

Communiqué DE PRESSE

Paris, 18th November 2022

ART publishes a study on the usage of sidings and issues 20 recommendations to improve the quality of the offer and services provided to railway undertakings

Whilst the State displays a strong ambition for the development of the railway mode in order to contribute to the decarbonisation of transport, the French Regulatory Transport Authority (ART) publishes a study on the usage of sidings aimed at improving the quality of the access conditions to these tracks, which constitute one of the determinants of the overall performance of the railway system. To this end, ART issues 20 recommendations, including 9 strategic recommendations, for the State, SNCF Réseau (Infrastructure manager) and SNCF Immobilier (Real Estate).

ART IDENTIFIES FOUR MAIN BARRIERS TO THE OPERATION OF RAIL PASSENGER OR FREIGHT SERVICES

Often considered to be of secondary importance, the sidings are nonetheless an essential asset for the operation of rail passenger and freight services, on a par with the main tracks of the rail network.

Yet, the sidings offer proposed by SNCF Réseau currently presents **four main barriers** to the operation of such services.

1st barrier: The lack of transparency in the sidings' offer prevents the identification of the relevant sites by the railway undertakings.

Railway undertakings, especially new entrants, do not have a comprehensive and up-to-date vision of the offer of sidings, making particularly arduous the identification of the shunting, marshalling and yard tracks they need to operate their services.

2nd barrier: The capacity reservation process appears too rigid.

When rail freight services were opened up to competition in 2006, SNCF Réseau gradually introduced the capacity management of sidings based on the concept of "tracks block". While this block-based management has the advantage of simplicity, it generates considerable rigidity in the capacity allocation process in view of the number of railway undertakings and the temporality of transport markets.

3rd barrier: The management of sidings appears to be insufficiently digitised.

SNCF Réseau's processes for operating and marketing sidings are still insufficiently digitised, which does not facilitate agile and optimal capacity management in line with the modern practices in the logistics sector.

4th barrier: The industrial and commercial strategy for sidings must gain in visibility and ambition.

Despite the major rationalisations already undertaken and an increase in investment in sidings since 2019, the ageing of this asset does not seem to have been halted. The lack of an incentive environment for SNCF Réseau, as manager of these services, is now compromising their sustainability.

ART ISSUES 20 RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS

In order to overcome the four main barriers to the operation of rail transport services identified, the Authority issues 9 “strategic” recommendations for SNCF Réseau, SNCF Immobilier and the State. They are completed by 11 “practical” recommendations mainly addressed to SNCF Réseau, which aim at significant improvements in the quality of the offer through precise and concrete actions achievable without delay or additional resources.

#	Strategic recommendation	Addressee
1	Establish, publish, and update a mapping of the domain managed by SNCF Réseau.	SNCF Réseau, SNCF Immobilier
2	Restructure the capacity allocation process on the sidings to ensure its modularity and smoothness.	SNCF Réseau
3	Adopt an industrial approach, enabling all sites to digitise the structuring functions of core business processes within 3 to 5 years.	SNCF Réseau
4	Include requests for capacity for work purposes in the third-party allocation process.	SNCF Réseau
5	Initiate a virtuous dynamic between industrial performance and a regulated pricing model for access to sidings by progressively raising the level of coverage of authorised revenue through a pricing structure that correlates tariffs to the level of services offered and modulates charges according to the actual level of service.	SNCF Réseau
6	Enhance the strategic nature of the sidings at the highest level of the company by integrating into the company's project a dimension specific to the service facility operator's business and by developing a strategic vision of the commercial services provided.	SNCF Réseau
7	Carry out an exhaustive inventory and an overall estimate of the renewal work required in the short and medium term, anticipating the evolution of railway practices.	SNCF Réseau
8	Include in the performance contract a definition of the target industrial consistency of the service facility offers, together with the allocation of specific resources.	State SNCF Réseau
9	Facilitate and extend the implementation of closer monitoring and control of SNCF Réseau's tariff and industrial dynamics by the regulator.	State

For further details:

- [The study on the usage of sidings \(in French\)](#)
- [Press release in French](#)

About the French Transport Regulatory Authority (ART)

Since 2010, the French railway sector has had an independent authority to accompany its gradual opening to competition: the Autorité de régulation des activités ferroviaires (Araf). Law 2015-990 of 6 August 2015 on growth, activity and equal economic opportunity extended the regulator's powers to road activities - coach transport and motorways.

On 15 October 2015, Araf became the Autorité de régulation des activités ferroviaires et routières (Arafer), with the mission to contribute to the proper functioning of public service and competitive activities for the benefit of rail and road transport customers.

With competence for the regulation of airport charges since 1 October 2019, Arafer became the Transport Regulatory Authority (ART) on that date. Lastly, Law No. 2019-1428 of 24 December 2019 -mobility act- extended the Authority's powers and missions to the opening up of mobility and ticketing data, as well as to the regulation of infrastructure manager activities and security activities carried out by RATP in Île-de-France.

Its opinions and decisions are adopted by a college of five independent members chosen for their economic, legal or technical skills in the field of digital services or transport, or for their expertise in competition matters. It is chaired since 4th August 2022 by Philippe Richert, Vice-President and Acting President.