PUBLIC BODIES AND POLICY

HIGH-SPEED RAIL: a model extended beyond its relevance

Thematic Public Report

Executive Summary October 2014
This executive summary is intended to facilitate reading and use of the report from the Cour des comptes. Only the report implicates the liability of the Cour des comptes. The responses from the administrations and organisations concerned are appended to the report.
Executive summary of the Thematic Public Report by the Cour des comptes

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INTRODUCTION

The history of high-speed rail in France is the history of the convergence, 30 years ago of an avant-garde technology with a large public. Indeed, many French people have had the opportunity to enjoy the comfort and speed of a mode of transport that is moreover considered by the cities it serves as an indispensable landmark of modernity.

As the high-speed rail network (HSL) has expanded, the relevance of the model and its benefits to the community have gradually decreased: new lines are less and less profitable, the extremely large number of stations served is inconsistent with the very notion of high speed, the profit margin obtained from this operation as a whole is decreasing and each year covers a slightly smaller portion of the deficit incurred by the other SNCF rail operations.

This investigation completes several studies by the Cour des comptes on the subject of rail transport: regional express transport in 2009, Transilien in 2010, maintenance of the French national rail network in 2012, accounts and management of the RFF (French Rail Network) in 2013, trains d’équilibre du territoire (TET, trains linking several regions) in 2014.

It highlights three facts that partially challenge the current model, and which are reflected by the three chapters of the report:

- the benefits of high-speed rail for the community are not as great as were anticipated and the very heavy investment was committed at the expense of maintaining the conventional network;

- the decision-making for the creation of an HSL is presented as a rational process, but in practice, it remains highly dependent on subjective and political parameters;

- the financial resources allocated for the construction of the infrastructure nowadays barely enable funding of the lines under construction.
INTRODUCTION

Two major questions remain open:

- the arbitrage between the increase in tolls payable by the SNCF which reduce the profits of the high speed operation but are essential to renovate and modernise the conventional network;

- the choice of a sustainable source of funds to replace the environmental tax with a view to the implementation by 2030 both of new projects, especially those adopted by the "Mobilité 21" Commission, and other infrastructure classified by the government as priorities, such as the Seine-Northern Europe canal.
1 A success that has reached its limits

A technical success, the TGV in France is today the most important component of the long-distance passenger railway system. Its ability to serve the entire country using the conventional network as well as the high-speed lines makes it especially attractive. This positive picture should not obscure either the limits to this success nor its negative effects on the rest of the railway system.

A French model characterised by a specific type of equipment, which also runs on the conventional network to serve more destinations than in any other country.

Twenty years after the Shinkansen came into service in Japan in 1964, the SNCF became the pioneer of high-speed rail in Europe, bringing the first sections of the high-speed line (HSL) on the Paris-Lyon rail link into service. The initial success of this link has led the government to encourage the development of a high-speed line network. These lines were originally designed for trains travelling up to 270kph, a speed that was increased to 300 and then 320 kph on the newest lines. The network now extends 2036 km, and it is envisaged that it will increase to 2700 km by 2018, when the four lines currently under construction will be completed.

The French network is characterised by "mixed high speed", where the TGV trains, specially designed for high speed, run on both HSL open only to this traffic, but can also make use of the conventional network. On average, a TGV runs about 40% of its time on the conventional network at the speed appropriate to that network, i.e., below 220 kph. This mix results in the particularity of the French model: it serves a large number of destinations, over 230 in total, consisting of intermediate stops as well as end-of-line stations. This distinctive feature has implications in regard to the average speed of high-speed trains and their profitability.

Considering the significant investment required to build high-speed lines and purchase the rolling stock, high-speed rail really has to be a mass transport mode, that is, it must serve a large number of passengers, travelling in high-capacity trains with high occupancy rates. It will therefore be all the more profitable if it serves major population centres with high frequency (23 return journeys per day between Paris and Lyon or Paris and Nantes, for example). But France is already suffering from an imbalance between the capital city and the small number of other major cities. Multiplying the number of stations served necessarily leads to lower frequency and more importantly a large
A success that has reached its limits

fleet whose purchase, maintenance and renewal are a heavy burden on the accounts.

Source: Guide TGV, SNCF (June 2014)
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The « the relevance zone » for high-speed rail compared with cars and planes represents a journey of between an hour and a half and three hours.

Fourteen countries in the world have high-speed rail, using very different models. In Asia, China and Japan have the world’s two largest networks, with lines totally separate from the conventional network. Several models can be found side by side in Europe: Spain (the largest European network) and France use a partial mix. Other countries, such as Italy, have an exclusive high-speed network. Germany is alone in having a full mix: its high-speed network is limited and it is used by conventional trains travelling at normal speed, which limits the time slots during which high speed can be used. In fact priority in that country has been given to the renovation of the conventional network in order to decongest it to benefit North/South freight transport.

There are two consequences to this heterogeneity. First of all it is difficult to draw lessons from experiences in neighbouring countries, with the exception of one: The high-speed train is only really competitive with cars and planes, in terms of the market share of total traffic between two cities, for journey times between one and a half and three hours, that is, for distances of between 350 and 600 or 700 km. Less than that, the car wins; more than that, the plane.
A success that has reached its limits

It is consequently difficult to talk about an «European high-speed network» as the practices of the different countries are so diverse in this regard. Therefore, the argument of a European network is rarely relevant in justifying the creation of a national line. While the London-Paris high-speed link is pertinent, that between Paris and Barcelona is not, given the distance, and nor is Lyon-Turin, considering its cost.

In France, the TGV has stabilised the decline in SNCF passenger traffic. It still represents a minority of journeys and is not used primarily by those whose priority is saving time. It is also coming up against new forms of competition.

Within its relevance zone, the TGV brings about both an increase in total traffic and a shift in mode from air and automotive travel towards the TGV. These aggregate shifts thus account for 67% of total traffic increase for the Mediterranean TGV.
and 55% for the Atlantice TGV and first phase of the Eastern TGV.

Traffic in 2013 was 53.8 billion passengers-km. It has remained unchanged for five years. This level has been achieved at the expense of long-distance conventional routes served by Intercité trains (TET), where passenger travel has fallen by five times in thirty years and have seen the withdrawal of many destinations. Traffic for regional rail (TER, regional express trains) has however increased in line with that of the TGV, raising the question of how expenditure is distributed between the high-speed network and the conventional network.

Km of HSL in service and passenger travel of TGV and other long-distance trains (in passenger-km) (1980-2020)

Contrary to popular belief, the TGV is not mostly used by those for whom time saving is a priority, that is to say those travelling in a professional capacity: professional reasons account for only one-third among reasons for travel.

1 One passenger-kilometre: unit of measurement equivalent to the transport of one passenger over a distance of one kilometre.
A success that has reached its limits

Use of the TGV according to reasons: private 63.8% and professional 36.2% (in thousands of journeys)

Source: Cour des comptes after processing the data of the national transport and travel survey

In addition, TGV users are in the highest deciles of income (as opposed to regional transport or by car for example). These two findings on income and motivations of TGV users raise questions about the relevance of a model based in part on the service by TGV of ends of line using conventional track. The comfort of an unbroken journey must be set against lower occupancy rates and the deployment of a large fleet of expensive trains if they are not fully utilised or running at full speed for the whole length of their journey.

Finally, while it has been observed that the TGV, in its initial phase of development, gained market share (often more than 60%) from the plane and the car thanks to the single factor of “speed”, in recent times a change in behaviour has emerged among some consumers, for whom price has become more important than saving journey time. Taking into account, among other things, the disappearance of a large number of conventional long-distance rail connections (Intercités/TET), customers are tending to move away from the railway towards other modes of transport, coach or carpooling, which, like low cost air travel, have become formidable competitors. The SNCF is still protected by the restrictions that exist in France on long-distance coach transport, but this de facto monopoly situation is not expected to last.
A success that has reached its limits

The arguments regarding environmental impact, economic development or equality between the regions must be qualified

The TGV enjoys a bias in its favour as regards its impact on the environment, which must be qualified: energy efficiency, per person transported, depends by definition on the occupancy rate. Even though this rate is far higher for the TGV than competing modes on the most popular lines, it falls considerably as soon as TGV trains run on conventional lines. The same reasoning applies to CO\(_2\) emissions per passenger: if the rate of TGV occupancy is less than 50%, the TGV’s CO\(_2\) balance is no better than that of the coach. In addition, these emissions also depend on the origin of the electricity used. By purchasing on the market, the SNCF imports a far higher «carbon» proportion than the French average, which is remarkably low because of its nuclear power. Following the calculation methods adopted, this is capable of worsening the CO\(_2\) balance even further.

Furthermore, the construction phase of the high-speed lines (HSL) also produces high levels of CO\(_2\): accordingly, a comprehensive carbon balance of the Rhin-Rhône (Eastern branch) HSL has showed that if one weighs all emissions caused by the construction of a line with emissions saved through a shift in modal transport towards the TGV, the line becomes carbon neutral only 12 years after its entry into service.

In the end, the cost per ton of CO\(_2\) «avoided» through HSL, the relevant environmental criterion used on projects, remains incomparably higher than the carbon market price and even the shadow price of the social cost per tonne of avoided CO\(_2\) fixed at € 32 in 2010, and estimated at € 100 for 2030.

Regarding economic development, there is a contrast between the general opinion, which holds that an HSL is always a positive factor for economic development, and the few scientific studies that post a more neutral score. According to these studies, a region that is already dynamic remains so, with or without an HSL. A region in difficulty also remains so, and the examples of activities that grow up around the new rail infrastructure have more to do with relocations than net creation.

It follows that an HSL has an ambivalent effect on regional development. Contrary to the notion of TGV «for all» that would bring equality between the regions, the TGV instead tends to accentuate the polarisation around large cities, particularly the largest of them, primarily Paris.

Faced with this rather mixed balance, it would appear necessary to review the French model, from at least two perspectives:

- firstly, technological: even though France was truly a pioneer in high-speed rail, it has failed to impose its model internationally, with only two
exceptions. Moreover, the parameters of the new international tenders require commercial speeds above 350 kph, which the French offer is unable to meet. To remedy this delay, a « TGV of the future » is among the 34 projects in the « New Industrial France » Plan announced in July 2013.

- secondly, policy, which lies in improving the connection between high-speed rail and other modes of rail transport. To this end, rather than considering the TGV as the sole landmark of modernity and retreating into the contradiction of « TGV everywhere, stops everywhere », it is urgent to define a joint offer between TER and TGV, which, on a conventional but renovated network, can deliver a rapid service, but at less than 220 kph. Similarly, the connection between the railway and modernised road links (car pooling, car sharing, for example) should be considered as a priority in passenger transport policy.
2 A decision-making process that inevitably leads to the creation of new lines

Investment in high-speed lines is subject to a socio-economic assessment the results of which, even if negative, frequently become blurred in the decision-making process; this leads to projects being implemented when their relevance is sometimes questionable. This trend is reinforced by the increasing use of co-financing with local authorities. These operations call for counterparties who are able to act against the rationality of investment in high speed, as the most recent projects demonstrate.

The socio-economic analysis of projects can be improved but remains essential

Among the projects for new high-speed lines or any other transport infrastructure, it is necessary to distinguish between those that are most profitable for society and those that are much less so. Socio-economic analysis (also called cost-benefit analysis) is the method most used internationally for the assessment of these investments. By reverting to a single criterion of a monetary nature for disparate data (value of time, of a ton of carbon, etc.), this enables the calculation of the gains for society resulting from a public investment by subtracting the costs involved and also taking into account the lifetime of the infrastructure using the discount rate. The result of this weighted sum, the net present value (NPV), like the ratio of NPV to public credits (i.e., the NPV per euro invested), are important parameters for comparison between projects. The internal rate of return or IRR, which is the discount rate that reduces to zero the NPV, discriminates against it: any project where the IRR is below a certain value, 4%, is in principle ruled out.

Multi-criteria analysis, which is the other evaluation method, is less technical and responds better to the question of alternative solutions (railway rather than a road) but has the disadvantage of leaving a lot of room for subjectivity in the weighting of criteria.

In France, the Loi d’orientation des transports (LOTI, Guidelines for Internal Transport Act) of 1982 requires that a socio-economic and environmental assessment be included in the public inquiry for major investments in the field of transport. All civil government investments are subjected to an analysis of this type under the Act of 31 December 2012.
A decision-making process that inevitably leads to the creation of new lines

on multi-annual public finance planning. For the largest projects, an independent expert second opinion is now required.

On the conclusion of the socio-economic analysis currently being conducted, the overriding advantage of rail infrastructure lies in the time savings that it allows. However, this analysis has encountered several limitations.

First, it is difficult to obtain independent expert second opinions due to the reluctance of the SNCF to disclose the data for traffic per line, for reasons of commercial confidentiality. This data is nevertheless essential for assessments and expert second opinions.

Furthermore, the overestimation of time savings has tended to obscure the changes in consumer behaviour that has turned towards slower but cheaper transport. Above all, it has justified the construction of a number of increasingly important lines at the expense of maintaining the conventional network, creating an imbalance the consequences of which are now serious.

Despite these shortcomings, the Cour des comptes considers that the socio-economic analysis should remain of prime importance – if the above-mentioned faults are corrected –, to the extent that the criterion of profitability remains decisive in justifying the optimal use of public resources. Nevertheless, debate remains fierce between the supporters of this approach and those who believe that non-economic considerations (equality of access for the regions to high-speed rail, for example) should be incorporated into the selection parameters. This debate is all the more topical now that a new ministerial directive of June 2014 has introduced a multidimensional approach to assessments for transport, without citing the socio-economic assessment in this context. However, in practice, the socio-economic assessment was already often pushed aside in favour of less rational decision-making processes. The new directive could amplify this trend.

In theory, decision-making is based on successive stages but in fact it is irreversible from the start

The duration of implementation of transport infrastructure has become significantly extended due to the proliferation of stages upstream of the project, where citizen participation in public debate has become essential. This participation is primarily intended to obtain citizens’ adherence to the project.

Environmental protection has also added stages prior to the decision, as has heritage protection during the construction phase. Today, it takes 14 to 18 years between the first drafts and the commercial inauguration of a line.

In principle, in France the key stage in the implementation process for transport infrastructure is the declaration
A decision-making process that inevitably leads to the creation of new lines

of public utility (DUP) which determines the execution of the project. Experience shows that this stage becomes caught up in the overall process where successive publicity stunts end up serving as decision-making.

This observation holds for the projected Tours-Bordeaux line (Sud Europe Atlantique), where successive statements by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport in January and February 1994 on bringing the Aquitaine, Centre and Poitou-Charentes regions into the project, served as the decision itself. Similarly, the statement of the Prime Minister in March 2004 on the Poitiers-Limoges line had the strength of a decision even though no prior study had been initiated.

Beyond such publicity stunts, the proliferation of "small steps" eventually ends by entrenching a project in reality. Of course, "prior debates" to the studies, « preliminary engineering studies », « a preliminary project outline » are provided for in the legislation and validated by ministerial decisions. But these steps trigger expenses the sum of which eventually end up justifying the implementation of project. As the local authorities concerned have a share of these expenses and thus underscore their future involvement in the realisation of the project itself, it gradually becomes impossible to stop.

This is all the more important in that it has justified the emergence of a concept of « co-construction » for the lines arising from the « Environment Summit », consisting of juggling preliminary studies and consultation at the same time, thus reducing the importance of the former in favour of the latter. This was particularly true for the Poitiers-Limoges project.

Under these conditions, the declaration of public utility (DUP) adopts the findings of the public debate as well as the expenditure incurred in the preliminary stages and ceases to act as the trigger for the decision.

Finally, funding, even though essential, is not central to the decision-making. In the case of Tours-Bordeaux, the DUP process took place in 2006 and the selection of the concessionaire in 2010, the financial arrangements having taken about four years, for a total of € 8.8 billion. For the Poitiers-Limoges line, even though the public inquiry has been completed, the financing has not been decided on, or even considered.

The assessment of the expected return on TGV is mostly optimistic

In principle, the Réseau Ferré de France (RFF), which is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the high-speed lines, « may only accept an investment project if it is subject to specific funding in order to avoid any negative consequences» on its accounts. In other words, RFF may only invest a maximum of the net present amount of its revenues over the life of the line, estimated at 50 years. Then again, experience has shown
A decision-making process that inevitably leads to the creation of new lines

that by varying the parameters that determine the discounted net revenue, it is possible to steer the findings in an optimistic direction.

Thus, the expected revenues are closely linked to traffic forecasts. In the case of Tours-Bordeaux (a section operated under concession), RFF by definition will not receive any toll. Consequently, its financial contribution to this project depends on the additional revenue envisaged on the section Paris-Tours that is not under concession, which depends on both the level of traffic and the amount of the toll. In both cases, the preliminary assessments show a strongly optimistic bias.

Similarly, depending on whether the discount rate applied is higher or lower, this will be either an obstacle or an incentive to HSL projects. Thus, RFF participation in different HSLs were calculated with discount rates varying from one line to another: 7.5% for phase one of the Eastern line, 4% for phase one of the Rhone-Rhone Est, 8% for Tours-Bordeaux. Lastly, even with optimistic assumptions, some projects do not reach a minimum threshold of profitability for the community. For example, in the case of Poitiers-Limoges, the results of studies have never exceeded an internal rate of return (IRR) of 3.3%, which would be a justification for not continuing with the project.

The construction of unprofitable high-speed lines is encouraged by the increasing use of local authority financing

Because of both the demands of the State and their growing preponderance in regional development policies, local authorities are becoming increasingly involved in the financing of projects. Naturally, they only do so if they are able to find counterparties. These conditions can impair the profitability of the projects.

The HSL East was one of the first examples, as 16 local authorities participated not only in its funding, but also in the development of the conventional network to provide service to 16 non-TGV destinations. These co-financings have given rise to questionable choices: the existence of two stations (TGV Lorraine, Meuse TGV) that have no interconnection with the regional transport network; the creation of costly service lines of doubtful sustainability; the proliferation of stops from Reims onwards.

The case of Tours-Bordeaux is even more illustrative because it involves 58 local authorities for a total amount of €1.3 billion. Apart from the complexity of a financial package comprising so many participants which in addition were not really coordinated, the local authorities made their participation conditional on obtaining numerous benefits and as packed a timetable as possible.

The best-known example is that of the Midi-Pyrénées local authorities in the Tours-
A decision-making process that inevitably leads to the creation of new lines

Bordeaux line, conditional on the decision to build the Bordeaux-Toulouse line whose importance and profitability are open to question. From commitments to providing service by developing other parts of the rail network, the Tours-Bordeaux project strictly speaking has grown from 300 km and €5.6 billion (value June 2006) to the Sud Europe Atlantique (SEA) project of over 850 km and €14 billion (value June 2006).

As for the Poitiers-Limoges HSL, to ensure it a minimum – albeit small – return, some of the traffic from the conventional Paris-Orleans-Toulouse (POLT) line has to be rerouted onto the SEA line. This proposed reduction from eleven to only four return journeys per day aroused the strong reaction of certain local officials, resulting in this suggestion eventually being dropped.
An unsustainable cost

There are three reasons why the cost of the French high-speed rail model has now become unsustainable: existing lines are less and less profitable, new projects are not financed for lack of sources of funds, and the profitability on high speed lines is not sufficient to guarantee a positive result for the SNCF as a whole.

Lines are less and less profitable

HSL construction costs have been constantly increasing over the last 30 years. From € 4.8 million/2003/km for the Paris-Lyon link, they have risen to € 26 million/km today. On the latest lines these costs are divided between 60-70% for civil engineering, 20/30% for rail, 10% for the land.

The gap between estimates and what is achieved has averaged 17% between the declaration of public utility (DUP) and the opening of the five HSLs that have been assessed retrospectively. Similarly, operating costs tend to be higher than expected, double the forecasts for the Nord or Rhône-Alpes Méditerranée high-speed lines.

Forecasts of traffic are rarely achieved. Once fully operational, out of six HSLs that have been subject to assessments of this type, only one, the Paris-Lyon, has achieved higher traffic than expected, five have lower traffic including one, the Nord HSL, whose traffic is lower by one half. On average, forecasts are over-optimistic by 24%.

Consequently, profitability is always lower than forecast and has tended to deteriorate as the most profitable lines were completed.
An unsustainable cost

Economic and socio-economic returns are defined, the first as the financial profitability of RFF+SNCF taken together calculated in constant euro and excluding financial expenses, the second by adding in the surplus of other stakeholders (passengers, competing infrastructure operators, public authorities, environmental impact) as outlined in Chapter II.

New projects are in financial stalemate

The projects included in the draft national plan for transport infrastructure of 2011 represented an expenditure of € 107 billion in railways of which € 60 billion was for the 2500 km of high-speed line to be built.

Against these costs, funding sources available to the transport infrastructure financing agency (AFITF) are less than € 2 billion, all projects and all sectors taken together (that is, including roads, sea and river infrastructures).

Faced with this stalemate, the government appointed a commission called « Mobility 21 », to allocate the different projects according to their level of priority. The enthusiasm for high speed rail in fact is in conflict with the growing costs of building HSLs together with their declining profitability, the most relevant lines having been built first. Following the work of this commission, the government has still chosen a more ambitious scenario in which rail spending would amount to

Source : Cour des comptes, based on data from the CGEDD (General Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development)
An unsustainable cost

23 billion by 2030. It follows from this choice that, apart from the lines actually under construction, the other projects are not being financed in the current state of the existing or foreseeable funding sources of the AFITF.

The sources of available funds are being depleted

As regards the State, its budgetary capacity for investment does not exceed € 700 million in 2013. These appropriations are borne by the AFITF, whose usefulness the Cour des comptes has in the past had occasion to criticize. Its sources of funds come from various earmarked taxes, a proportion of radar fines and a State balancing subsidy. It was envisaged that this subsidy would gradually disappear with the growing importance of the environmental tax, for which proceeds for the full year should have been around € 870 million. However, the State subsidy started being reduced from 2013 onwards, even though collection of the environmental tax was postponed, now sine die.

Under these conditions, not only is the AFITF struggling to meet its current budget commitments, but the lack of a new and sustainable source of funding, it has no more leeway for new spending up to the 2030 horizon. In this regard, the allocation in 2015 of revenue from the increase in the TICPE, the French domestic energy products tax, on diesel (2 cents/litre) will probably not be enough to make up the shortfall from the relinquishment of the environmental tax. There is now the risk that new projects may be started even though they are underfunded and that the State will gamble both on the implementation of the projects being staggered and on greater participation by local authorities to make up this underfunding. This assumption is all the more shaky given that the financial situation of local authorities is tighter. Moreover, as the « Mobility 21 » commission has acknowledged, some extremely costly projects such as the Seine-Nord Europe canal or the Lyon-Turin rail link, which it has not taken into account, would alone be sufficient to drain all the funding sources of the AFITF until 2030 if they were to be launched.

Finally, the SNCF’s TGV business is proving less and less profitable. While turnover has stagnated since 2012, the operating margin has decreased under the cross-effect of revenue capping and increased costs. On the revenue side, we observe that for commercial reasons the SNCF is reluctant to increase ticket prices, knowing that the TGV is a product the user already perceives as being expensive. On the cost side, the increase in tolls is certainly an important factor, but it is far from the only one: rising labour costs is another, as well as the purchasing
An unsustainable cost

policy on high speed trains under the inducement of the State to support the industrial order book of the national manufacturer’s transportation division.

At the same time, the SNCF needs to maintain a high margin in the TGV business, essential for it considering the difficulties faced in certain of its other rail operations (freight, TET). To this end, the SNCF is increasingly resistant to the toll increases that are being contemplated to enable RFF to finance the construction of new railway lines.

This resistance is nonetheless a zero-sum game, since if RFF does not have the toll revenue that it needs to renovate the conventional network, that body has no choice but to halt the renovation or continue getting deeper into debt. Moreover, as RFF debt also tends to increase because it finances increasingly less profitable HSLs, it is not surprising that its debt, which has already reached €34 billion, continues to rise by €1.5 billion per year.
RECOMMANDATIONS

- Pour mieux intégrer les choix de mobilité des Français, en faisant du TGV une offre qui en premier lieu profite de toutes les communications - ferroviaire, ferroutage, transport collectif (voiture, carpooling, car sharing et location) - et éviter les entraves à la concurrence des modes de transport longue distance ;

- en parallèle, pour réduire de manière progressive le nombre d’arrêts sur les sections des lignes HSL et TGV, en conservant seulement ceux justifiés par une grande base de population ;

- pour garantir la transparence et l’accès aux données SNCF, notamment le volume de voyageurs par ligne ;

- pour donner la priorité à l’évaluation socio-économique des projets HSL annoncés avant 2030 et à la deuxième opinion du CGI, y compris ceux qui ont fait l’objet d’une enquête d’utilité publique avant le 23 décembre 2013 ;

- ne prendre la décision de lancer des études préliminaires avant que :
  - un plan d’affaires pour la ligne ne soit défini, impliquant la gestionnaire d’infrastructure et le ou les opérateurs de chemin de fer ;
  - une décision ministérielle formelle ait pris en compte les perspectives de financement du projet d’infrastructure et la répartition entre les parties prenantes (État, RFF, potentiels pouvoirs locaux) ;

- pour assurer le paiement de l’AFITF de ses engagements financiers vis-à-vis de RFF et afin d’élargir le problème de ses ressources ;

- pour concentrer principalement sur les ressources financières pour assurer l’exploitation de la ligne et améliorer la gestion de l’entretien du réseau par la gestionnaire d’infrastructure ;

- pour garantir que la définition des ratios de dette future de la gestionnaire d’infrastructure ne financerait pas de projets non lucratifs.