



# EcoMobility

**PRIORITY FOR ECOMOBILITY IN OUR CITIES. A SERIES OF LOCAL STORIES**

## La Rochelle, France A leader in e-mobility policy

**Summary:** Since the 1990s, car traffic in the periphery of La Rochelle has doubled. In reaction to this, the city has defined a long-term strategy for public transportation to ensure seamless intermodality between different transport networks and modes. La Rochelle is also developing car sharing stations, public roadside charging points for e-cars and other infrastructure required to achieve a more EcoMobile transportation policy..

### The beginning of intermodal transportation

For one day in 1997, La Rochelle banned greenhouse gas-emitting cars in the city center. Citizens, authority, and the media collaborated to ensure that the day was a success. This day marked the beginning of a new attitude in many European cities that cars were usually not required for passenger transport within the city. Subsequently, car traffic has decreased significantly within the city. However, traffic has increased outside the city. To combat the higher commuter level, the local government built new housing, office buildings, and public areas to bring citizens to the city center. Higher densities make it easier for people to rely on sustainable transportation modes. The public transportation network is also becoming denser and as a result, reaching more places and attracting more users. To further encourage public transport use and intermodality, the city is building more Park and Ride stations to connect a parking facility with public transit. La Rochelle is also synchronizing connections of an extended tram network to city bus routes.



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**Bikesharing station near public transportation encourages rental in La Rochelle**

### The introduction of the bike sharing system

In 1974, La Rochelle initiated the first successful bicycle sharing system in France. By 2003, there were 300 shared bikes in use and 130 kilometers of bicycle lanes. In 2009, the system was refurbished and became fully automated with smartcards that are integrated into the public transportation system and accessible at all times. The new system began with 26 stations and 110 bicycles. In 2010 there were already 350 bicycles, 50 stations, 300 km of exclusive bike lanes, and 700 users of the system. The city is currently developing more bike paths to reach the goal of 800 km.

### La Rochelle invests in solar e-mobility

In Electric shuttle boats that allow 300,000 passengers to cross the city channel each year are available on request year-round. Each boat can carry 30 passengers and accommodates bicycles on board. Electro-solar boats carrying up to 75 passengers are also available. Photovoltaic panels provide 20% of the necessary energy. The electro-solar system has seen a ridership of 200,000 passengers per year. La Rochelle has also invested in an electric car sharing service which shares the public transportation smartcard. The service is available around the clock at seven stations around the city and comprises 50 vehicles and 73 charging stations. These cars are typically rented for short duration uses, with an average trip distance of seven km.

## Fee structure and business model

The public transport smartcard can be used for local trains, buses, shuttle boats, bike sharing, car sharing, taxis, and Park and Ride. The integrated ticketing strategy in La Rochelle has successfully created a more efficient system for citizens to take advantage of the city's variety of transport modes.

Information systems were key to enable such intermodal culture. For example, the city improved sign and schedule postings at stations, and provides users with real time information via SMS. La Rochelle created both a student travel plan and a business travel plan. The student travel plan includes 195 kilometers of pedestrian-only paths and 320 bicycles available for students to rent on an annual basis. The business travel plan led to the development of the city's Park and Ride system and increased the frequency of public transportation for working times. These transport policies are successful in part because they provide customers with a variety of transport choices which are seamlessly integrated and that are available at modest prices. The result is visible through the decrease of car use shares from 57% to 50% over the last 13 years.



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Carsharing station in La Rochelle

**“La Rochelle has been for years an open place for experimentations in the field of advanced and clean transportation systems and has always adopted initiatives in the same spirit.”**

**Maxime Bono, Mayor of La Rochelle, 2011**



La Rochelle, France

**The City of La Rochelle** is located in Western France and is inhabited by 80,000 people. The city extends over 29 km<sup>2</sup>. Located on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and part of the region of Nantes, the city's main income sources are its harbors and the tourism.

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