

PRESS RELEASE

Paris, April 29th 2024

Passenger transport has regained its pre-health crisis dynamic

ART - the French Transport Regulatory Authority - publishes its third multimodal report. The report provides an overview of passenger transport in 2022, highlighting the impact of the health crisis on the various modes of transport, the quality of services provided to users, and the environmental impact of the sector. It also presents two thematic studies that respond to the major challenges of decarbonization, competitiveness and accessibility for the transport sector: (1) a review of projects for the deployment of new metropolitan regional express services ("Serm") and (2) an analysis of the development of a "single" transport ticket in France.

THE HEALTH CRISIS DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE CAUSED A SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTION IN THE EVOLUTION OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT IN FRANCE

In 2022, passenger transport in France represented 991.6 billion passenger.km, which is close to the level observed before the health crisis (-3.8 % compared to 2019). Despite a very marked rebound for the rail sector, which exceeded its previous modal share "ceiling" of 10 %, the private vehicle remains the preferred mode of transport, covering 83% of kilometres travelled. Finally, the improvement in the punctuality of transport services during the health crisis was only temporary, with a marked deterioration in 2022.

In 2022, although below their 2019 level, greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector - passenger and freight combined - reached 130.5 million tonnes CO₂eq (down 2.9 % compared to 2019), most of which comes from road transport (93.8 %). Thus, in 2022, the average French person generated, for travel purposes only, around 2 tonnes CO₂eq, a level equivalent to the target carbon footprint for 2050 set by the French National Low-Carbon Strategy (*Stratégie Nationale Bas Carbone* - SNBC) to meet the targets set by the Paris Agreement.

SERM PRESENT A CLEAR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN METROPOLES AND THEIR SUBURB, UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS

By 2023, almost 15 metropolitan regional express service ("Serm") projects have already been launched or even put into operation, even before the law¹ specifying the conditions for their implementation was enacted. These projects can already capitalize on the current good condition and capacity of the rail infrastructure to start ramping up their services without delay, by increasing their frequency, amplitude and service, as well as on a dense, albeit highly heterogeneous, urban transport offer.

While these projects confirm the national challenge of reinforcing multimodal services around major metropolises, they show strong disparities in their motivations at local level and suffer from a lack of technical and economic studies of their expected effects, particularly in terms of passenger number. However, such studies are essential to justify the major investments these projects call for, some of which cover broader projects than just Serm projects.

In addition, the significant demand potential that such projects could capture, as well as the relatively high level of road congestion in the metropolises and agglomerations concerned, are factors likely to support the success of Serm projects. However, their success - particularly in providing a coherent, comprehensive transport offer across the mobility area of the metropolises and agglomerations concerned - depends on how they are financed, and on effective coordination between local and regional mobility authorities.

LESS AMBITIOUS THAN EXPECTED, THE RAIL PASS IN FRANCE IS NEVERTHELESS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS SIMPLIFYING MULTIMODAL TRAVEL FOR PASSENGERS

The government's plan for a single rail pass introduced early 2023 was intended to ensure that the ease of use achieved on road by the "reliable navigation / bank card / electronic road toll" triptych would be transposed to public transport. In the short term, the system should take the form of a Rail Pass aimed at young people under 27 during the summer period and would only apply to TER and Intercités services.

In view of the experience gained from more or less similar measures already deployed elsewhere in France and Europe, the potential impact of this system - which is smaller in scope than a generalized pass - is likely to be limited in terms of modal shift. However, the Rail Pass has the advantage of being less costly than a generalized pass and of limiting the risks observed when similar measures are implemented on a large scale (in particular, embolization of the offer and reduction in service quality).

For further details (in French):

[« Le transport de voyageurs en France – Les transports à l'issue de la crise sanitaire en 2022 ; Les services express régionaux métropolitains ; Le titre unique, analyse au travers d'exemples en France et en Europe » – Avril 2024](#)

¹ Law No. 2023-1269 of 27 December 2023 on metropolitan regional express services
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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 ART'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 29 December 2023 by Thierry Guimbaud.