

el Periòdic News

INTERVIEW

Sebastià Mijares i Verdú

ANDRAIL PRESIDENT

“We favour a route about 8 kilometres long and a tram journey between 15 and 20 minutes”

IRINA RYBALCHENKO
ESCALDES - ENGORDANY

In 2021, the Andorran government carried out a study of public transport needs, which recommended the introduction of a tram in the centre of Andorra by 2030 as the best solution. As a result, at the end of 2023, the government of Andorra launched a second study, informally called a “preliminary project” being prepared by Suport Engineers and Euroconsult that aims to define the route and study the characteristics and budget of the tram launch.

The ongoing study results should be delivered to the government in late 2024 or early 2025.

AndRail is a civil society association that insists that the study reflects the best proposal for a tram line in Andorra. AndRail is campaigning to demonstrate that the tram is not only a technically viable and necessary solution, but also benefits from bro-

ad social support. AndRail President Sebastià Mijares i Verdú believes that the public transport Andorra needs is a centralized tram and explains why.

—How do you assess the perspectives of the Andorran electric transport market in general?

—The electrification of transport is an imperative of the energy transition. In our case, it is clearly a postponed topic: only 1% of Andorra’s mobile fleet is made up entirely of electric vehicles, or less than 2% if you consider hybrids. I will not assess whether this stagnation in the electrification of the mobile fleet can be reversed and therefore whether we will see an increase in these percentages anytime soon. But I can estimate that replacing this mobile fleet with electric vehicles would cost more than €3.2bn (about 92,000 vehicles without recharging).

This calculation is based on



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the difference between the average price of an electric car (~€35,000) and the average price of a conventionally fueled car (~€24,000) in Spain. The average age of Andorra’s mobile fleet is approximately 15 years. Therefore, the €2.2 billion to €3.2 billion that this renewal entails (in current prices) spread over 15 years, would amount to between €147 billion and €213 billion for every year that society spends to buy new cars.

—AndRail claims that the tram is a solution to relieve traffic. But how realistic is this project in a mountainous area?

—The tram is a means of transportation that is widespread around the world

— and in particular in Europe, where services of this kind are everywhere in cities with populations similar to Andorra’s, including mountainous places and places with cold and snow winter. In a way, the fact that a country like Andorra does not have a railway service is an anomaly: we are the only country on the continent that does not have and has never had a railway. Is this project realistic? What is unrealistic is to keep going without it!

Andorra is a mountainous country, as are Switzerland and Austria, the two countries with the most railways (trams in particular) in the world. We are not talking about a tram going up to the top of Comapedrosa,

but rather serving urban areas where topography is not a significant obstacle at all, like in Innsbruck, Zurich, Neuchâtel, or Lausanne.

—What are the technical characteristics of the project?

—We favour a route that is about 8 kilometres long and a tram journey between 15 and 20 minutes. To ensure fast service, it is important that all or almost all of the route is double-tracked. In some sections, the line should run in one location and its alternative in another. Variations at specific locations along the route are possible: the route follows one, the other, or both sides in the same direction. We have shared this route recommendation with the government and engineers working on the preliminary design.

—What is the estimated cost of the project?

—With respect to the design engineers and their work, we are not announcing the current projected cost. According to the already published government study for 2021, this tram system is estimated to cost 170 million euros (including infrastructure, rolling stock, etc.). These costs can be significantly reduced by reducing the impact of infrastructure – making it

on the surface rather than underground in some sections, and doing away with viaducts at street level, for example. Savings can be made by using classical electrification (with catenary) instead of more expensive alternatives such as ground power supply or batteries, which only solve aesthetic aspects.

—In what direction is electric transport developing today and how does it see the future?

—I don't have the expertise to assess the direction of electric transport in general. It is undeniable that Andorra today is a country where the car is a necessity, as its absence is an obstacle to moving around comfortably.

The cars have a very large spatial impact: every 20 square metres of Andorra la Vella is dedicated to parking, and 70% of public space is dedicated to cars.

We need a competitive and high-performance alternative that allows at least a large part of society to be independent of the car, as in hundreds of cities in Europe.

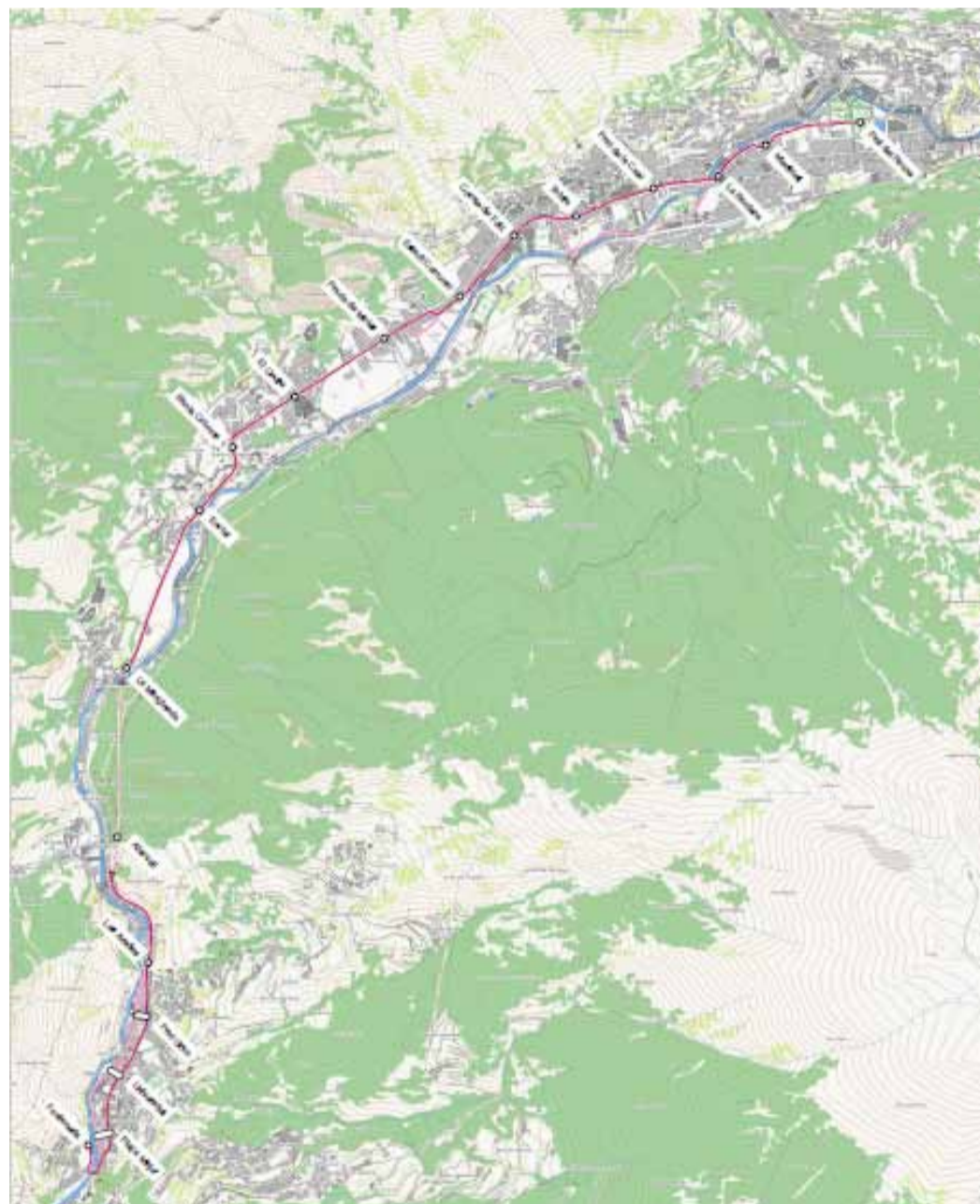
The electrification of Andorra's car parks is a complete failure at the moment. I cannot assess the reasons, but I can say this: it is much less costly for society and the state and more efficient to introduce the tram in Andorra than to replace the entire car fleet with 100% electric vehicles.

And thousands of citizens will thus have a reliable public transport means that will move away from the need to have one car for each adult member of the family, as is the case today.

In the grave economic crisis in which we find ourselves, the absence of a tram in Andorra means an increase in the cost of

maintaining a car, which stifles everyone's purchasing power. If the tram, being a more practical and reliable public transport option, enables the purchase of 8% fewer cars (e.g. families no longer need 2 or more cars), society will save €176-256 million over 15 years, which is more than the budget for its commissioning. ●

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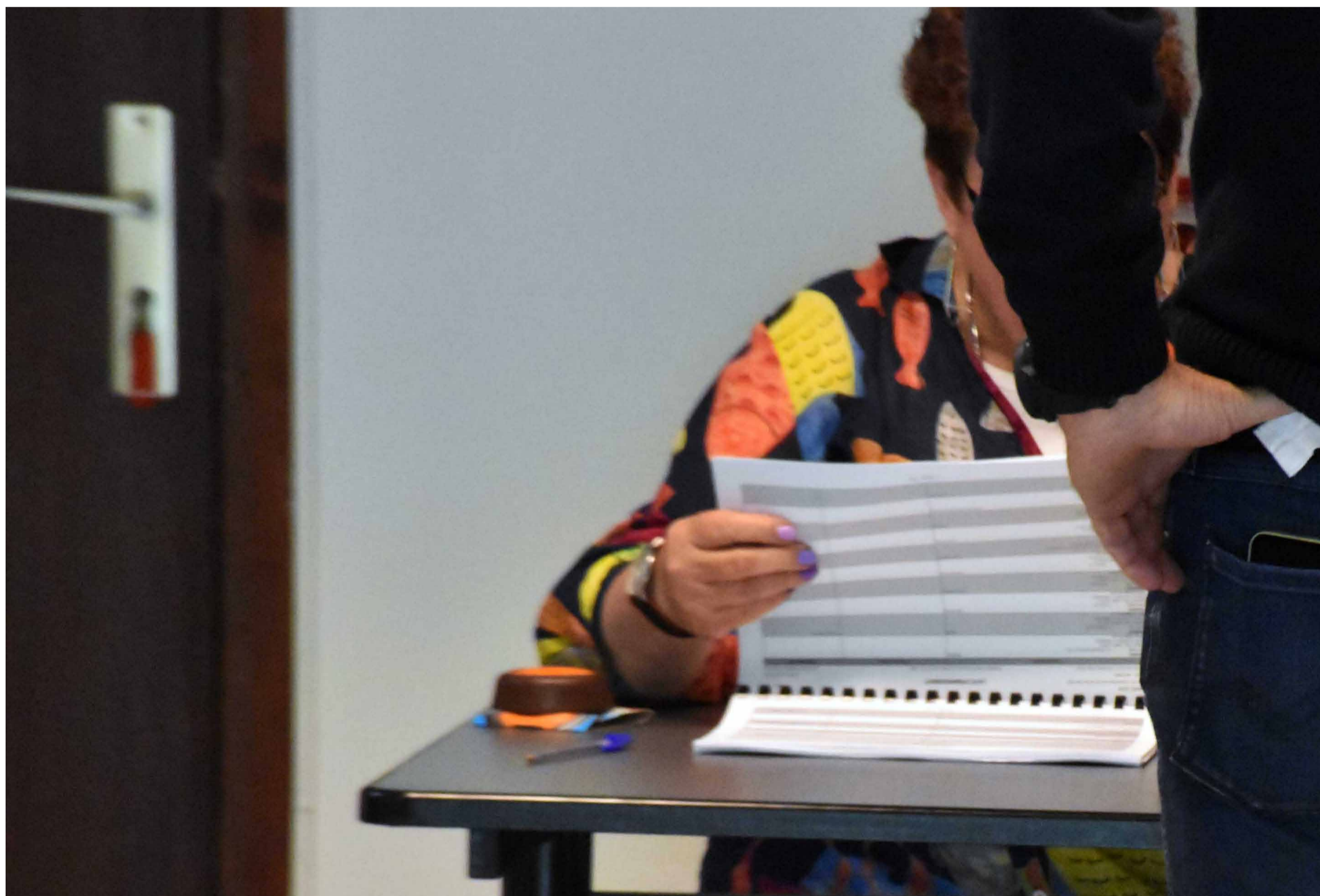


SECOND ROUND OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Liberalism wins the second round of the elections in Andorra

The total participation was less than 15% of voters

E.M/ANA



French citizens identifying themselves to be able to exercise the right to vote.

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A total of 386 people went to the polls at the Francophone embassy on Sunday, where after the count, it was seen that 74.01% voted for Stéphane Vojetta, from the socio-liberal political party Renaissance. It must be remembered that, belonging to the countries of the fifth constituency, the only choice was between Maxime

da Silva, from France Insoumise (25.99%) and Vojetta

Last Sunday was the second round of the electoral process for the re-composition of the National Assembly, which the French co-prince Emmanuel Macron dissolved after losing the elections to the European Parliament last June. In total, 2,666 voters were registered who could leave their vote between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. However, there was a turnout

of less than 15% in total, figures that may have been influenced by the lack of National Regrouping representative of Marine Le Pen, Johana Murel, who came third in the first round. Of the 386 total votes, eleven were invalid and 48 people opted for a blank vote. The final results that include the vote by mail are not yet public, but the reality is that they do not leave room for change on the decision in Andorra. ●

THE VOTES

74.01%

The percentage of votes in Andorra that voted for Stéphane Vojetta, from the socio-liberal party Renaissance.

25.99%

The percentage of votes from Andorra that has voted for Maxime da Silva, from France Insoumise and Vojetta.

La finestra Oberta

MARTA AMBOR



Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain: A Real Binomial

Artificial intelligence faces the great challenge of getting machines to be able to make guesses at a scale and accuracy that surpasses ours. Unlike traditional processing, in which machines perform predefined tasks, AI seeks to mimic the human cognitive process, including the ability to infer and predict.

For this, machines learn from large amounts of carefully selected and processed data. This information allows them to build probabilistic models of the world; that is, mathematical representations that reflect the probability of certain events occurring.

As they process more data, these models are refined, adapting to the changing reality. It is as if the machines are constantly sensing what they perceive through their sensors, be it sound, image or text.

A clear example of this is intelligent assistants such as Alexa or Siri. These systems analyze what we say and, in accordance with their probabilistic model, offer us an answer. Even if it is not always perfect, AI learns from its mistakes and each interaction brings it closer to a greater understanding of language and context.

Machines must not only process information, but also interpret it, extract patterns and anticipate future scenarios. It is at



While AI explores the conjectures of the world, Blockchain is the inviolable foundation of certainty

this point that AI differs from simple data processing and enters the realm of real intelligence.

Getting machines to master this art of guessing will open up a range of possibilities. From making more accurate business decisions to developing more efficient medical diagnostic systems, AI has the potential to transform the way we live and work.

While artificial intelligence explores the conjectures of the world, looking for patterns and probabilities, Blockchain stands on the inviolable basis of certainty. Unlike AI, which focuses on discovery and evaluation, Blockchain takes care of validation, permanence and control.

Imagine a giant puzzle, whe-

re each piece represents a transaction. Blockchain encrypts and stores each piece of this puzzle, creating an unalterable chain that records the complete history of transactions. This technology guarantees transparency and traceability, allowing all participants to verify the authenticity of the information.

AI, with its probabilistic approach, can identify opportunities and assess risks. However, it is Blockchain that comes into play when it comes time to execute the plan. Smart contracts are self-executing computer programs that reside on the blockchain. These contracts define the terms of an agreement and are automatically executed when pre-set conditions are met, eliminating the need for interme-

diaries and reducing the risk of fraud.

Unlike probabilistic AI, Blockchain must operate with absolute certainty. Each transaction recorded on the blockchain is immutable, meaning it cannot be modified or deleted. This is the feature to ensure trust and security in digital transactions.

Blockchain establish itself as the backbone of a new era of trust and transparency in the digital world. As AI continues to evolve, Blockchain is positioned as its ideal complement, providing the solid foundation upon which plans can be built and executed with complete security and certainty. Its ability to validate, preserve and control information makes it a great tool. ●

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