

Transport – Tunisia

New rapid transit system for the capital Tunis

Transportation in Tunisia's capital has grown dramatically in the last few years, as has been the case in so many major cities around the globe. In its metropolitan area of two million, it is now so densely populated that commuters are spending a good half an hour in traffic every day. This time spent unproductively is frustrating for everyone involved and harms the environment. Those responsible within the municipality have therefore now taken to expanding the local public transit system, step by step and train by train.

Context

Tunis is the country's largest city as well as its political and economic centre. It is not where the Jasmine Revolution of 2010-2011 began (this was started in the countryside); the actual upheaval and political turning point did, however, manifest itself in the capital. While much has already been achieved on the road to more democracy, such as the adoption of a new constitution at the beginning of 2014, the process of transformation proves to be long.

Although the change of government in 2016 was largely marked by political continuity, a politically still heterogeneous government and the highly fragmented party system in Tunisia make it difficult to reach a consensus, which is becoming an ever greater problem for the country's economic recovery in view of urgently needed reforms. Unemployment is still at a high level (15.6 % in 2016 according to the IMF), and among young people even over 40 %. In addition, terrorist attacks with many deaths, as in 2015, illustrate the vulnerability of the young democracy. Structural reforms, economic growth and the promotion of disadvantaged regions are there-

fore necessary and are also a main concern of the government, as the five-year plan adopted at the beginning of 2017 makes clear. Aside from the sufficient supply of energy for the country and a stable banking sector among other things, another basic requirement in doing so is a functioning transportation infrastructure. Although the road network in the North African country is overall well developed, public transportation has failed to keep up with the pace of the population growth in the last few years as well as with the dynamic economic trend. This is especially the case in the capital Tunis. While buses there service many city districts and with good frequency, the city's rail network so far only covers a portion of the capital and has also hit its limits in terms of capacity.

Project name	Tunis rapid transit system
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/Region	Tunisia
Lead executing agency	Société du Réseau Ferroviare Rapide de Tunis (RFR)





Crowded station in Tunis. Source: KfW photo archive, photographer: photothek.net

The Tunisian government would therefore like to add a rapid transit system to the bus and tram network already in place. Given its dedicated track, a rapid transit system would be able to transport hundreds of thousands of people every day from A to B quickly and in a manner friendly to the environment, regardless of the dense road traffic. KfW is supporting Tunisia in this project by order of the German Federal Government. The aim here is to improve the overburdened urban infrastructure while helping to protect the environment at the same time.

Project approach

The Tunisian government's plan for local public transit includes the construction of five rapid transit lines over a total length of 85 kilometres throughout the Tunis metropolitan area. The first phase is currently under way, with two lines being built over 18 kilometres through the centre of Tunis towards the city's suburbs. The D and E lines will begin at the main train station and go west through a new tunnel. From there, one line will run largely parallel to an existing long-distance line to the northwest, while the other line will run on a new route in a south-westerly direction.

The project-executing agency is the Société du Réseau Ferroviaire Rapide de Tunis (RFR), a public company founded especially for this purpose. The construction project involves both local and European companies. A German-French syndicate, with the involvement of Siemens, is taking on the tasks of the overhead contact line, telecommunications and signalling equipment, for example. The state-owned railway company (SNCFT – Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Tunisiens) will be responsible for operating the rapid transit system.

The Tunisian state is expected to finance the track layout, together with a syndicate of European donors; in addition to KfW, this will involve the Neighbourhood Investment Facility of the EU, Agence Française de Développement and the European Investment Bank. The funding by KfW will amount to EUR 47 million for the construction of the first two rapid transit routes. KfW provided an additional EUR 65 million for the procurement of trams.

In doing so, KfW will link back to a past co-operation, in which it funded the construction of a tram in Tunis, called the Métro léger. The first lines were opened in 1985 and were the first of their kind on the African continent at that time. Today the tram makes up the heart of the capital's environmentally friendly local public transit system. The two rapid transit lines D and E will offer a noticeable addition to and expansion of the city's rail system starting at the end of 2021.

Impact

The rapid transit system is expected to haul 350,000 people a day through the metropolitan area of Tunis in a way that is fast, safe and environmentally friendly, thus in large part connecting people and markets. The trains are also expected to slow the further growth in private transport. The project will also make a valuable contribution to global climate protection by cutting back on roughly 50,000 metric tonnes of CO₂ emissions every year.



Contact

KfW Group
KfW Development Bank
Palmengartenstrasse 5-9
60325 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
Phone +49 69 7431 0

Energy and Mobility North Africa
joschka.greve@kfw.de

Competence Centre Infrastructure and Natural Resources
veronika.pliats-shirzadi@kfw.de