

### **THIRD PARTY OPINION**

(DRAFT, 26 January 2009)

#### **Expressway Construction Project and Casablanca South Ring Road Construction Project**

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The Casablanca-Settat Highway (A7 - 57 Km), and the South Ring Road (A5 - 27 Km) are located in the biggest region of Morocco: The Greater Casablanca. These two sections are major highways within the North-South National highway network.

The actual completion of the two projects (commissioning of the A7 Highway in June 2001 and of the A5 Ring Road in July 2003) incurred a three-year delay compared to the initial deadline. The main reason behind this delay was the long lasting negotiations which took place with the inhabitants with regard to the required expropriations. The process of land acquisition and relocation of the 50 households involved was carried out according to the applicable Moroccan laws and legislation.

The total cost of these two projects was 16% lower than the planned cost. The main reason for this decrease in costs is the reduction in the length of the roads (from 36 km to 33 km for the highway, from 35km to 33.5 km for the belt freeway).

Since their opening, traffic on both highways has increased steadily. In 2007, the average daily traffic reached 15,088 vehicles for the Casablanca-Settat highway, and 13,088 vehicles for the Ring Road, representing 11% and 30% increase respectively compared to 2006. Traffic on those two roads is expected to increase heavily when the Marrakech-Agadir Highway will open by 2010 and the enlargement to 2x3 lanes of the Casablanca-Rabat highway.

Toll revenue for both roads has also increased. Revenue for the Casablanca-Settat highway increased from 110 Million MAD in 2004 to 160 Million MAD in 2007. Thanks to the Ring Road, a total of 39 Million MAD was earned in 2007, representing 30% increase compared to 2006.

Concerning road safety, it improved overall since the opening of both highways. On the Casablanca-Settat highway 57 casualty accidents incurred in 2004, amongst which 7 deaths, 65 in 2005 amongst which 6 deaths, 89 in 2006 amongst which 17 deaths, 82 during the three first quarters of 2007, amongst which 13 deaths, and 76 accidents during the same period of 2008 with 8 deaths. The still relatively high casualty accident rate can be explained by the insecurity due to pedestrians leaving nearby crossing the highway and to criminal assaults. On the by-pass freeway of Casablanca-South, the number of casualty accidents was high initially after its opening. In 2005, 32 accidents incurred, amongst which 7 deaths and 36 seriously injured, 28 amongst which 4 deaths in 2006, thus showing a decrease of 39% in terms of death toll, 37 amongst which 7 deaths in 2007 and 22 accidents amongst which 2 deaths during the three first quarters of 2008. The construction of several pedestrian bridges as well as the building of steel and concrete fencings guaranteed a safer movement of nearby residents on both sides of the road. The adaptation of road users to the road structure is also a factor which helped to decrease the number of accidents in the operational highway network. This being said, further efforts need to be made in terms of awareness-raising and education of both area residents and drivers.

Moreover, the building of these two highways induced several positive impacts on different levels:

- Firstly, concerning the transport of people and goods, the travel time on both sections has been more than halved compared to the time needed on the national road despite the fact that there is no big difference in terms of distance (The Casablanca –Settat highway is 5 km shorter than the national road, and the South Ring Road is 2 km longer). Thus, the time decreased from 70 minutes to 32 for the expressway, and from 48 minutes to 20 for the Ring Road. The average speed is higher on both.
- Secondly, the two highway sections contributed to reduce traffic jams in the Great Casablanca region. They both helped to improve substantially the feeder roads to the city, and facilitate connections to the national road and highway networks. The South Ring Road, which is bypassing the city, also contributed in reducing traffic jams in the near-urban area by facilitating circulation inside the city, helping in the distribution of intercity traffic through three crossroads, improving structural access to the city and increasing the strategic outreaching capacity of Southern Casablanca (Casablanca-Nouaceur National Road 11). This latter axis is very important in that it allows on the one hand, to channel outgoing traffic from the city to the Casablanca–Settat highway and on the other hand, towards three big supermarkets, the industrial zone of Sidi Maarouf, the Mohammed V Airport, and many administrative and residential districts.
- Moreover, since they opened, the highways contributed to the development of tourism and the agricultural sector, and enhanced the creation of new markets and new job opportunities, the distribution and more active economic exchanges, the access to public services, and to the enlargement –in the case of the South Ring Road– of the industrial zone, in particular of the city of Berchid (increase in the number of companies, production, revenues and exports). The airport vicinity increased its attractiveness for exports.
- Lastly, at environmental level, the highways are equipped with oil separation basins and concrete pits, thus preventing subsurface contamination. The tolls are supplied by the drinking water distribution system and are therefore bringing area residents closer to drinking water facilities. Furthermore, air pollution and noise levels have been reduced. The National Highway Company (ADM) initiated in 2006 landscaping works, building a median strip between the two highway lanes thus embellishing the expressway routing, and improving the security of traffic by avoiding dazzling lights at night. The project also involved the maintenance of green spaces at toll stations.

As far as the sustainability of sites is concerned, the National Highway Company (ADM) which is ISO 9001 certified since July 2004, and won the National Quality Award in 2005 in the category of Major Utilities Organisms, is in charge of maintenance works, and infrastructure planning. Thanks to its administrative and technical staff, the Company operates and maintains in an appropriate manner the highways, setting standards and carrying out periodic inspections. The ADM launches in January 2009 a pavement strengthening project on the Casablanca-Settat Highway, resurfacing in a first stage, the two traffic lanes and emergency lane, with a Class 3 coated material (BBSG) 3 to be grooving-resistant.