charge of urban transport: dominating role of the State and fragmentation of responsibilities**

Countries in the Mediterranean region are still highly centralized. The State plays a dominating role in urban transport planning, organization, and financing through its central body and also at decentralized levels. Several ministries may be in charge: one may be responsible of roads and highways, another of the railroad system, and others of public urban transport or simply of state-owned agencies or concessions. When these competences are devolved to local authorities, there may be additional sub-divisions. Allocation of responsibilities must frequently be clarified.

In most countries, local and/or national institutions in charge of urban transport do not have the necessary human and technical means to play their role effectively. Their personnel is inadequate, in quantity and quality, for the major issues they have to deal with. Few institutions are dedicated to transport systems planning and management, but new initiatives are in the making in several countries with the perspective of new planning authorities: in Tunisia, the 2004 reform introduced the principle of these transport authorities within a framework heavily controlled by the State; the reform project in Morocco with authorities responsible of transport planning and management; Algeria has also been working for several years on a project, etc.

This institutional fragmentation explains why urban mobility cannot be apprehended as a whole and why planning tools are only partially operational. But recent household-surveys carried out in Algiers, Casablanca, Cairo, and Istanbul, and older surveys in Tunis show that efforts have been made to gain knowledge of the situation. However, they must be pursued since these surveys are not always fully exploited, are not easily accessible... and must be carried on through constant data follow-up and update, as it was done in Tunis with the Master Plan on Transport and the RFR project.

Public transport systems are undergoing transformations or in crisis. In Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Iran, the public sector has a larger share than private companies in public transport while the private sector is represented mainly by small-scale transport services. Morocco stands out with the mobilization of private companies in Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs).

## **Large financing needs that have not been met**

Pricing policies applied to the public sector inevitably generate losses because governments traditionally try to lighten the burden of transport expenses on family budgets. Since the municipalities' financial resources are also inadequate, the State contributes directly (but most frequently not enough) to finance urban transport—investments and operators—through compensation systems, in particular for fare reductions granted to certain categories of users. Deficient financing of the urban transport sector ensues which explains in part the current crisis in transport supply.

## **Unbalanced investments in mass transit**

In an effort to overcome the difficult situation in urban passenger transport, recent offers in most Mediterranean cities tend to focus on showcase infrastructure with numerous investment projects for mass transit, as opposed to a few effective undertakings. They are only partially capable, however, of meeting the needs of the population and of providing solutions for existing dysfunctional systems.

## **Public policy initiatives still in favor of the automobile...**

Most of the time, urban transport policies favor the development of individual transport modes through the proliferation of projects and undertakings in road and highway infrastructure. Besides these investments, other public policy initiatives also tend to encourage private car ownership.

But measures to limit automobile traffic have also been implemented in some cities. Tunis, for instance, has a traffic management plan since 1987 barring automobiles from going through the city's center (currently less effective) and Teheran has introduced urban tolls in the downtown area and traffic restricting measures using license plates numbers.

## **2 Key Urban Mobility Issues: A challenge for Public Authorities**

### **Control over the high costs of dysfunctional systems for local communities**

Already, the consequences of inadequate urban transport in cities south and east of the Mediterranean are many:

- Time wasted by car owners and users of public passenger transport and its impact on local productivity;
- Air pollution and its adverse effects on public health;
- A higher energy bill and its impact on the countries' trade balance, particularly for Morocco, Tunisia and most countries of the Mashreq, oil-importing countries.

Access to services and economic activities tends to be increasingly limited and according to available indicators accidents, air pollution and other adverse effects are constantly on the rise in cities.

Costs for the community are probably very high but further analysis is needed in this area. The competitiveness and appeal of Mediterranean cities is affected by these malfunctions. Moreover, even if it difficult to accurately measure their social consequences, they are nevertheless significant.

In the absence of strong policies, cities face the risk of increasing local costs if we take into account the combination of the following trend factors:

- Higher rate of individual mobility
- Longer urban trips due to sprawling cities
- Growth in urban population, slowed-down by demographic transition but constant nevertheless

### **Coping with new environmental and energy constraints**

New context parameters related to changes in the world economy and to sustainable development objectives must be taken into consideration:

- Absorbing a sustained increase in oil prices and implementing energy-saving policies
- Preserving the local urban environment by reducing air and noise pollution caused by motorized traffic
- Limiting greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming

### **Institutions capable of effectively implementing an urban transport strategy**

Setting up effective institutions in charge of public passenger transport systems and of urban traffic is one of the major challenges identified in the diagnosis of the situation. Cities are changing fast and will continue to change. It is necessary to plan in advance sustainable solutions that take into account the city of the future in its new environment. This is only possible through a strategic planning approach. These two interrelated issues will be discussed during **Workshop 1**, in the afternoon of **January 22**.

### **Finding the right place for each transport mode**

In order to improve the quality of life for all citizens and to make Mediterranean cities more competitive, accessibility to urban transport must be increased. This requires a balance between the different transport modes. Also, it is important for political decision-makers that Mediterranean cities give a positive image as efficient and user-friendly urban centers when compared, as is often the case, to other cities worldwide.

Multimodal systems must be implemented in large cities to give a new boost to public transport supply by combining structuring lines of mass transport, an efficient bus network, and a complementary controlled supply of minibuses and/or shared taxis. This will be the topic of **Workshop 2**, in the afternoon of **January 22**.

### **Sustainable financing systems**

Urban transport system financing is a determining issue for upgrading urban transport infrastructures, coping with the increasing demand, and providing public transport modes truly accessible to all, particularly to low-income groups.

**Workshop 3**, in the morning of **January 23** will analyze several proposals of sustainable solutions for securing financing funds.

### **A comprehensive vision of urban traffic management**

Sharing the public space for the benefit of the entire community is a major issue. Public passenger transport must have the adequate infrastructure to provide quick and punctual services. Safe movement infrastructure with adequate capacity must be provided for pedestrians and bicycles (non-motorized transport, NMT). Finally, automobile transit must be optimized in this overall context. In order to achieve these objectives, improved traffic management and a parking policy are required. To this end, control over the use of automobile is a major and complex issue that involves limiting the cost of its negative externalities and at the same time enabling the urban population to benefit from the advantages of the efficient use of private vehicles. These topics will be discussed during **Workshop 4**, in the morning of **January 23**.

## WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS

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**CODATU**, (Cooperation for Urban Mobility in the Developing World) is an international organization whose objective is to promote and facilitate scientific, technical, economic, and social exchanges on transportation systems and their linkages to urban development. In order to encourage experience sharing between emergent and developing countries and industrialized countries, CODATU organizes international conferences almost every two years in different parts of the world, and workshops for international fund donors in France and abroad. In this manner, it contributes to the development of public transport worldwide. For several years, CODATU has been considering the idea of a workshop on urban transport in the Mediterranean region. The situation previously described advocates in favor of the organization of such an event. The French ministry of ecology sustainable development and spatial planning has provided important technical and financial support to CODATU.

The **Government of Morocco** (Ministry of the Interior/DGCL) has decided to launch a new urban transport strategy aimed at setting up or restructuring its urban transport system so as to provide effective and user-adapted services. The Government has requested the assistance of the World Bank in this program. Starting in 2007, it constituted a fund of 20 million Euros for urban mobility of which 75% are allocated to public urban transport. European cities, mainly in France, have engaged in cooperation actions with Moroccan cities, and have provided technical and even material aids. By offering CODATU to host the first conference on urban transport in the Mediterranean, beginning of 2008, the Government considers the event as the true starting point of its new policy.

**The World Bank** has persistently shown strong commitment to urban transport issues. In 2002, it published "Cities on the Move", a key publication on the subject. The Bank finances many urban transport projects worldwide, several of them are located in the MENA region, for example, the previously mentioned technical assistance program with the Government of Morocco for a new policy on urban transport. Overall, it has multiplied in the past years its interventions in the Mediterranean. Within this context, it opened an office in Marseilles (KNA MENA), close to the Middle East and North Africa. Supported particularly by the French government in its efforts to develop a program for building capacity of local authorities on governance and local and urban development, the World Bank agency in Marseilles, KNA MENA, has decided to back CODATU's initiative.

**The Blue Plan** carries out prospective and systemic studies for the UNEP/MAP (United Nations Environment Program/Mediterranean Action Plan) and works with 21 Mediterranean countries. In 2005, it published a major report on environmental and development perspectives. For its 2007-2015 strategic interventions, it has decided to pay special attention to urban transport and mobility issues in the Mediterranean, and particularly to their linkages with global climate change. Within this context, the Blue Plan is conducting a specific program on urban and periurban transport for the 2007-2010 period based on case studies whose results will be discussed during a Mediterranean conference programmed for 2009.

**The French Development Agency** (AFD) is a public agency with a general interest mission: financing development. As a specialized financial institution, AFD finances in the five continents economic and social projects of local public authorities, public and private companies and associations. The projects include urban development and infrastructure, rural development, industries, financial systems, and education and health. AFD's objectives in the urban public transport sector are: 1) economic growth and improved services to users 2) the reduction of poverty and improved access for the population to essential goods and services 3) taking into account environmental protection, for example, by promoting clean energies for the protection of local and world environments (greenhouse gases). In 2005 and 2006, AFD financed outstanding infrastructure projects for urban passenger transport: the tramway in Tunis, Hanoi's LRT/metro, and Istanbul's metro. Other public transport projects are under consideration: a busway service in Accra, fast bus lanes in Curitiba, a tramway for Rabat-Salé.

**The city of Marseilles** supports jointly with the World Bank (KNA MENA) a network of Euro-Mediterranean cities mobilized for urban development: the **Europe-MENA network**. Since the beginning in 2004, most mayors and local representatives believed that urban transport should be one of the priority issues, and that a workshop should be organized for local officials in the Maghreb and in the Middle East. It is therefore natural for Marseilles and the Europe-MENA network to join forces with this project for an international workshop

**MedCités** is a network of Mediterranean cities. It was created in 1991 on METAP's initiative to reinforce decentralized actions involving technical assistance as the best tool to increase awareness of urban environmental problems and to use such actions to empower municipalities to manage urban environment related issues. Since then, MedCités has enlarged its scope of activities from the initial local environment field to include wider issues of local sustainable development. The network developed recently cooperation projects on urban mobility in Sousse, Tétouan, Tripoli (Lebanon), Larnaka, and Limassol. Today, 23 Mediterranean cities are members of the network, under the presidency of Rome and with a general secretariat in Barcelona.

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