

**Transport & Olympic
Games 2024: there's still
time to sound the alarm!**

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Introduction

In the summer of 2024 (from July 26 to September 8), France - and more specifically the city of Paris, will host the Olympic and Paralympic Games ("Olympics"). This major sporting competition, which attracts worldwide attention (more than 3 billion individuals watched the 2020 edition, which took place in Tokyo)¹, will also bring several million people to the Capital (and a few other sites). The authorities are expecting a total of 13 million tourists, 15,000 athletes and tens of thousands of accredited guests (including 20,000 journalists). Clearly, this influx will be a boon to France's image, as many consumers will be renting rooms, booking restaurants, visiting museums and bringing back souvenirs from the "City of Light".

That's a lot of people who'll have to travel around Paris and to the competition venues, some of which are located beyond the Paris ring road (as well as in some of France's larger cities)...

¹ International Olympic Committee

It is estimated that 600,000 spectators and 200,000 accredited guests will need to be transported every ^{day}². For the Île-de-France transport authority, Île-de-France Mobilités (IdFM), the challenge is gigantic: as its director explained to the press in March 2023, "it's almost as if we had to manage access to 50 soccer matches and 50 Stade de France stadiums a day "³.

Transport is therefore a key issue.

And it will be, right from the start of the event. While the organizers would like to attract up to 600,000 spectators to the opening ceremony, IdFM has warned that it will not be able to cope with such an influx. As a result, a number of concerns have arisen, such as the capacity to offer efficient modes of transport, and the organization of security.

The challenge is all the greater because it's no secret that traffic in Paris is complex, to say the least: the city is systematically congested, and traffic jams are on the ^{increase}⁴.

For the event to be a success, public transport must be reliable, efficient and fast. But it's more than just about getting around: it has to be safe, it has to be ecologically responsible, it has to be comfortable. On a day-to-day basis, they will reflect an image of France to tourists: either efficient, or from another century and lagging behind in modernization.

In fact, the subject was at the heart of the Paris bid: a commitment was made that all spectators would be able to get to the competition sites by public transport, and that these sites would be accessible to people with reduced mobility.

But it's not just sports fans who need to get their transport systems right: the people of Paris and its suburbs will also be there during the Games! Although the Olympic Games start in the middle of summer, when some of the inhabitants of Paris and its suburbs will be on vacation, it's still a challenge. What's more, the Paralympic Games will take place when Parisians are back from their vacations and preparing for the start of the new school year... The sequence therefore gives rise to much greater concern in terms of the strain on transport capacity: between August 28 and September 8, three million spectators are expected,

² Cour des Comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rapport au Parlement, January 2023.

³ Le Monde, Paris Olympics: the immense transport challenge, March 2023

⁴ JDD, Traffic jams in Ile-de-France: the shock study that demonstrates the worsening situation, May 2018

even though the summer period will have come to an end and school and professional activities will have resumed. So much so, that rumors are already circulating that it could be postponed, otherwise France won't be able to ^{manage}⁵. For its part, IdFM warns Parisians that it will be preferable to telework.

There is a real danger that, if the difficulties are too great, the population could become hostile to the Games. At the end of 2022, the French government noted in a report that "the organization of mobility during the Games must preserve transport for everyday users "⁶. The French Court of Auditors even expressed concern about the risk of "severely damaging the event's acceptability to the public "⁷.

For some weeks now, doubts have been growing.

The press is open and unambiguous. In June 2022, Le Parisien was already asking the question: "Will the transport network hold up? "⁸. A year later, some were even more assertive: "the transport network is not up to the task "⁹. In March 2023, 500 days before the start of the Olympic Games, articles were also ^{multiplying}¹⁰, pointing out that "concern" was mounting over the transport situation.

There's every reason to doubt it: in a report published in January 2023, the Cour des Comptes (French Audit Office) noted that two challenges remain. Just two. Safety and ^{transport}¹¹. The authorities, while partially denying it for the sake of putting on a brave face, are in fact perfectly aware of the fact: the Government has thus set up a The new "Mobility Strategy Committee", directly under the authority of the Minister of Transport, will ensure that the project moves forward as smoothly as possible. This is good news.

The purpose of this note is therefore to give a partial, but not partial, progress report on transport preparations for the Olympic Games.

His observation is that this major sporting event adds burdens, constraints and challenges to a transport system that was already facing structural difficulties. The Olympics will accentuate this pressure.

5 Le Parisien, Jeux olympiques 2024 : en Île-de-France, de possibles postponements de rentrée scolaire, May 2023

6 Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Inspection générale de l'administration, Audit des mobilités dans le cadre des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques de Paris 2024, September 2022.

7 Cour des Comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rap- port au Parlement, January 2023.

8 Le Parisien, JO de Paris 2024 : avec 10 millions de voyageurs en plus, le réseau de transports va-t-il tenir le choc, June 2022

9 La Gazette des communes, Paris-2024 : en Île-de-France, le réseau des transports n'est pas au rendez-vous, June 2023

10 LCI, With 500 days to go before the 2024 Olympics, concerns about Parisian transport, March 2024

11 Cour des Comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rap- port au Parlement, January 2023.

His analysis focuses selectively on four issues:

- Finances, which are drifting ;
- Major works, which are not on the agenda;
- Accessibility, which will not be achieved ;
- Fluidity, theoretically made possible by ticketing systems, which will not be modernized.

Based on these analyses, his conclusion is one of disappointment (missed opportunities) and concern - or at the very least, circumspection. Will Paris be up to the challenge? Most probably. But won't it be at the cost of unreasonable effort and unwelcome sacrifice?

The specific features of the Île-de-France transport system¹²

*The Île-de-France transport network is **well-developed**, with 14 train and RER lines, 16 metro lines and 10 tramway lines, for a total of 1,800 kilometers. Over 9 million journeys are made every day.*

Launched in 2010, the Grand Paris Express (GPE) project, managed by Société du Grand Paris (SGP), aims to complete the public transport infrastructure in the Paris region, notably to facilitate travel between the suburbs of Paris. It plans to add 200 kilometers of lines between 2024 and 2030.

*The **governance** of transport in the Île-de-France region is handled by a single authority: Île-de-France Mobilités (IdFM), a local public body that essentially reports to the Île-de-France Region. Although its creation to replace the Syndicat des transports d'Ile-de-France (STIF) was a welcome rationalization of regional organization, bringing together the departments and the Region, this optimization remains imperfect. Conflicts between authorities (State / Region / départements / communes) are recurrent.*

*Only a minority of **funding** comes from users (barely a third)¹³ : it relies heavily on compulsory contributions from companies ("versement mobilités"). In 2023, the Paris Île-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry noted t h a t "while the share of the business community has continued to grow, the share of users has declined overall, both through the extension of social fares and general fares "¹⁴.*

¹² Cour des Comptes, Les transports collectifs en Île-de-France - Rapport public annuel 2022; Institut Montaigne, Mobilités en Île-de-France : ticket pour l'avenir, June 2022

¹³ Transport is financed from three sources: (i) a direct contribution from companies, known as the "versement mobilités", which corresponds to a payroll tax, (ii) a contribution from users, through their season tickets and the purchase of transit passes; and (iii) a contribution from local authorities.

¹⁴ Assises du financement d'Île-de-France Mobilités, Cahier d'acteur CCI Paris Île-de-France, January



1. From finances à the that the Olympics only marginally improve

IdFM's financial situation before the JO is structurally complex (A) and has deteriorated significantly as a result of the economic climate (B).

A) Structurally unsustainable accounts

A financial drift now well identified and known to all

The financial situation of public transport in the Paris region is a major concern. In May 2023, a report published by the French government came to a stark conclusion:

"the financial trajectory of Île-de-France Mobilités (IdFM), the

AOM) in Île-de-France is, as it stands, unsustainable "¹⁵.

This observation is by no means revolutionary, as there has been no shortage of warnings. In 2020, a mission already commissioned by the French government also highlighted the unsustainable nature of IdFM's financial ^{dynamics}¹⁶. The same year, the Chambre régionale des comptes came to a similar ^{conclusion}¹⁷. In 2022, the Cour des Comptes again sounded the alarm, pointing out that "the worsening threats to the sustainability of the Ile-de-France public transport business model "¹⁸.

All in all, IdFM would be in a "funding impasse" that would put it in contradiction with public accounting standards (the "golden rule")¹⁹ as early as ²⁰²⁷²⁰!

Suffocating debt

The problem is quite simple: in a dynamic that is fairly widespread in France, "we are witnessing an increase in expenses at a faster rate than revenues "²¹.

Systematic recourse to borrowing to finance major projects has placed IdFM in a situation that is, to say the least, uncertain, if not ^{perilous}²². In a report published in the spring of 2023 by the French government, IdFM's financial situation has deteriorated,

15 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

16 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

17 Chambre régionale des comptes, Syndicat des transports d'Ile-de-France (Stif) - Ile-de-France Mobilités. 2013 and subsequent years, 2020

18 Cour des Comptes, Public transport in Île-de-France - Annual public report 2022

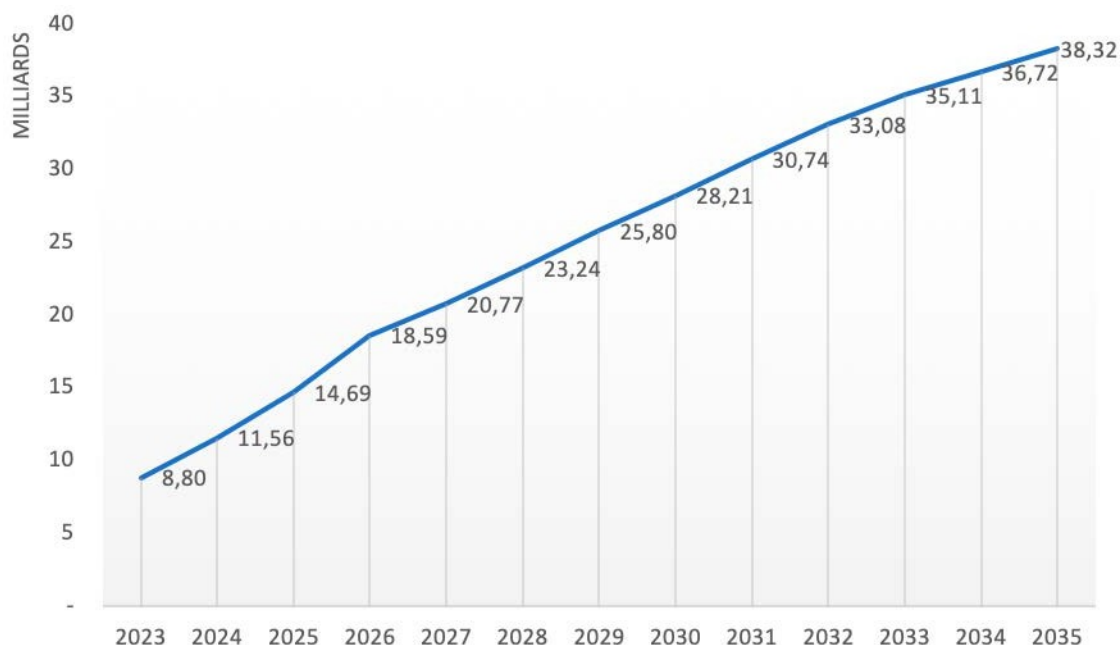
19 This rule stipulates that "local authorities and their public establishments must comply with three cumulative conditions: - each section, operating and investment, must be voted in balance; - revenue and expenditure must be evaluated sincerely; - the deduction for the benefit of the investment section, added to the own revenue of this same section, must cover the capital repayment of the loan annuity". Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023.

20 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

21 Assises du financement d'Île-de-France Mobilités, Groupe majorité présidentielle à la région Île-de-France, January 2023

22 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

They noted that "while IdFM had virtually no debt in 2012, its major investments, mainly financed by borrowing, have led to a rapid acceleration in debt, which will reach €8.8 billion by the end of 2022". This indebtedness, so typical of national public practices, is set to grow considerably even further, reaching €28.2 bn in 2030 and €38.3 bn in 2035²³.



IdFM debt (billions of euros) ²⁴

Funding requirements are therefore enormous: 800 million euros from 2024, rising to 2.6 billion by 2035²⁵.

B) Uncertainty over resources

In early 2023, the "Assises du financement de mobilité en Île-de-France" were organized, with the aim of identifying how to find new resources and try to avoid the predicted wreck²⁶.

²³ Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

²⁴ Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

²⁵ Institut Paris Région, Financing the operation of public transport in the Paris Region, 2023

²⁶ Institut Paris Région, Financing the operation of public transport in the Paris Region, 2023

The proposal most often put forward was expressed in chastened terms by the French government: "the most powerful lever for reducing the need for financing is fare policy "²⁷. In other words, users will have to pay, and pay ^{more}²⁸. It has to be said that, to date, public transport in the Paris region is mainly financed by companies (50% of the total), with users providing 'only' 31% of resources. In this respect, Paris and its region stand out from other major European metropolises, where fares are often considerably ^{higher}²⁹. This is a major, structuring political choice, which enables residents to get around easily, increasing their professional mobility.

For the time being, the proposal of a fare increase is, as everyone can easily imagine, politically explosive, and no one is prepared to accept it.

seems to want to activate it.

	M€	%
Versement mobilités	5 311	50,0%
Recettes tarifaires	3 273	30,8%
Contributions publiques	1 592	15,0%
Dont collectivités	1 333	12,5%
Dont État	128	1,2%
Dont autres subventions	99	0,9%
Autres recettes	455	4,3%

Sources of funding for IdFM in 2022 ³⁰

²⁷ Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

²⁸ Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

²⁹ The report states that "by way of example, the price of a monthly pass covering the AOM territory in 2019 was around €280 in London and Frankfurt, €186 in Berlin and €99 in Stockholm, compared with €72.20 in Île-de-France".

³⁰ Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

Another suggestion is that, in the absence of action on the revenue side, we could intervene on the expenditure side by moderating future investments... Calls for moderating ambitions for the future are being heard, but they will do nothing to change the debt dynamics driven by projects already underway and committed.

Unsurprisingly, in this type of situation, local elected representatives and the state pass the ^{buck}³¹.

C) A situation marginally worsened by the Olympic Games

Accounts downgraded by economic conditions

IdFM's financing difficulties are amplified by a doubly inflationary context:

- Energy costs have soared, which has necessarily increased the cost of operating public transport;
- The shortage of drivers has led to a drive to raise salaries and make offers more attractive. In fact, despite announced bonuses, too few candidates are willing to enter the driver's ^{profession}³².

Beyond this, while the Covid crisis is receding and its cost has been offset by state aid mechanisms, it has obviously had an impact on operators, who have maintained their transport activities even though services have been little or unused. IdFM, which suffered a loss of 1.45 billion euros in ²⁰²⁰³³, must repay the aid granted by the State in 2023.

Finances officially moderately affected by the Olympic Games

The authorities regularly repeat that the major transport projects undertaken in the Paris region are independent of the Olympic Games. As such, this sporting event will only have a marginal impact on IdFM's accounts.

31 France Bleu, Financement des transports publics : " L'Etat nous mène en bateau ", dénoncent Valérie Pécresse et Anne Hidalgo, February 2023; Le Point, " Le gouvernement n'a pas de stratégie " : les transports à bout de souffle, November 2022; JDD, Transports : Valérie Pécresse et les présidents de métropole de Lyon, Toulouse et Nantes veulent plus d'aide, October 2022

32 20 minutes, Transports : mais pourquoi une telle pénurie de chauffeurs, October 2022

33 Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

That said, there is a moderate form of double hypocrisy in these statements:

- Firstly, the infrastructure projects under development were, at least in the communication, linked to the Olympic construction site. Not only was public transport mobilized as a major asset of the Paris bid, but several projects were also essential to the smooth running of the Games;
- Then, the statistics seem to contradict this observation somewhat. In January 2023, for example, IdFM reported that the Olympics would generate additional costs of 200 million euros... while the audit mission commissioned by the French government in 2020 had assumed 100 million euros³⁴ ! This (non-zero!) approximation is perhaps not surprising, given that the Cour des Comptes itself noted, in January 2023 (a year and a half before the start of the competition!), that it "is not in a position, at this stage, to establish the overall cost of the Games and its impact on public finances "³⁵.

³⁴ Ministère de l'économie, des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, Ministère délégué chargé des Comptes publics, Ministère délégué chargé des Transports, Inspection générale des finances, Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Perspectives financières d'Île-de-France Mobilités, mai 2023

³⁵ Cour des Comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rapport au Parlement, January 2023.



2. Major works behind schedule, but unable to relieve Olympic traffic congestion

It's a truism, but the sector, because it's part of the daily lives of millions of French people, is directly or indirectly affected by the major transformations affecting their lives. These changes are numerous, and some are particularly far-reaching:

- Ecological transition;
- Transformations in work organization ;
- Opening up to competition ;
- The digitization of society and its uses, which is changing the way people travel, from the organization of journeys to the ticketing revolution, which makes travel much smoother and more flexible, via the exploitation and enhancement of data.

For several years now, Île-de-France has been engaged in a vast project to extend its public transport network in two ways.

Firstly, it plans to reinforce its infrastructure: by the end of the decade, 139 new stations or stations will be created, and existing metro or RER lines will be extended. In all, 350 kilometers of new metro, streetcar, train and bus lines will ^{emerge}³⁶. Secondly, it has embarked on programs to renovate existing services.

These ambitions are a welcome response to the public transport challenges of our time. However, there's a long way to go from words to deeds and achievements, and Île-de-France seems to be taking it only with difficulty...

Although some of these projects were presented as essential to the success of the Olympic Games, in reality they will not be carried out (A). More broadly still, the modernization of transport services is not on the cards either (B).

A) Delivery of infrastructure essential to the Olympic Games still uncertain

Major public transport infrastructure projects are now running impressively late: we now know that some sites will definitely not be finished by the time the Olympic Games arrive; others should be, but their timetable cannot tolerate any unforeseen events. These delays are harmful because, by preventing the network from being relieved, they will contribute to overloading the existing network...

Building sites already abandoned

A number of projects that are now presented as secondary have long been highlighted as essential to the success of the Olympic Games. There's a simple explanation for this change of line: the authorities are "making the best of a bad situation"!

In 2018, SGP stated that "line 14 and the common trunk of lines 16 and 17 are also necessary for the smooth running of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games"³⁷. By 2021, the tone had changed: faced with a reality check, SGP

³⁶ Le Monde, Les transports d'Ile-de-France en quête de financements pour leurs investissements massifs, January 2023

³⁷ Government, Grand Paris Express - press kit, February 2018

pointed out that "the first sections of line 16 and line 17 are experiencing the most significant delays, with the entire line due to enter service in autumn 2026"³⁸.

Contrary to what was promised for the Olympic Games, it is now accepted that several major projects (which go beyond the Île-de-France region) will not be ^{ready}³⁹ :

- Lines ¹⁵⁴⁰, ¹⁶⁴¹ and ¹⁷⁴² of the Grand Paris Express ;
- The Charles-de-Gaulle ^{Express}⁴³ link;
- The two TGV lines Paris-Nice and Paris-Toulouse.

So many public transport routes will not be available to facilitate the mobility of the millions of people expected to use them...

Enormous pressure on the rest of the calendar

However, there is still pressure on a number of other current projects: although they are expected to be delivered on schedule, deadlines are now so tight and compressed that any unforeseen event would spell doom for them, even though they are still considered absolutely strategic for serving the Olympic ^{Games}⁴⁴.

38 Société du Grand Paris, Grand Paris Express, Société du Grand Paris updates the commissioning schedule for the Grand Paris Express and presents its strategic orientations, July 2021

39 Cour des comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rapport au Parlement, janvier 2023; Assemblée nationale, Stéphane Peu and Stéphane Mazars, Mission d'information sur les retombées des Jeux olympiques et paralympiques de 2024 sur le tissu économique et associatif local, February 2023

40 Société du Grand Paris: "Along its 33 km length, line 15 Sud will pass through 22 communes and affect more than a million inhabitants. Commissioning is scheduled for late 2025. By 2030, together with lines 15 West and 15 East, it will form a 75 km ring road around the capital.

41 Société du Grand Paris: "An essential line for the development of the eastern part of the metropolis, line 16 will link 10 stations, from Saint-Denis Pleyel to Noisy - Champs, in less than 30 minutes. It will serve towns that are currently poorly served by public transport, such as Clichy-sous-Bois and Mont-Fermeil, as well as the Descartes university campus in Champs-sur-Marne and Noisy-Champs, and the Plaine Saint-Denis business park.

42 Société du Grand Paris: "With a length of 26.5 km, line 17 spans 13 communes in the departments of Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-d'Oise and Seine-et-Marne. It connects nine stations* between Saint-Denis Pleyel and Le Mesnil-Amelot in less than 25 minutes, making it easier to get to and from Paris.

the daily lives of almost 565,000 residents. A new strategic axis for Greater Paris, with numerous connections, it offers a new, efficient mode of transport for thousands of employees in the major employment areas to the north of the metropolis. In this way, line 17 reinforces the development of major economic hubs in the Paris region (Pleyel sector, Villepinte Exhibition Centre, Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Paris-Le Bourget airports).

43 Charles de Gaulle Express: "The heart of Paris, 20 minutes from Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport. At the start of 2027, this direct rail link project will help reduce car use, contribute to the modernization of daily transport (RER B), and create jobs and boost the attractiveness of the Ile-de-France region.

44 Cour des Comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rapport au Parlement, January 2023.

This is the case for the following projects:

- Eole, i.e. the E line of the RER, whose route extends to the west of Paris.

In the run-up to the Olympic Games, this line should improve services between Paris and La Défense-Arena. By the time the competition begins, the overall project will not have been finalized: it is so far behind schedule that the final delivery date (2026 at best)⁴⁵ seems hard to pin down.

The management of this project is causing great tension between local authorities, the State and infrastructure operators. The cost overrun has already reached almost 50%! Whereas the project was supposed to cost 3.7 billion euros, its budget is now estimated at 5.4 billion! So much so, in fact, that SNCF Réseau has even threatened to pull the plug on the project if it doesn't receive a higher level of financial backing. In February 2023, in a rare moment of transpartisan unity, Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo and Île-de-France region president Valérie Pécresse jointly denounced insufficient funding, expressing concern that service would be "degraded" for the Olympic Games⁴⁶.

- The extension of line 14 and the Pleyel urban crossing, which will facilitate access to the Stade de France, the Olympic aquatic center and the athletes' village.

⁴⁵ Les Echos, L'arrivée du RER Eole dans les Yvelines à nouveau retardée, October 2022

⁴⁶ France Bleu, Public transport funding: "The State is taking us for a ride", denounce Valérie Pécresse and Anne Hidalgo, February 2023

The Court of Auditors takes a hard look at the delays⁴⁷

In a January 2023 report, the Cour des Comptes noted that "Several infrastructure projects, whether included in the bid or not, but which will play a major role in the success of the Games, present major risks due to the fact that the schedule is already stretched and there is no real room for manoeuvre. If they were not completed in time for the Games, the result would be an unsustainable strain on heavily-used lines, with the associated risks of incidents and bottlenecks for everyday users".

She adds that "the goal of putting all the 'JO lines' into service, already compromised at the start of 2020, has become unattainable".

The Court notes with administrative diplomacy that "Delays in certain key projects are putting further strain on the existing network. Some projects currently underway, which are strategic for the Games, are still uncertain about their delivery dates".

Against this backdrop, it is highly likely that the networks will be overloaded, leading to congestion and the need to find alternative solutions as palliatives.

On some days, for example, metro line 9 will be unable to cope with the massive influx of visitors (up to 55,000 per day on three days in July)⁴⁸. Unable to adapt, the authorities have decided to introduce shuttle buses to the Parc des Princes (for soccer events) and Roland-Garros (tennis and boxing)⁴⁹.

Olympic lanes

"There will be two types of Olympic lanes. Bicycle paths, where a huge effort has been made and which will remain as a legacy, and road lanes dedicated to the delegations for rapid access to the venues". This is the most advanced element of the transport plan for the Olympic Games⁵⁰.

Clément Beaune, Minister of Transport, L'Equipe, October 2022

⁴⁷ Cour des Comptes, L'organisation des jeux olympiques et paralympiques de paris 2024 - rapport au Parlement, January 2023.

⁴⁸ Le Parisien, Le problème de la saturation de la ligne 9 loin d'être réglé, June 2023

⁴⁹ 20 Minutes, Paris 2024 Olympics: transport not quite up to scratch in western Paris, June 2023

⁵⁰ Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Inspection générale de l'administration, Audit des mobilités dans le cadre des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques de Paris 2024, September 2022.

B) Poor service, insufficiently modern

In a recent report, two members of parliament (one from NUPES, the other from Renaissance) harshly judged that "never has transport in the Paris region worked so badly"⁵¹. The situation is so unsatisfactory that last January the Chairman of the National Assembly's Law Commission even suggested that a parliamentary group be set up to investigate⁵².

This feeling is backed up by a significant number of testimonials and news reports, which speak of the weariness of users, dissatisfied with transport conditions and degraded services⁵³. Examples abound, some of which may be presented here for illustrative purposes.

The first example is RATP, which is faced with bus driver absenteeism so high (approximately 13%) that "one bus in five remains at the depot every day"⁵⁴. To remedy this, in October 2022, the company announced the introduction of an attendance bonus, to be paid when attendance at the workstation is continuous⁵⁵ (the last straw!)⁵⁶.

Another example: service on the RER B (one of Europe's busiest lines) is so inadequate that the users most affected benefit from compensation⁵⁷. And yet, in May 2023, the Île-de-France Region announced that it was abandoning the line's renovation project, as the accumulated delays (for over 4 years!) were now too great. For dissatisfied users, this means a lost promise of quality service: "no refrigerated ventilation, video surveillance or increase in the number of seats"⁵⁸.

51 Assemblée nationale, Stéphane Peu and Stéphane Mazars, Mission d'information sur les retombées des Jeux olympiques et paralympiques de 2024 sur le tissu économique et associatif local, February 2023

52 L'Opinion, Transports en Île-de-France : l'Assemblée veut tirer les choses au clair, January 2023

53 Le Figaro, Stress, agression, delays... quand les Franciliens fuient Paris à cause des transports en commun, April 2023; Le Figaro, La RATP et Île-de-France Mobilités peinent à répondre à l'exaspération des usagers du métro parisien, September 2022

54 France Télévisions, Public transport: faced with criticism and the anger of users, Jean Castex has unveiled his new plan for the RATP, January 2023

55 Radio France, To combat bus driver absenteeism, RATP launches an attendance bonus, October 2022

56 Beyond that, efforts must certainly be made to control expenditure ... and work better. In 2022, the Cour des Comptes noted, with a polite sense of understatement, that "transport operators must step up their productivity efforts".

57 Le Parisien, Ces retards qui bouleversent la vie des usagers du RER B, January 2023; Le Parisien, Un tiers des abonnés Navigo concernés indemnités après les retards à répétition, January 2023

58 Le Parisien, L'abandon de la rénovation des RER B déçoit une fois de plus les usagers, May 2023

Third example: punctuality... Statistics published by IdFM show, for example, that 7 lines (3,4,6,7,8,12 and 13) perform particularly poorly. Worse still, service deteriorated in the second half of ²⁰²²⁵⁹! Beyond the statistics and the marginal but regular delays, anecdotes regularly arise from more important events, such as a major breakdown on metro line 4 in June 2023, blocking five trains for over 2h30 with their passengers and no air ^{conditioning}⁶⁰. All in all, although "efforts have been made to improve passenger information", "punctuality remains inadequate on a large part of the network" ⁶¹, which is obviously detrimental to users: "these delays and incessant disruptions cause stress, even anxiety, for many people", denounced Bruno Gazeau, President of the Fédération nationale des associations d'usagers des ^{transports}⁶² at the end of 2022.

The latest example is the never-ending episode surrounding the opening up of bus networks to competition, which is due to take place shortly. Faced with the fear of not being able to adapt to it, elected representatives are now pleading for its postponement! They claim that this change in management mode will increase the constraints on ^{administrations}⁶³ and risk provoking social ^{protests}⁶⁴. The government, through the voice of its transport minister, has also come out in favor of a ^{postponement}⁶⁵.

It is therefore regrettable that the Olympic Games were not better used as an opportunity to modernize transport in the Île-de-France ^{region}⁶⁶!

59 20 Minutes, Paris: punctuality on seven metro lines is problematic, January 2023

60 L'Opinion, RATP : une panne géante qui pose question, June 2023

61 Chambre régionale des comptes, Syndical des transports d'Île-de-France (Stif) - Île-de-France Mobilités, 2020

62 Le Figaro, Entre fatigue et colère, le ras-le-bol des usagers des transports en commun, novembre 2022

63 Assemblée nationale, Stéphane Peu and Stéphane Mazars, Mission d'information sur les retombées des Jeux olympiques et paralympiques de 2024 sur le tissu économique et associatif local, February 2023

64 See for example Assemblée nationale, Stéphane Peu, Rapport sur la proposition de loi visant à surseoir à l'ouverture à la concurrence du réseau de bus de la Régie autonome des transports parisiens (n°995), April 2023.

65 Regional President Valérie Pécresse, for her part, believes that she can open up the market gradually - and more slowly than initially envisaged, without amending the law. BFM, Paris : Pécresse estime pouvoir ouvrir à la concurrence les bus de la RATP "progressivement", sans modifier la loi, May 2023 ; La Tribune, Ouverture à la concurrence des bus parisiens de la RATP : Pécresse prête à temporiser, April 2023

66 In this respect, the two MPs consider the Olympics to be "a missed opportunity to improve transport in the Paris region". National Assembly, Stéphane Peu and Stéphane Mazars, Mission d'information sur les retombées des Jeux olympiques et paralympiques de 2024 sur le tissu économique et associatif local, February 2023



3. Accessibility... inaccessible

As part of its bid to host the Olympic Games, France undertook to ensure that the venues would be accessible to people with reduced mobility (350,000 disabled travellers are expected)⁶⁷. However, it's no mystery that this will not be the case.

As the Cour des Comptes notes, "structural weaknesses remain, however, particularly in the Paris metro for wheelchair users. It seems unlikely that this commitment to accessibility can be met in full, so alternative measures to public transport must be rapidly adopted". The Minister of Transport recognized this as early as ²⁰²²⁶⁸, indicating in the press the need to speed up the search for these alternative solutions. In June 2023, the

⁶⁷ La Gazette des communes, Paris-2024 : en Île-de-France, le réseau des transports n'est pas au rendez-vous, June 2023

⁶⁸ La Croix, Delays in transport accessibility: "with the Olympics, we were hoping for a dynamic", October 2022

government confirmed its plan to use an alternative to public transport, mobilizing "1,000 cabs"⁶⁹.

This solution seems to have disappointed the associations, who regret that the opportunity offered by the Olympic Games was not seized to make public transport in the Paris region accessible to disabled users⁷⁰.

In this respect, they are particularly worried. "Pascale Ribes, President of APF France handicap, wrote in *Le Monde* in February²⁰²³⁷¹. In terms of transport, the association leader wrote: "access by public transport is almost impossible: only 3% of metro stations, i.e. line 14, are accessible; few RER stations are accessible, and when they are, human assistance is often required to get off the train; buses can only accommodate a maximum of two wheelchair users... if they're not already full. As for access by private vehicle or minibus, it would either be forbidden or parking would be (very) far away from the competition venues".

⁶⁹ Ministry of Sports and Olympic and Paralympic Games, Amélie Oudéa-Castera and Clément Beaune chaired the fifth Strategic Mobility Committee JOP Paris 2024, June 2023

⁷⁰ *La Gazette des communes*, Paris-2024 : en Île-de-France, le réseau des transports n'est pas au rendez-vous, June 2023 ; *Libération*, Qu'en est-il de l'accessibilité aux Jeux Olympiques de Paris, April 2023 ; *La Tribune*, Jeux Olympiques 2024 : l'accessibilité pour les personnes à mobilité réduite inquiète encore, April 2023

⁷¹ *Le Monde*, Pascale Ribes, Paris 2024 : " C'est un scénario catastrophe qui se dessine pour les personnes en situation de handicap ", February 2023



4. Uncertain fluidity

With the advent of digital technology, the transport sector has also entered a new era (A). The question is whether public transport in the Paris region has also taken this step. Ticketing systems offer a glimpse, albeit not an entirely reassuring one (B).

A) Public transport in the age of MaaS

The emergence of digital technology is gradually transforming the way transport is used and offered: specialists are now constantly talking about "MaaS", for "Mobility as a service", in other words, the development of digital solutions enabling consumers to prepare their journeys from start to finish, and to move around seamlessly.

Users now expect integrated, easy-to-use solutions that combine efficiency with environmental concerns. The Smartphone is obviously the ideal tool for this, as it is the "device" that enables the agglomeration of solution "applications". Now you can carry everything you need for your trip in your pocket, and travel with peace of mind!

The use of digital tools makes travel more fluid by integrating a variety of solutions. This integration can be achieved in several ways and to several ^{degrees}⁷² :

- Firstly, by integrating information, i.e. giving users easy access to the information they need to prepare and carry out their journeys (timetables, fares, etc.);
- Secondly, by adding booking and payment, i.e. by developing tools that enable users to plan their journeys, book the various successive means of transport and purchase their tickets, either individually or by subscription;
- Finally, an even more integrated solution is to add public policy concerns, such as the environment, to support user behavior.

B) Ticketing lags behind

Ticketing is a key factor in the rapid fluidity of transport and the integration of purchasing elements on telephones, for example, with consumers now needing 'only' their Smartphone to travel, since it will record their travel data, timetables, reservations, tickets and so on.

An efficient tool is essential, especially for temporary users, who don't need to acquire a specific card as they still do today to use Parisian transport.

However, the Paris region network is lagging far behind in this ^{area}⁷³ : the digitization of tickets is not up to scratch.

⁷² Institut Montaigne, Mobilités en Île-de-France : ticket pour l'avenir, June 2022

⁷³ Le Parisien, Billets électroniques dans les transports : Londres et Helsinki ont un train d'avance sur l'Île-de-France, August 2022 ; Le Parisien, Pourquoi l'Île-de-France a un train de retard sur les billets électroniques ", August 2022

and not living up to the promises that had been made. This is particularly unfortunate in the run-up to the Olympic Games, which could have been an opportunity for foreign users to travel simply, smoothly and without constraint.

The announcements were promising: the IdFM's "ticketing modernization" plan called for the disappearance of the magnetic ticket in 2021 and the widespread introduction of a solution enabling users to dispense with ^{tickets}⁷⁴ and pay easily and simply for each journey (with a cell phone or bank card, for example, as is the case in London, where users can even pay for their ticket with the blue card integrated into their smartphone)⁷⁵.

Unfortunately, this is by no means the case in 2023: IdFM is only planning to *experiment with* the purchase of paperless tickets by telephone across the entire Ile-de-France network, starting this summer - 2 years ^{late}⁷⁶. However, this will not be as flexible as elsewhere: 'navigo liberté+'⁷⁷ will require customers to carry a specific card, and their journeys will be billed ^{afterwards}⁷⁸. As well as seeming less practical, this solution is more time-consuming than using a Smartphone... due to a worldwide shortage of the necessary electronic ^{chips}⁷⁹.

The promise of the operator selected in 2018 was also that, from 2019, metro tickets and the Navigo pass would be replaced by a contactless medium on ^{smartphones}⁸⁰. Instead, the solutions adopted oblige users to acquire a specific application, on which they have to register, instead of having followed the revolution implemented elsewhere in the world, consisting of enabling them to use their phone very ^{simply}⁸¹.

74 Le Parisien, Ile-de-France : un pas de plus vers la fin du ticket de métro, February 2018

75 Le Parisien, Transports du Grand Paris : et si le Passe Navigo intégrait votre carte bancaire, September 2021

76 Inspection générale de l'environnement et du développement durable, Inspection générale de l'administration, Audit des mobilités dans le cadre des Jeux Olympiques et Paralympiques de Paris 2024, September 2022.

77 IDFM, Les titres de transport en Île-de-France évoluent, June 2019

78 Le Parisien, Transport: the Navigo Liberté + pass to be tested throughout the Île-de-France region this summer, 2023

79 Le Figaro, Faute de puces, la disparition du ticket de métro parisien repoussée à cet été, February 2022 ; ActuParis, La suppression du ticket de métro en papier en Île-de-France retardée par une pénurie, January 2022

80 La Tribune, Comment le passe Navigo sera dématérialisé dès l'été 2019, December 2018; Le Monde, La RATP et la SNCF perdent la gestion informatique du Navigo, December 2018

81 Paris' difficulties are even echoed on the other side of the world: they were recently cited in parliamentary debates in Australia, as elected representatives debated the best solutions for Victoria's transport network. ABC, US-based firm Conduent put under spotlight ahead of December myki takeover, May 2023

"Why Ile-de-France is one step behind on electronic tickets".

Le Parisien, August 24, 2022

"(...) In Paris, paper tickets still account for almost half of all sales.

In the Île-de-France region, this "trend" obviously involves the gradual disappearance of the T ticket (the single-fare magnetic coupon for use on the metro, buses and RER in Paris only), which was initiated by Île-de-France Mobilités (IDFM) last year. It has already been replaced by two new media: the Navigo Easy, a kind of electronic wallet that can be loaded with tickets at station ticket machines or on the Internet (for a saving of €2 per book of 10 compared with the same paper book), and the Liberté + pass, which enables customers to pay for their journeys after the fact, with a daily expenditure capped at €7.50.

For the time being, however, these two new payment methods can only be used in the T-ticket zone (Paris and the inner suburbs), as exit validators are not available at all stations in the outer suburbs. Unsuitable for very occasional users, these replacements for paper tickets have been relatively neglected for the time being. And despite being over 120 years old, the metro ticket is still going strong. Last April, it still accounted for almost half of all sales.

So we're still a long way from its total disappearance. All the more so as other means of payment likely to replace it - on which IDFM and Comutitres (the group managing regional transport tickets, which launched its ticketing modernization plan in 2016) are working - are not at all perfected. Payment by bank card (to be affixed directly to the validator like a Navigo pass) is possible on Roissybus and Orlybus. But not on other modes of transport. As for smartphones, while they can already be used (since 2018) to buy bus tickets by SMS or (since 2019) to top up your Navigo pass, very few of them are yet formatted to store tickets and be used directly as validators.

In Helsinki, tickets by SMS for... sixteen years

IDFM, which is currently testing a new SIM card technology, has announced that the validator function will soon be extended to all NFC (contactless) compatible Android phones. However, they will not be able to replace paper tickets on the entire network.

when all Île-de-France stations have been equipped with exit validators (essential for calculating the fare afterwards). Completion is scheduled for 2023.

All the more reason to measure the extent to which the Île-de-France region lags behind other operators with 2.0 ticketing practices. In Helsinki (Finland), for example, all urban bus, metro, streetcar and ferry services can now be paid for directly by smartphone. Buying and issuing tickets by SMS has been possible since... 2006 ! In Berlin (Germany), smartphones can also be used as validators at station entrance kiosks. In Singapore, which recently abolished the sale of cardboard tickets, bank cards are used as Navigo passes...

Open payment" is also a key feature of the ticketing strategy of TFL (Transports for London, the British equivalent of IDFM), which has been Europe's champion of dematerialization for the past decade. So much so, that in Greater London stations, the only passengers who try to understand the complex fare structure (no single fare on the Underground, discounts for off-peak tickets) in front of the cardboard ticket vending machines are... tourists.

And the station agents (usually quite numerous, except during strike periods) who come to their rescue often find it hard to understand their request. "Do you have a bank card? Then why do you want to take a paper ticket!" they point out, explaining that passengers simply need to place their card on the entry terminal (and then on the exit terminal in the case of rail networks) to pay for their journey (...)".

