

## ECOBULEVARD CASABLANCA

Aware of its historical responsibility, the city of Casablanca seeks to shape its future with the ambition of being a city open to other cultural identities, socially human and cohesive, economically competitive as well as sustainable from the environmental and cultural point of view.



Casablanca, is the largest city in Morocco; in its endeavour to support its position within the national economy, Casablanca has strong assets : it is the main financial decision-making centre in the country, the main industrial and service centre in the country, it represents the largest potential market with a population of more than four and a half million inhabitants, with its heavy infrastructure, its two harbours, airport, road and rail networks linking the city with the rest of the country, its energy and telecommunications equipment.

In addition, Casablanca is traditionally known for its openness onto the world, a vibrant cultural life, pleasant weather conditions, a valuable seaside, as well as its outstanding urban estates and built heritage.

Moreover it is an economical node connecting North Africa with Southern Europe, Casablanca is the north of the south.

While being respectful of its cultural identity, Casablanca has a clear international vocation. Yet, Casablanca, being a victim of its fast growth, has to develop its city project and face the challenge of the trilogy of sustainable urban development, i.e. an urban development that is socially fair, economically viable and environmentally liveable.

## METHODOLOGY



A team of 27 stakeholders and institutions, named "Forum Ville" was set up at the very beginning of the study. With the assistance of Metropoli Madrid, and thanks to the benchmark model applied to 22 comparable cities in the world, the work of Forum Ville has made it possible to identify components of excellence as well as priorities for the future of Casablanca

Forum Ville has indeed identified for the city project of Casablanca:

**10 components of excellence as follows:**

1. Its location as the main North African harbour, open to the West and very close to South European countries.
2. An average city in a global scale, not too big, not too small, with real opportunities to plan its future.
3. Its national location, in the middle of the country, creating a real competitive two-pole axis with Rabat, the political capital of Morocco.
4. The main airport of the country, which is a real global hub of connectivity especially with Europe.
5. The main harbour in the country
6. Its important water front and mild weather all year long
7. Its mythic brand name
8. Its old authentic medina, and the Habous district
9. The « Art Deco » architectural style of the core city
10. Its famous mosque "MOSQUEE HASSAN II "

**And 10 priorities and strategic options for the future as follows:**

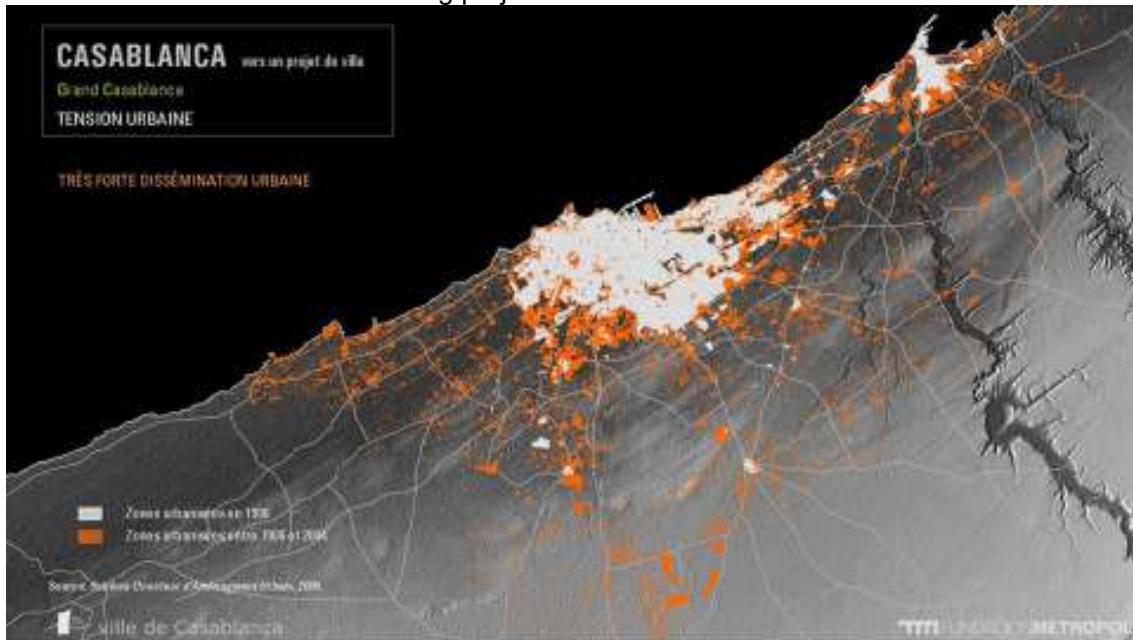
1. The implementation of a sustainable urbanism
2. Collective urban transport
3. Global urban restructuring for a better harmony of the city
4. Reduction of the sprawl
5. Fight against traffic congestion
6. Leisure and culture infrastructures
7. Development of the university and of the technological poles
8. The quality of environment and the reduction of air pollution
9. Creation of new urban parks
10. The harbour and the marina

**Eco-boulevard is undoubtedly the trigger of the city project for future Casablanca, however,**

Fighting against urban sprawl and stabilising the population, delimitating the extent of the city by the ring road and the green belt

Organising the linear growth of Casablanca to Mohammedia by the development of nine peripheral poles: Dar Bouazza, Errahma, Bouskoura, Nouasseur, Médiouna, Lahraouiyyine, Tit Mellil around Casablanca, Zenata and Beni Yakhlef around Mohammedia

Balance the settlement of structuring projects between East and West of Casablanca

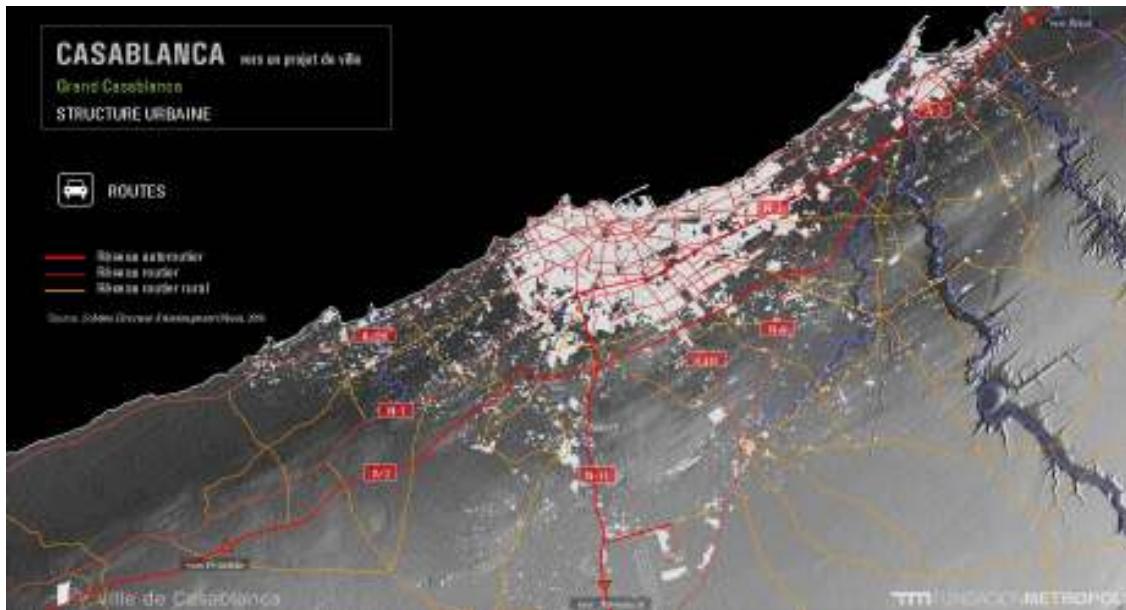


**The regional road network must be better balanced**

A road network comprising 3 major inadequately structured components:

The Bypass Road – known as South Toll Bypass Road, coming from Rabat and linking the Marrakech and El Jadida Highways;

The National Road N° 9 which links the city of Mohammedia with Berrechid across the satellite urban centres of Tit Mellil, Mediouna and Nouaceur ; this axial road which is a crucial feeder road for secondary poles is expected to play a major role later on in the development of this region.



The urban expressway which breaks away from the bypass road at the level of Ain Harrouda, and goes right through the urban fabric of the suburbs thus creating an impassable cut between the northern part of Casablanca – which hosts about 2.5 million inhabitants and is the main employment pool – and its suburban districts in the south – 2 million mostly poor inhabitants.

This inadequately structured and saturated road network is not relieved by an appropriate mass transportation system, and urban travelling takes place mainly by privately owned light motor vehicles, which aggravates urban congestion.

As a matter of fact,

1/ the urban expressway in the central part of Grand Casablanca plays the role of an actual urban main road from a functional point of view. Several factors contribute to such a situation:

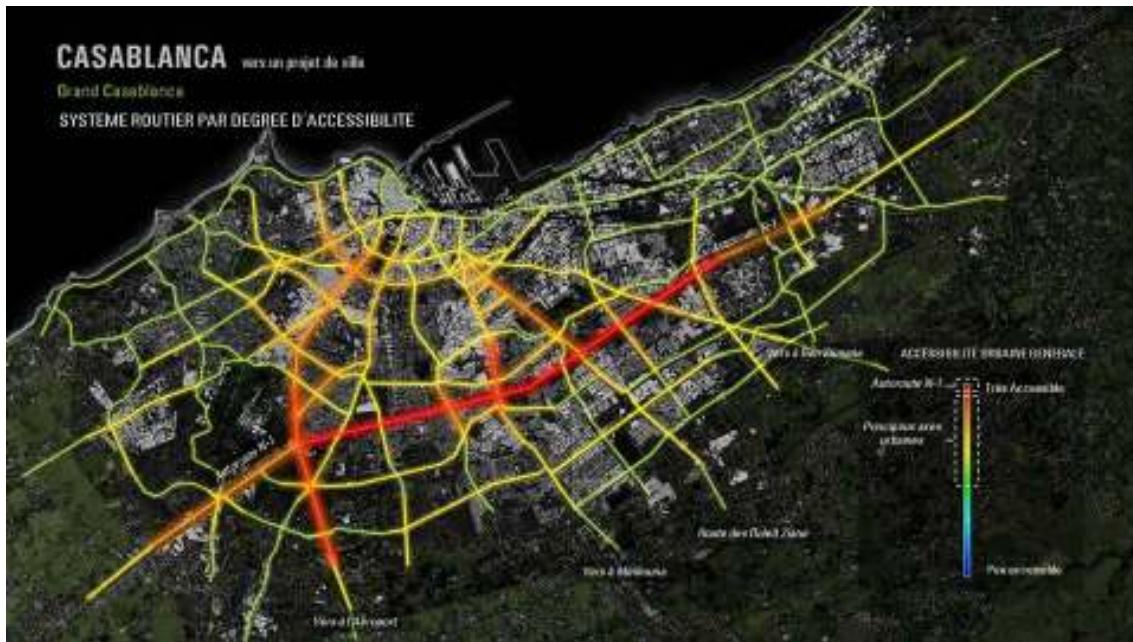
- its location within a relatively dense urban fabric;
- lack of bypass routes in the city centre;
- the expansion of urban development in the suburban areas;
- the number of interchange points with the local network;
- absence of toll.

2/ between the urban expressway and the South Bypass, housing estates have expanded with a messy and inadequately structured road network marked by numerous discontinuities and which has been developed without an overall coherence.

3/ the South Bypass is far away from the city centre on the fringes of the urban fabric with a rather limited number of interchange points. Its toll system strengthens its traffic selectivity.

### **The traffic congestion must be reduced**

Indeed, the radial urban planning of road network is no more adapted to the nowadays density of the population of Casablanca. The traffic congestion is amplified by the location of social housing programs south the urban express way, while the majority of employment areas are north, increasing the necessary daily mobility between the 2 banks.



In the city centre, several crossroads function with much difficulty at peak hours and are on the brink of saturation:

This is namely the case of the urban expressway, particularly between the road of Mediouna and the road of Ouled Ziane, where daily traffic reaches the peak of 112 000 vehicles, i.e. about 8 000 at peak hours.

Road traffic regulation and organization of road intersections is not at its best and therefore aggravates congestion of the road network.

Progressiveness of traffic in throughways between the outskirts and the city centre is clearly observed.

In sum:

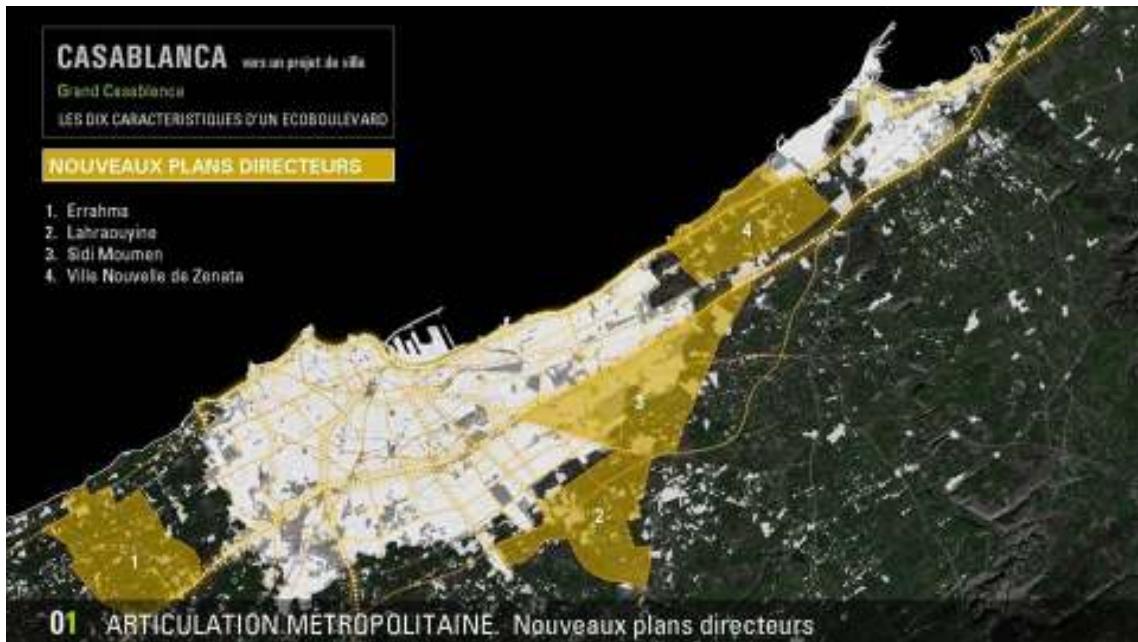
The importance of the urban expressway in urban operations is clearly stated.

It reaffirms its role as a bypass and as a traffic distributor for the entire southern part of the city.

However, with a comparable admissible capacity, the south bypass has only a limited impact on urban travels in the city. Traffic density stands at 1 300 vehicles at peak hours, i.e. five times less than in the most heavily congested road segments of the urban expressway.

Furthermore, the comparative study conducted on «La Castillana» of Madrid, the «Diagonale» of Barcelona, and the «Paseo de la Reforma» of Mexico city confirms that Ecoboulevard Casablanca meets the fundamental characteristics of an Ecological Urban Boulevard:

**Eco-boulevard Casablanca as a metropolitan road axis will be articulating the major projects of Casablanca**



5 flagship projects have been launched recently to balance Est and West and improve social mixing of the city:

1. The Errahma neighborhood, 1000 ha
2. The old airport of Anfa, 358 ha
3. The Lahraouiyine neighborhood, 450 ha
4. The Sidi Moumen neighborhood, 850 ha
5. The new town of Zénata, 420 ha

All these urban ensembles will be directly irrigated or connected by Eco boulevard

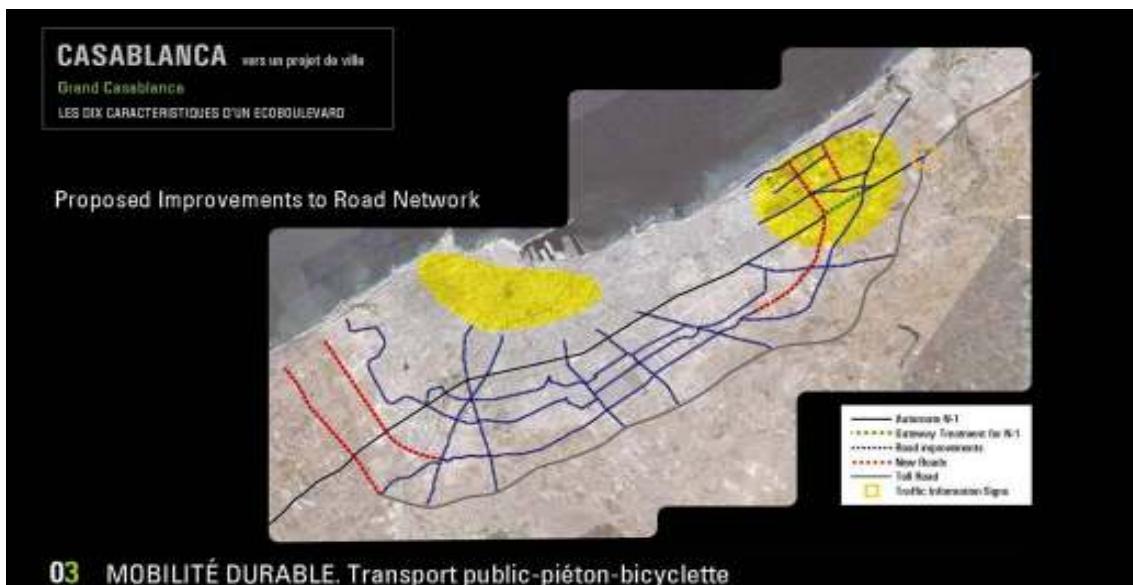
**Eco-boulevard Casablanca should be a regional connecting axial road which is expected to link Casablanca, the economic capital, with Rabat, the administrative capital.**

Almost 7 million inhabitants are concentrated on a strip 150 km long and 10 to 30 km wide along the sea, it is a real littoral conurbation – which is quite rare in mediterranean countries – dominated south by Casablanca (4.5 millions inhabitants) and north by Rabat (1 million).

**Eco-boulevard Casablanca should be the hinge line for sustainable mobility based on urban transportation**

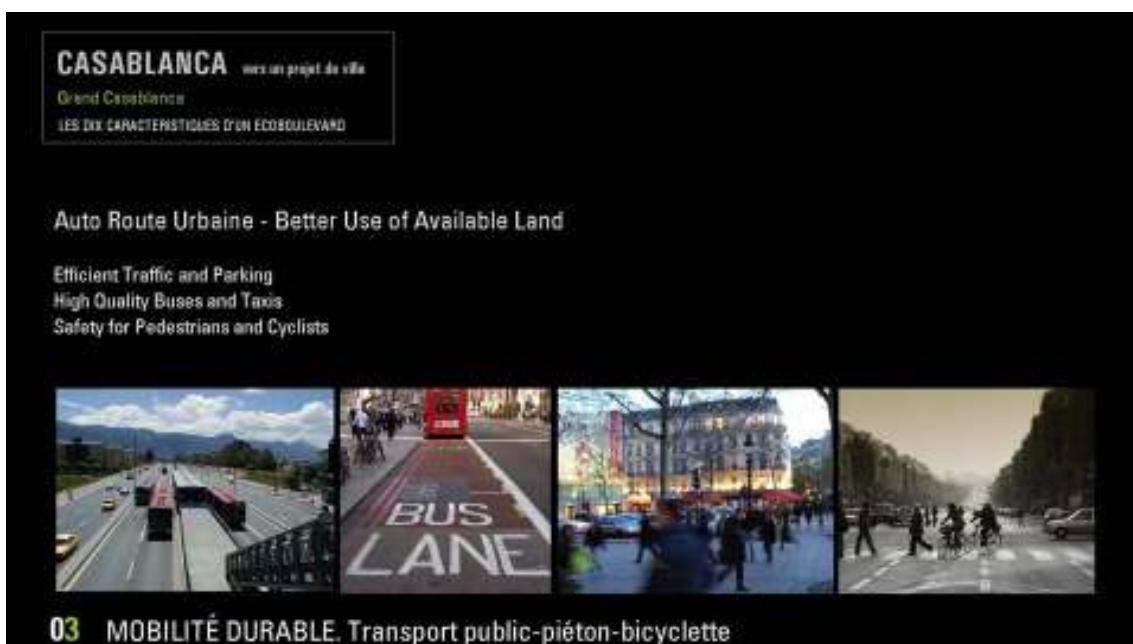
By maximizing the use of the road networks parallel to the urban expressway and radial throughways, and by clearing transit traffic on the south bypass, the current load may be considerably reduced on the urban expressway;

The first priority should be given to improve the regional and local road network:



Restoring the main throughways and parallel roads to better organize and structure traffic around the urban expressway;  
Removing toll pay on the peripheral section of the south bypass in order to attract maximum transit traffic towards Marrakech and El Jadida, especially heavy trucks traffic.

The second priority should be given to Public Transport Improvements:



Establishing an effective mass transportation network on an exclusive right-of-way on the urban expressway structure, such as tramway and rapid bus transport systems,  

- Better spatial accessibility, affordable services accessible for everyone
- High Frequency services,
- Reduced air pollution and noise

Developing new tracks of permeability such as pedestrian walkways and bikeways, to ensure greater safety and more fluid traffic between the city centre and the suburbs,

Modernizing traffic signals at crossroads, by namely taking account of pedestrians and cyclists in addition to a centralized management of traffic regulation at the crossroads; Establishing parking areas that are deterrent enough for trucks, motor cars and bicycles in connection with public transport stops, at crossroads between the Eco-boulevard and the radial throughways.

**Eco-boulevard Casablanca will provide also multi-occupancy places of urban intensity located at the main crossroads - 5 ideal locations as follows:**



Eco-boulevard Casablanca will provide real estate opportunities so as to implement places of creativity in connection with the university,

And to implement new development projects based on innovative architecture.

Eco-boulevard Casablanca is an opportunity for engaging in urban regeneration of neighbouring under-equipped districts, as Sidi Moumen, Hay Mohammedi, Sidi Othmane...

**Eco boulevard is an important real estate opportunity to launch sustainable urbanism for Casablanca and to favour it's linear plan extension instead of it's present radial plan.**

Eco-boulevard Casablanca offer the possibility of achieving operations of urban acupuncture





## **CONCLUSION**

In fact, the plan to develop an urban boulevard on the skeleton of the current urban expressway will, instead of strengthening its role of an expressway exclusively dedicated to car traffic, confirm its role of a connector throughout the entire city, and at the same time will physically weave the urban fabrics of the city and its suburbs and upgrade the social link between the city-dwellers of the two sides of the city.

Eco-boulevard Casablanca will also grant a predominating role to mass transportation on the exclusive right-of-way, such as tramway and rapid bus transport (BRT) systems – to pedestrian walkways and bikeways, to landscaped green areas and spaces of animation and urban centrality.

In this respect, Eco-boulevard will contribute to reducing air and noise pollution which is a real nuisance in Casablanca, reducing release of CO<sub>2</sub> thanks to the use of clean public transportation and creating a more breathable living environment by expanding green open spaces.

In conclusion, Casablanca has good assets indeed, but it has to handle its rapid urban growth thanks to sustainable urban planning.

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