

PRESS RELEASE

Paris, September 12th, 2024

The French Transport Regulatory Authority issues a favorable opinion, subject to reservations, on SNCF Réseau's proposed 2024-2026 rail tolls, after they were annulled by the French Council of State

The French Transport Regulatory Authority (ART) today published its favorable opinion, subject to reservations, on the rail tolls proposed by SNCF Réseau for the 2024 to 2026 service timetables, following their annulment by the French Council of State for irregularities in the tariff-setting procedure. As the French Council of State did not call into question the substance of the tolls arrangements, SNCF Réseau's proposal does not entail any substantial change compared with the last tariff offer validated by ART in 2023 and is still in line with the full cost recovery decided by the State, and with structural changes designed to contribute to effective and optimal use of the network. ART thus validates most of the principles and amounts of rail tolls proposed by the infrastructure manager, in line with the applicable legal framework, its reservations being limited to the correction of a few calculation parameters. ART calls on SNCF Réseau to continue improving its charging for the 2027-2029 cycle.

SNCF RÉSEAU HAS SUBMITTED AN ENRICHED VERSION OF THE 2024-2026 RAIL TOLLS PROJECT TO ART, FOLLOWING THE ANNULMENT OF THE PREVIOUS ARRANGEMENTS BY THE FRENCH COUNCIL OF STATE.

The opinion published today follows the French Council of State's annulment, on March 5, 2024, of the previous versions of the tolls arrangements of the network statement 2024 due to a lack of transparency and insufficient consideration of contributions from public transport authorities (PTA). SNCF Réseau has relaunched a full stakeholder consultation process on a new version of the network statement, with enhanced information compared with previous versions.

As the French Council of State's decision did not call into question the substance of the network statement's charging provisions, SNCF Réseau has not made any substantial changes to the level of rail infrastructure usage tolls in its new charging project. The charges paid by railway undertakings, PTA and the State have increased by around 8 % compared with 2023 and will amount to over 7 billion euros in 2024.

While these toll levels remain high, they are in line with the goal of ensuring that the full cost of network management will eventually be covered by using charges. Despite being significantly higher than most other European countries, particularly for commercial passenger services, the proposed tolls levels are consistent with the objectives of the 2021-2030 performance contract between the French government and SNCF Réseau, and with observed inflation.

Regarding the structure of rail tolls, the changes undertaken in the initial project to encourage effective and optimal use of the network have been maintained, namely:

- an overhaul of the way in which charges are calculated, with the aim of covering costs directly attributable to train traffic, so that these tolls are more appropriate;
- an improvement in the economic signals sent by charges to cover the fixed costs of network construction and maintenance for commercial services; and
- the introduction of market royalty rates to cover the associated fixed costs of network construction and maintenance for public service obligation (PSO) services.

ART APPROVES ALMOST ALL NEW CHARGING PROVISIONS BUT CALLS ON SNCF RÉSEAU TO CONTINUE CHARGING IMPROVEMENTS

After deliberating on September 5, 2024, ART board validated, in their quasi-totality, the tolls for the use of the railway infrastructure for the new tariff cycle 2024-2026. For this referral, ART ensured that the total amount of rail charges did not exceed the full costs of infrastructure management, both overall and for each of the regional PSO services. ART has therefore issued a favorable opinion on the new tolls, subject to the correction of the amounts of market charges for five PTA¹, some of whose calculation parameters need to be rectified.

To ensure that the objective of covering full costs does not stand in the way of effective and optimal use of the network, ART reiterates its call for improved toll rates and maintains its previous recommendations to SNCF Réseau in this regard, with a view to the next 2027-2029 tariff cycle.

For further details (in French):

- [Avis 2024-060 du 5 septembre 2024 relatif à la fixation des redevances d'utilisation de l'infrastructure du réseau ferré national pour les horaires de service 2024 à 2026](#)

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About the French Transport Regulatory Authority (ART)

¹ PTA Normandie, Bretagne, Grand Est, State and Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.
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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 29th December 2023 by Thierry Guimbaud.