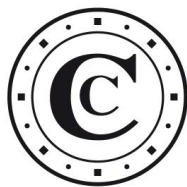


Cour des comptes



Chambres régionales
& territoriales des comptes

ROAD POLICY IN *ÎLE-DE-FRANCE*

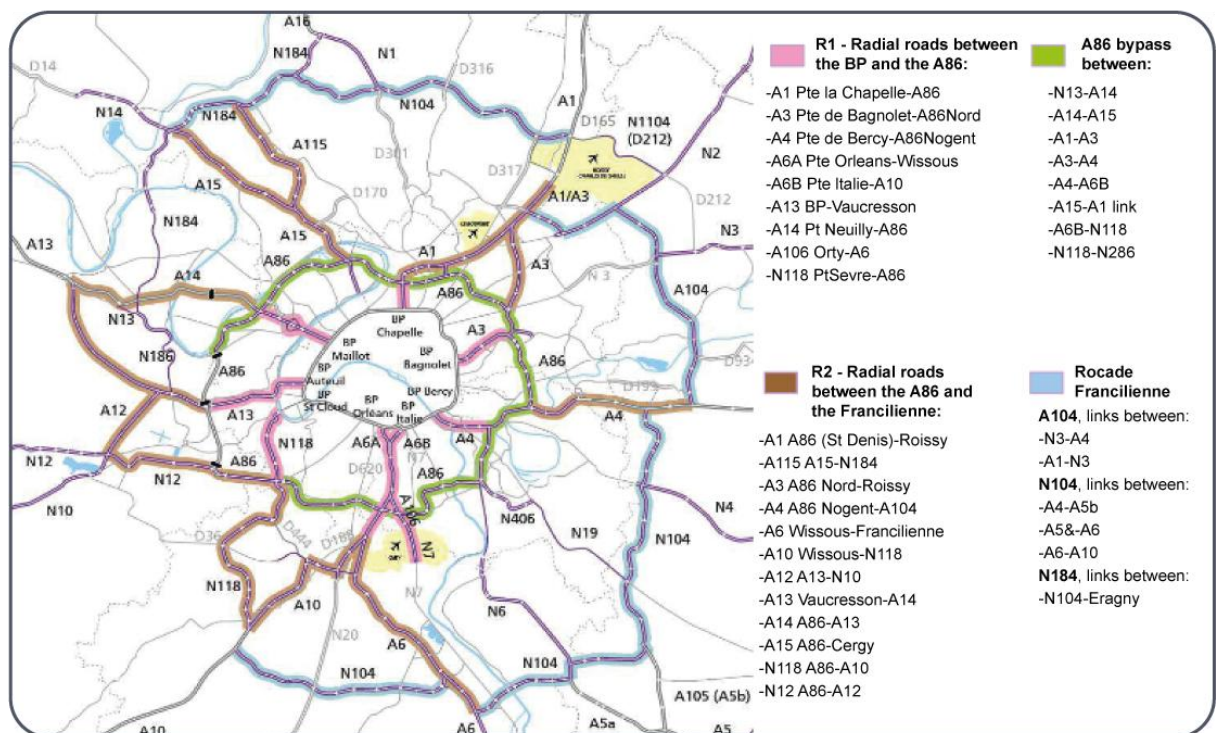
Public thematic report

September 2025

Summary

Roads policy aims to optimise the design and use of road infrastructure as part of a broader transport policy. It applies first and foremost to national and departmental roads, while municipal roads are mainly used to serve homes. In the *Île-de-France* region, the Paris ring road, owned by the City of Paris, is an exception because it carries a great deal of traffic, particularly through traffic. Together with the national roads, it forms the region's "main network", with a total length of 656 km¹¹.

The structure of the Île-de-France road network



Source: DIRIF

The absence of a genuine road policy, due to insufficient knowledge of needs and fragmentation of road authority

On this major network, the state of road traffic and congestion appears to be properly monitored and is accompanied by the gradual implementation of traffic management tools. However, our knowledge of total flows, including heavy goods vehicles, their trends, the nature of journeys and emerging needs is still inadequate. The same applies to forecasting and

¹ By comparison, the length of the departmental road network in the Paris region is 9,500 km.

modelling, particularly as a result of the limited sharing of road data between the various road managers. However, these are essential prerequisites for defining a region-wide road policy.

While these limitations are important, the implementation of a shared road policy comes up against the fragmentation of authorities, whether in terms of strategic thinking, road management, or traffic and associated transport services. These powers are shared between a number of public bodies: State, region, *Île-de-France Mobilités* (IDFM), Greater Paris metropolitan area, departments, inter-municipal public bodies and municipalities. Faced with this situation, their cooperation and coordination, which mainly take the form of joint programming documents that are not very effective, are insufficiently developed.

In this respect, decentralising national roads to the regional level could have ambivalent effects. On the one hand, it would contribute to better coordination with regional transport policy, particularly public transport – along the lines of *Transport for London* in the UK. On the other hand, this major network has strategic interests that go beyond the regional framework, as well as major management quality issues, as these are some of the busiest routes in Europe. The implementation of a possible reform, which would undoubtedly not reduce the number of managers, must not result, in practice, in an even more complex division of responsibilities or in the weakening of experienced maintenance and operations departments, taking charge of very specific needs (in terms of traffic monitoring or response times). Finally, this reform would raise questions of financing, as shown by certain past decentralisations of national roads, albeit on a smaller scale.

In any event, the region did not apply in good time for all or part of the *Île-de-France* national roads to be made available on an experimental basis, as permitted by Law 2022-217 of 21 February 2022 on differentiation, decentralisation, deconcentration and various measures to simplify local public action. It wanted this transfer of responsibility to be made to IDFM, the *Île-de-France* transport organising authority, which is not possible under current law.

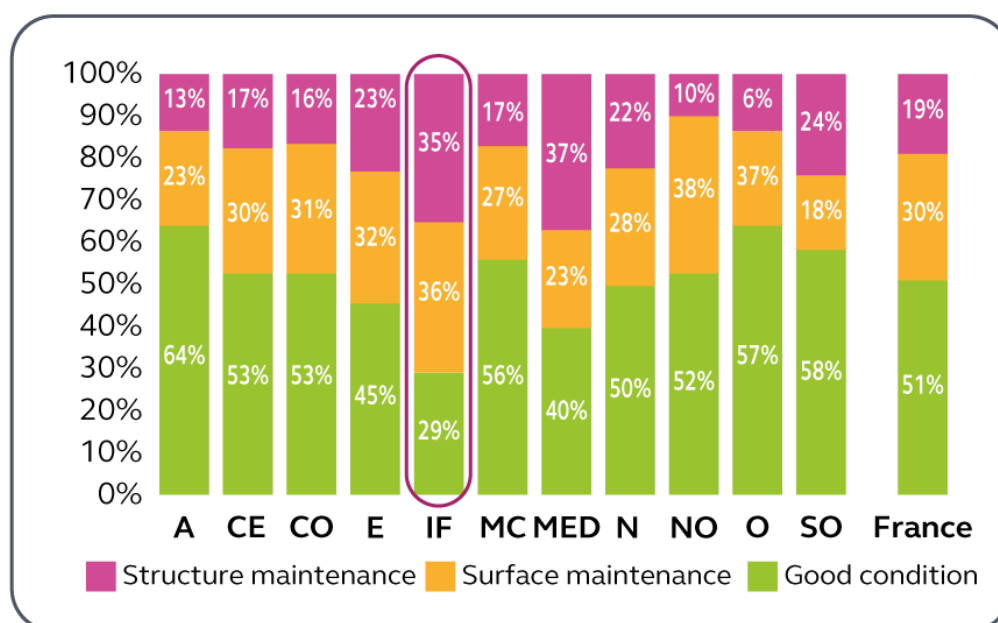
Without waiting for a possible reform of the governance of this policy, it is up to the State, which remains the primary manager of the main network and the primary contact for local authorities, to take the necessary initiatives to relaunch consultation between all stakeholders, with a view to defining a shared vision and strengthening coordination. This approach could take the form of the presentation of a strategic programme by the State's road services, within the framework of an ad hoc conference bringing together the other owners or managers of the regional network.

Ageing assets whose condition is sometimes poorly understood

Knowledge and monitoring of the condition of local roads is uneven. In fact, several evaluation reference systems coexist, and each manager uses his or her own classification system, with varying levels of precision and even approximate knowledge, particularly where the ring road is concerned. The condition of the bridges is also poorly known, which means that it is not possible to assess the extent of the maintenance operations that the managers will necessarily have to carry out in the coming years.

The main road network managed by the State is better monitored, but it is ageing and generally in poor condition, with the exception of the tunnels, which were the subject of a major effort in the early 2000s, in application of a law passed in 2002 following the fire in the Mont Blanc tunnel.

The state of pavements on national roads in 2021²



Sources: DIRIF, DGITM (Directorate-General for Infrastructure, Transport and Mobility) A: DIR (Interdepartmental Directorate for Roads) Atlantique; CE: DIR Centre-Est; CO: DIR Centre-Ouest; E: DIR Est; IF: DIR IdF; MC: DIR Massif Central; MED: DIR Méditerranée; N: DIR Nord; NO: DIR Nord-Ouest; O: DIR Ouest; SO: DIR Sud-Ouest.

The intensity of traffic and the corresponding difficulty in undertaking works, the lack of resources and, sometimes, the lack of skills of the managing services have thus contributed to the accumulation of this investment backlog, the amount of which is not known precisely.

The reorganisation of these departments and the progress made over the last period should therefore be continued and expanded, including in the area of human resources management, which for a long time was characterised by a certain laxity, particularly in terms of monitoring staff activity, working hours and absences. To achieve this, the State's decentralised services need the support of the central administration, whose steering must be strengthened by defining clear objectives and by a multi-year investment programme based on an economic assessment of infrastructure development or regeneration projects.

In the departments, management methods would need to be reviewed to improve performance. Cost accounting would provide precise information on the various costs associated with road management and enable us to monitor changes in these costs. The constrained financial situation of the departments would justify such a review, in order to ensure that the roads are maintained at the lowest possible cost.

At a time when annual road spending by the State, the City of Paris and the *Ile-de-France* departments totals €1.17 billion, such an effort is all the more imperative given that it is not just a question of bringing the assets concerned up to standard but also, given the age of their design, of applying the new standards in force and adapting them to contemporary mobility challenges. In particular, the ecological transition requires modernisation work, whether in terms of sanitation, noise abatement or air pollution, as well as diversification of road uses.

² Data for 2021, available in 2022. They are produced from annual surveys carried out by vehicles using a laser to scan the pavements on the lanes used by HGVs, enabling 200m sections to be classified by condition.

A more traditional concern, road safety deserves more attention from infrastructure managers, in the context of a region that is marked by an increase in accidents that both varies between networks and is imperfectly understood. With regard to national roads in particular, the procedures laid down in the regulations should once again be fully implemented, aimed respectively at identifying the areas where the most accidents occur and correcting anomalies identified on the basis of inspections carried out in real traffic conditions.

Recommendations

1. Acquire the technical means to estimate and monitor traffic levels on the main *Île-de-France* network, distinguishing between different vehicle categories, particularly heavy goods vehicles (*State-DiRIF, City of Paris, 2026*).
2. Complete the process of sharing road data between the various network managers and mobility policy stakeholders (*Île-de-France region, City of Paris, departments, 2026*).
3. Update the essential parameters of the "MODUS" forecasting model, in particular by incorporating the most recent factual data (passenger numbers, traffic, prices, costs) and publish new forecasts (*State-DRIEAT, 2026*).
4. Define a multi-year strategic programme for the main road network under the responsibility of the State and present it at a conference with the various stakeholders in road policy in the region (*Regional Prefect, 2026*).
5. Establish an annual programme of maintenance investment and route improvement projects on the national road network, based on their socio-economic evaluation (*DGITM, 2026*).
6. Strengthen the leadership and operational management of the *Île-de-France* Road Directorate (State-DiRIF) by the DGITM, in particular through annual performance objectives accompanied by quantified indicators (*DGITM, 2026*).
7. Draw up an annually updated diagnosis of the surface and structural condition of road assets, including pavements and engineering structures (*City of Paris, 2026*).
8. Complete the assessment of the condition of the engineering structures and draw up a costed schedule of the necessary maintenance operations, taking into account the impact of the Didier Law on the so-called restoration structures (*departments, 2026*).
9. In the *Île-de-France* region, relaunch the current procedures for monitoring and developing routes to improve road safety on national roads (*State-DiRIF, 2026*).
10. Develop an accounting system to analyse the operating and maintenance costs associated with road policy (*departments, City of Paris, 2026*).
11. Define a comprehensive programme of audits of the *Île-de-France* Road Directorate, particularly in the area of human resources management, accompanied by periodic reviews of the implementation of their recommendations (*Ministry of Transport, 2026*).