

# Franco-Chinese agreement on sustainable urban development

## Seminar on High Level of Service Transport

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### The tram of Bordeaux, a way for urban renewal

*(summary)*

Bordeaux benefits from a considerable number of assets which contribute to its international reputation: not only its architectural heritage and cuisine which are already well-known tourist attractions, but also human resources of remarkable quality, innovative technologies and a rare potential for economic development. Another advantage of our city is its innate sense of moderation and balance, possibly passed down to us by our great philosophers, Montaigne and Montesquieu, by which Bordeaux serves as an example in terms of sustainable development.

The reawakening and metamorphosis of the city were made possible thanks to those assets within the space of just one decade. Such a transformation owes much to the innovative and consensual policy of urban mobility implemented by Mr Alain JUPPE, former Prime Minister and Mayor of Bordeaux.

In the course of history, Bordeaux was lucky enough to have been spared from the destructive ravages of the last two World Wars, which explains the extent of its architectural heritage of outstanding quality. Upon his election in 1995, one of the priorities of the incoming Mayor was to enhance the value of Bordeaux as a city of heritage: restoration of the buildings, cleaning of the facades, a new lighting plan. The city changed colour: 10 years ago, it was black, now it is pale gold.

That new revelation of Bordeaux was hailed by the recent inclusion of practically the whole city on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

Whilst it was essential to exalt the old city of Bordeaux, it was equally important to prepare Bordeaux for European and global competition. That formed the second priority of the urban project of the Mayor of Bordeaux – making Bordeaux an open city, easily accessible from anywhere and everywhere.

Being accessible meant first of all enabling the city's inhabitants to travel easily to and from their workplace and home or to all the major public facilities, whether it be

the railway station, the hospital, the university campus, the conference centre, etc. For that purpose, the construction of three tramway lines crossing in the city centre was launched in 1998. The first two sections have already been completed with a total of 44 km of tramway lines and the third section will be finished by the end of the year.

Whilst the tramway spells easy access, it also triggered a whole series of transformations which have changed the image of the city, giving it a new, modern appearance. First of all, the modes of in-city transport have completely changed: fewer cars, more public transport (the levels of use of and satisfaction with the tramway rapidly exceeded the most optimistic forecasts), many more pedestrians and an explosion in the number of bicycles.

Bordeaux additionally underwent a far-reaching face-lift as a result of the redesigning of all the main streets and squares used by the tramway. The new layout of the open spaces took due account of the architectural context, with the use of natural materials, new public lighting and new urban furniture. In fact, the entire city centre has been revisited, starting of course with the 4.5 km of the waterfront that have been completely rehabilitated into a welcoming space offering gardens, promenades, taverns, a skate park and entertainment areas running parallel to the freshly cleaned and beautifully lit 18<sup>th</sup> century facades overlooking the river.

This new blossoming of Bordeaux into all that is beautiful, useful and enjoyable found its immediate expression in the introduction of the tramway cars, all both decidedly modern not only in their sleek design but in their technology. As a world first, ground power technology was in fact launched in Bordeaux, making it possible to preserve the aesthetic appearance of the historic city centre by doing away with overhead power cables.

The open city of Bordeaux is also easily accessible from outside. The first major step in that direction came with the opening of the A 89 motorway providing a direct connection with Lyon, Switzerland, Italy and Germany.

The second step will result from the arrival of the high speed railway line thanks to which Bordeaux will be just 2 hours from Paris and very soon 2h30 from Madrid, with an optimal multimodal connection with the tramway.

A city of heritage, an open city – two qualities which already place Bordeaux in a very favourable position in Europe. That is not, however, enough. Bordeaux must also be a vibrant city.

In the early 1990's, the population of Bordeaux had dropped to below 200,000 inhabitants. It now has 235,000 and should welcome an additional 30,000 between now and 2020.

Bordeaux today benefits from all the necessary facilities to welcome increasingly demanding citizens, whether it be in terms of schools, sport, culture or universities. Every year, it gains an extra 5 to 6 hectares of parks and gardens. Its universities are increasingly diversified so as to offer, alongside its main campus of 70,000 students, new student centres in the city centre. It is opening up new urban areas, in particular on the right bank of the river where between now and 2020 some 15,000 houses and over 600,000 m<sup>2</sup> of business parks will be built.

All these changes, which for a time considerably upset the everyday life of the inhabitants given the extent of the work undertaken, were based on one major vector – the tramway.

Bordeaux is therefore today a vibrant city. It simply remains for it to become a sustainable city. All the changes have been heading in the right direction over the last ten years with the development of the tramway, resulting in a reduction of traffic and therefore of pollution.

Bordeaux has also been a pilot city in France ever since 1993 for the use of electric vehicles. The city has made a point of attracting all the relevant skills of recognised laboratories and industries in the scientific and technical spheres and in particular in electronics, electro-chemistry, mechanics and new materials, industrial information technology and in urban travel and transport. Moreover, the Bordeaux Urban Community, with its fleet of over 250 electric vehicles, is boosting the study of optimisation of energy consumption on board light, medium and heavy electric vehicles.

Bordeaux – a city of heritage, an open, vibrant and sustainable city, is also a major European metropolis. It has undeniable appeal thanks to its economic assets, starting of course with wine and timber, but also thanks to its competitive centres in aerospace, health, biotechnologies, lasers and photonics. Its appeal also stems from its cultural reputation, which should shortly be recognised by it being appointed the European Capital of Culture in 2013.

Historically, Bordeaux has always had an international reach. It enjoys special partnerships with 19 foreign cities including Wuhan in China. Moreover, for the last four years Bordeaux has been acting as the national French leader in the dialogue between local authorities in France and in China.

It was in that role that Bordeaux recently organised for the second time the « Franco-Chinese Meeting for decentralised cooperation ». Over 800 participants from all over France and China came to exchange their expertise on issues of energy saving, urban mobility, ecology, economic development, the protection and integration of fragile populations and good governance.

Whether it be a question of the tramway, electric vehicles, concertation with the local population for the harmonious sharing of space between pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, the City of Bordeaux is open to full cooperation with the Chinese communities.

Urban centres, as sprawling concentrations of problems of development but also vast open laboratories for finding solutions, have no other alternative but to cooperate on the international scale. The major issues with which Bordeaux is faced concerning sustainable development are common to all the major cities of the world. It is together that we shall find the solutions. As a European metropolis, Bordeaux is firmly decided to fully play its part in that quest.

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