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## **Impact of Decentralisation of Responsibilities on Public Transport in France**

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## 1. Current organisational structure in France

The administrative structure in France is made up of the State and three major levels of local authority: the *régions*, the *départements* and the *communes*. France has 36,000 communes. There are several laws (the latest dating from 1999) aimed at increasing and simplifying co-operation between these communes, particularly in urban areas where public transport is concerned.

Public transport is regulated by the *Loi d'Organisation des Transports Intérieurs* – LOTI (National Transport Organisation Act) dating from December 30th 1982. This Act lays down the principle that access to transport should be open to all; it reaffirms the need for public transport and indicates the distribution of responsibilities and powers among the different institutional bodies.

The regulation of transport activities, and associated regulatory controls, are the responsibility of the State. The State is also the organising authority for public transport services of national interest; it formulates national transport directives and is responsible for a policy of contractual agreements with the various transport organising authorities so that decentralised measures can be co-ordinated. The State is also responsible for monitoring the situation: it works with GART and the association of public transport operators to conduct surveys and publish figures and ratios about public transport in France.

Outside of the *Ile-de-France* (Paris and its region), responsibility for the organisation of public transport falls to the local authorities. Transport organising sections within these authorities define transport policy, modes of organisation for public transport (defining service characteristics, fare levels, information structures, operating modes and the operators themselves) and manage transport infrastructure and equipment. The distribution of powers and responsibilities for public transport is given below.

Urban public transport is organised by the communes and commune-grouping structures. In conurbations of over 100,000 inhabitants the formulation of *Plans de Déplacements Urbains* – PDUs (urban mobility plans) is obligatory. PDUs set out objectives and targets for traffic levels, parking and the organisation of the transportation of people and goods. The reduction in use of the private car, priorities afforded public transport, the development of intermodal networks and increased use of cycling and walking as means of transport are all PDU objectives set down by law. PDUs, therefore, allow a global approach to be adopted, taking into account fundamental matters such as the environment and road safety.

Public road transport of a non-urban nature, including school transport, is organised by the *départements*. They formulate mobility plans at the *département* level.

The newest organising authority is the *région* which, since January 1st 2002, has been formulating transport policy at regional level. The *régions* are also responsible for organising road and rail transport structures of regional interest: they decide, for their entire territorial area, on the level of regional passenger transport, with particular emphasis on the locations served, fare levels, service quality and passenger information, taking into account national multimodal public transport and regional transport plans. All regional policies are set up taking into account *département*, commune and commune-grouping powers and responsibilities, as well as the coherency and uniqueness of the rail system, for which the State acts as guarantor. The *régions* exercise their powers in terms of fare level setting within the national fare system.

In the *Ile-de-France*, transport is organised by a specific body, the *Syndicat des Transports d'Ile-de-France* – STIF (*Ile-de-France* transport association), half of which is made up of State representatives, and the other half of local authority, *Ile-de-France* region, *départements* and city of Paris representatives. The association is chaired by the State representative, who has the casting vote. But the organisation will change from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2005 when the STIF will comprise only the *Ile-de-France* region, *départements* and city of Paris representatives. STIF ensures the financial equilibrium of public transport services, setting

fare levels and creating ticketing structures. As it is the companies that have ownership rights over the lines on which they operate services, the role of STIF is limited to managing the transport plan.

## 2. Financing of public transport in conurbations

In the Ile-de-France region and urban areas, public transport financing brings together three main economic participants: users, employers and public bodies. All companies and bodies with more than nine employees contribute to the financing of public transport through payment of a local transport tax, which is allocated to public transport. The amount of tax payable depends on the overall wage bill within the company or body. Its application and level (within legally-bound limits) are decided by the organising authorities. As well as the transport tax, the budget for public transport receives contributions from local authorities.

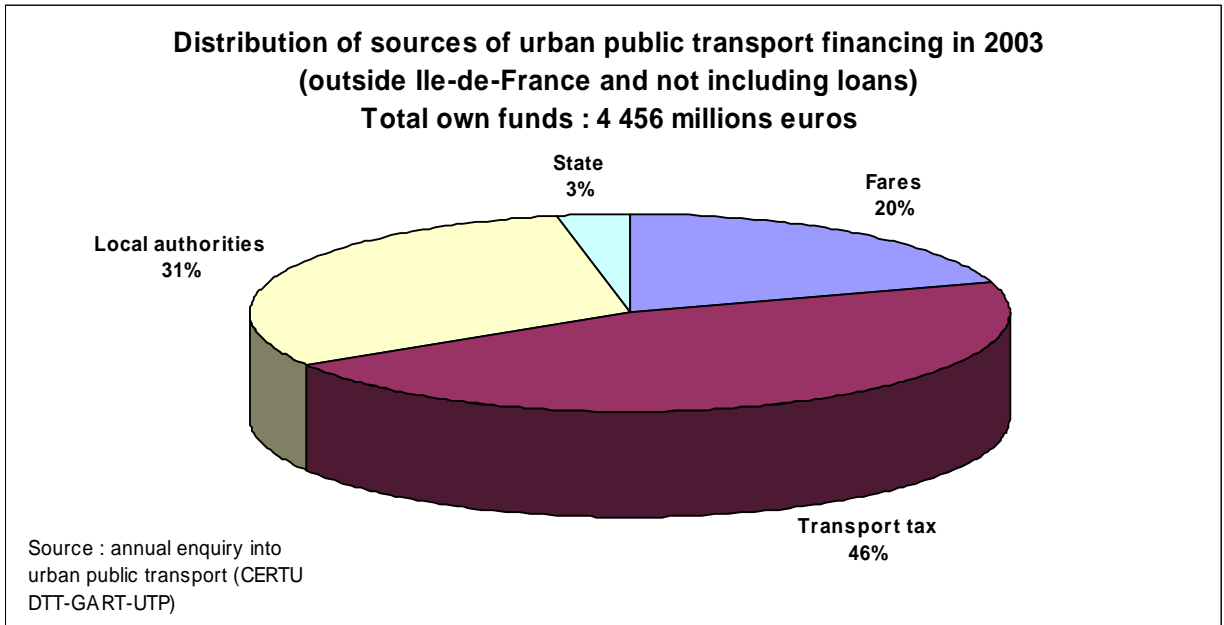
### Transport tax rates

<b>Territorial area</b>	<b>Maximum rate</b>
<b>Ile-de-France:</b> Paris, Hauts-de-Seine	2.6 %
<b>Ile-de-France:</b> Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne	1.7 %
<b>Ile-de-France:</b> Essonne, Seine-et-Marne, Val-d'Oise, Yvelines	1.4 %
<b>Outside Ile-de-France:</b> Conurbations of more than 100,000 inhabitants that have decided to construct a public transport infrastructure and whose dossiers have been examined by the State	1.75%
<b>Outside Ile-de-France:</b> Conurbations of more than 100,000 inhabitants	1%
<b>Outside Ile-de-France:</b> Conurbations between 10,000* and 100,000 inhabitants	0.55%
<b>Outside Ile-de-France:</b> Supplement for urban communities, conurbation and commune communities and the joint associations of which they are members	0.05%

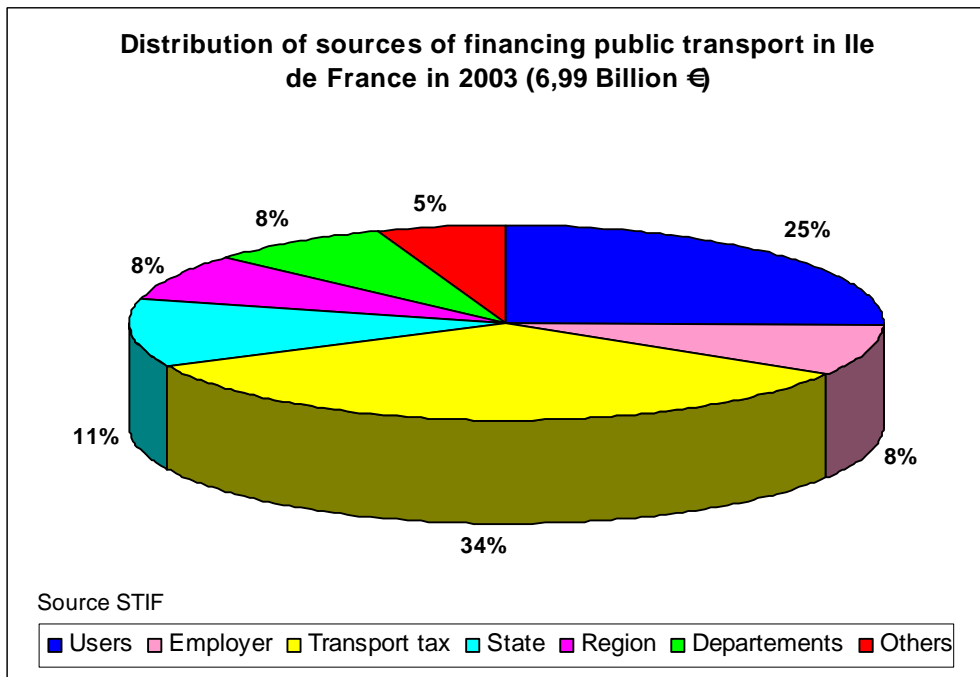
\* In 2001 the threshold for levying transport tax was lowered from 20,000 to 10,000 inhabitants.

### 2-1 Outside the Ile-de-France in 2003

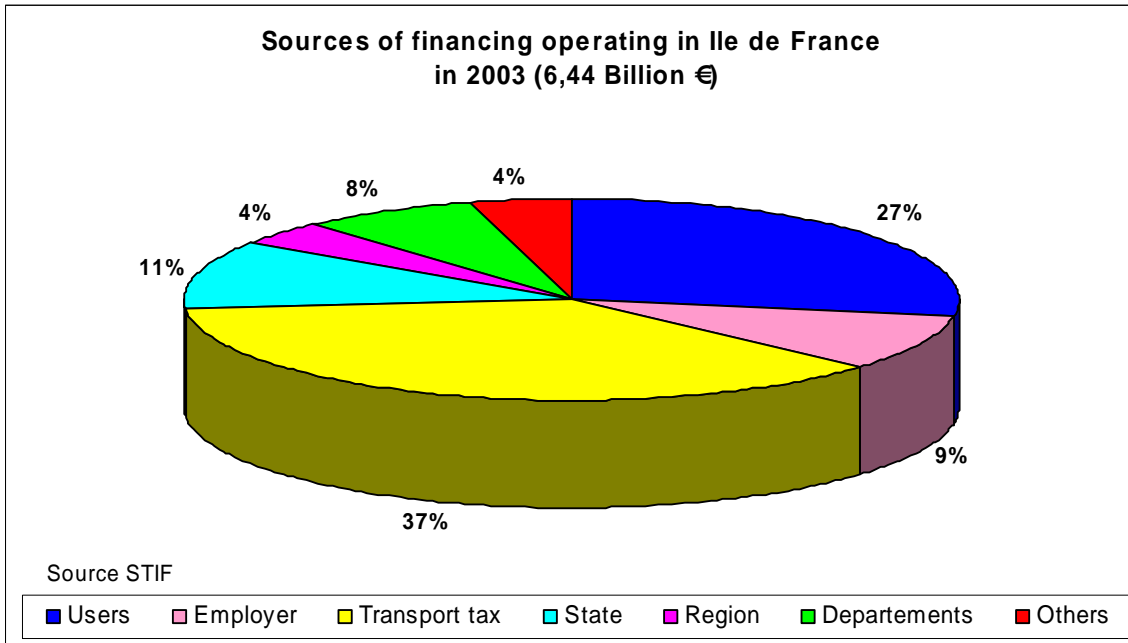
Overall financing (investment and operations) is distributed as follows:



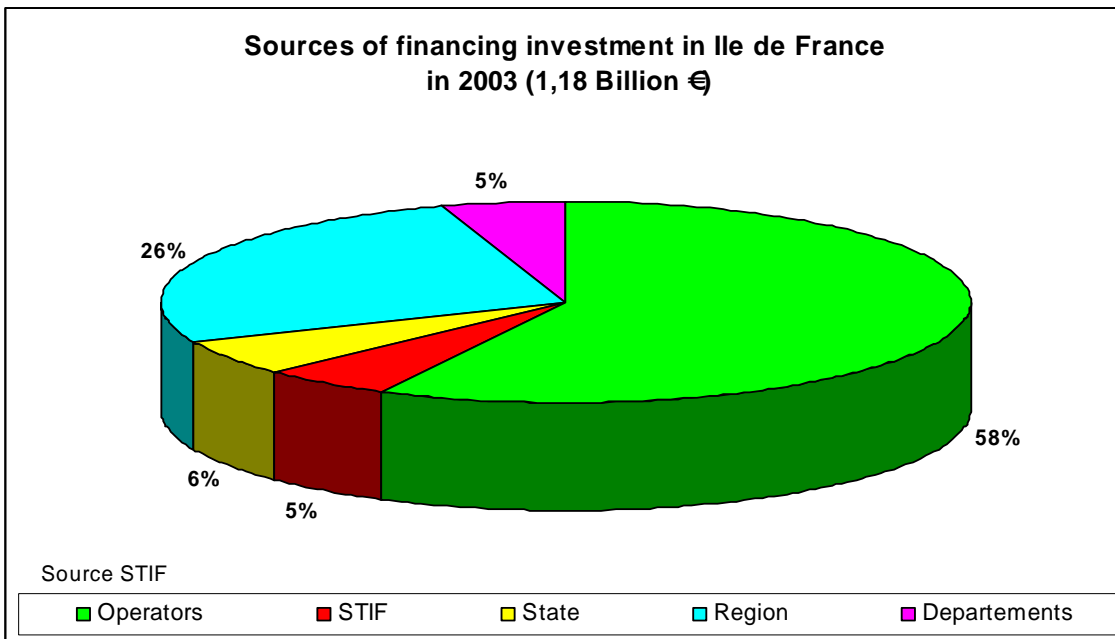
**2-2 Financing of public transport in the Ile-de-France in 2003**



NB : most employers not only pay transport tax but reimburse 50% of their employees' travel passes.



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### 3. Impact of decentralisation of the formulation of mobility policy

Under the Air and Rational Use of Energy Act (1996), each city with more than 100 000 inhabitants has to draw up an urban mobility plan. State control is limited to ensuring compliance with this obligation and with the goals stated in the Act. These are:

- Reducing car use ;
- Developing the least polluting public transportation and economical means of commuting, mainly the use of bicycles and walking ;
- Organising a main urban roadway system with a view to more efficient use, mainly adaptation to different means of transportation and promoting a traffic information action plan ;
- Public parking planning and organisation, on the street and underground ;
- The transportation and delivery of goods in such a manner as to reduce their impact on traffic and the environment.
- Encouraging companies and local councils to promote the use of public transportation and car-sharing by their employees.

We have conducted an analysis of 45 Urban Mobility Plans, which shows that it is very important to have a decentralized process to mix policies on land use, housing and transport.

### ***3-1 Reducing car use***

Almost all Urban Mobility Plans should anticipate a reduction in car use measured by journeys by car in the modal split or by number of trips by car (Lille with 1 million inhabitants) or in the number of kilometres travelled by cars (Paris region). Some of them have goals relative to the amount of public space reserved for cars: Valenciennes (300 000 inhabitants) and Bordeaux (600 000 inhabitants) have decided that a maximum of 50% of public spaces shall be dedicated to automobiles.

The road system was part of all Urban Mobility Plans with a hierarchy of the road system, decreasing capacity of the roads with new use for cyclists and pedestrians, traffic restrictions in city centres, creation or extension of zones with a 30 km/h speed limit, implementation of traffic plans with management encouraging public transportation and the building of new bypasses.

### ***3-2 Public transportation: developing an alternative to car use***

Increasing the use of public transport is a common goal for all urban mobility plans, mainly by increasing the quality of public transport (regularity, commercial speed, ...) and developing intermodality: fares' integration, timetable coordination, interconnection improvements with creation of hubs and park and ride, interactive information.

In the largest cities, plans also project new lines for tramways or bus rapid transit.

In the more innovative plans, there are new proposals with virtual lines and cooperation with taxis for night or suburban services.

### ***3-3 Parking policy: a necessity***

Greater consideration needs to be given in mobility policy, to parking issues. High urban mobility requires reducing the number of parking spaces on the street and underground in city centres and increasing parking in suburban "park and ride" facilities, especially for commuters. In city centres, the fare policy should give priority to the needs of residents and visitors.

### ***3-4 Slow modes: promoting travel by bicycle and foot***

Promoting travel by foot and the use of bicycles is linked with land use and housing. This is the concept of a “short distance” town, with a culture of self-sufficient neighbourhoods. To move away from the idea of streets being for traffic rather than for residents, a lot of urban mobility plans have developed areas with 30 km/h speed limits (2000 km of such streets in the city of Lille, an important program of “Green neighbourhoods” in Paris).

In order to facilitate travel by foot, urban mobility plans include measures for pedestrian: widening pavements, changing the timing of traffic lights, and improving access to public transport stops.

To promote the use of bicycles, a lot of measures have been included in urban mobility plans in order to: integrate the bicycle into major supply projects from the study and design phases, take account of the needs of cyclists when reclassifying or creating heavy traffic routes, allow for bicycle paths in land use and local urbanization plans, include bicycle parking regulations in urban documentation, create parking areas in the road systems, combat the effects of power cuts which penalize bicycle use by taking bicycle traffic through residential areas, create combined tickets for transporting bicycles on public transport.

### ***3-5 Goods and deliveries: a topic to develop.***

This is quite a new topic but awareness of its importance is on the increase.

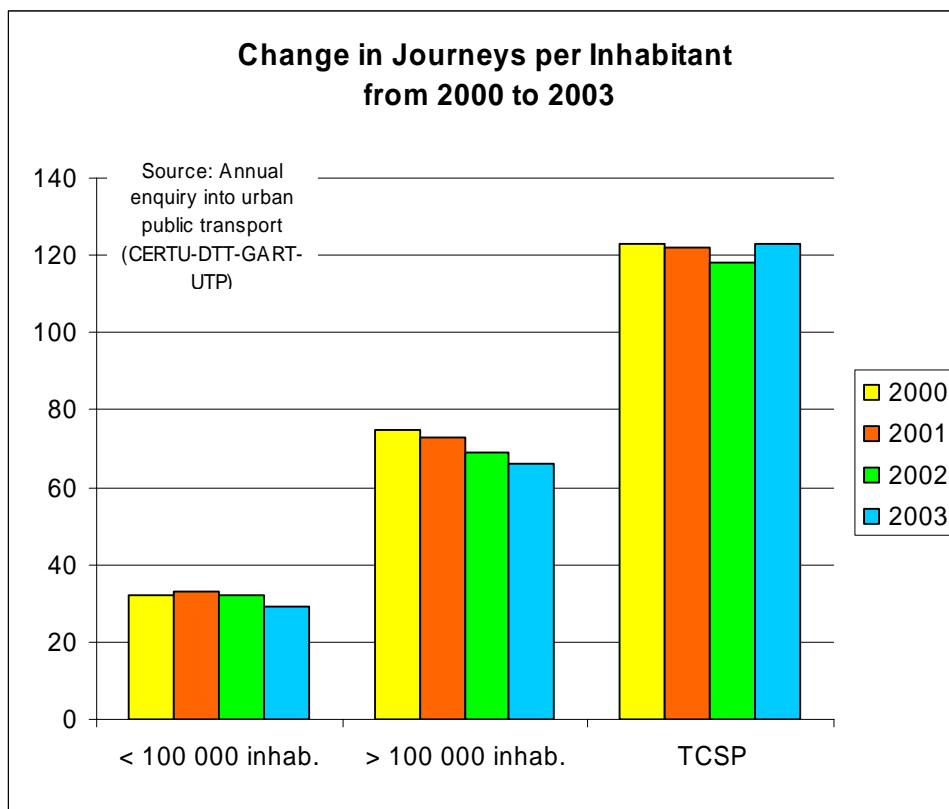
The goal is to address the causes of heavy goods traffic disruption linked either to transit or to the location of traffic generators, and also to economically revitalize city centres and support activities. The aims of urban mobility plans are to reorganise, rationalise and optimise the flow of deliveries, improve access to city centres by specific programs aimed at traffic or parking, and optimise the complementary interactivity of railways or waterways if they exist.

### ***3-6 The mobility plans of companies and public authorities: in progress.***

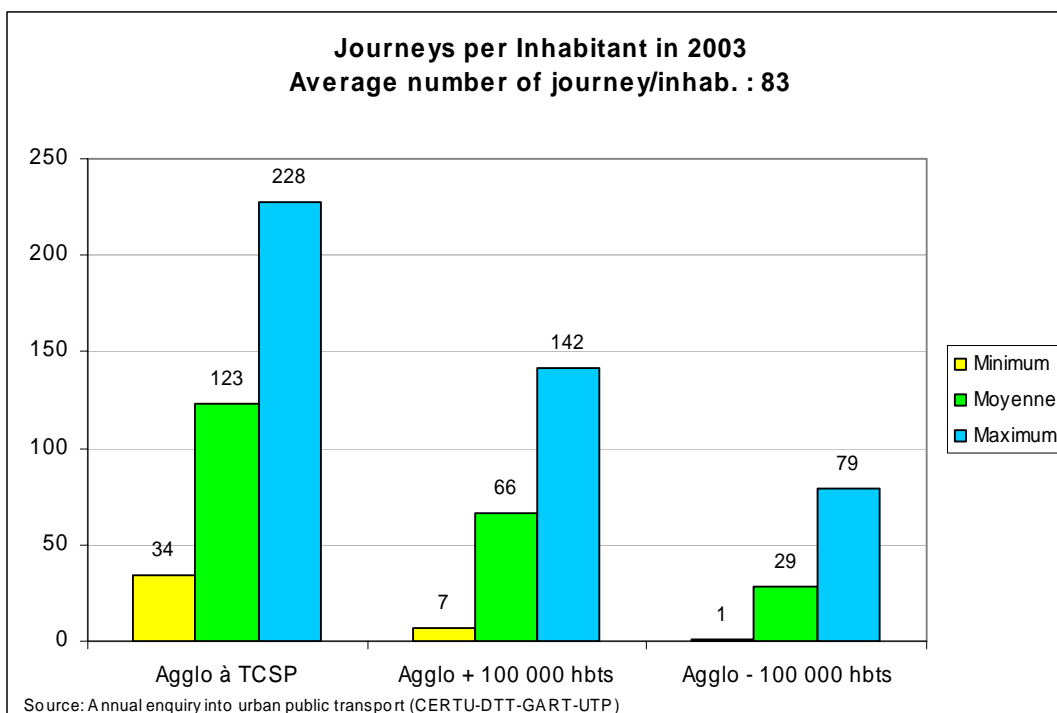
A lot of companies and public authorities in France already provide private parking for their employees. To change commuter habits, however, there are plans encouraging the use of public transport by providing subsidies for staff, the use of bicycles by providing appropriate facilities at work, and car-sharing with commuter parking.

#### 4. Impact of decentralisation on public transport use and financing

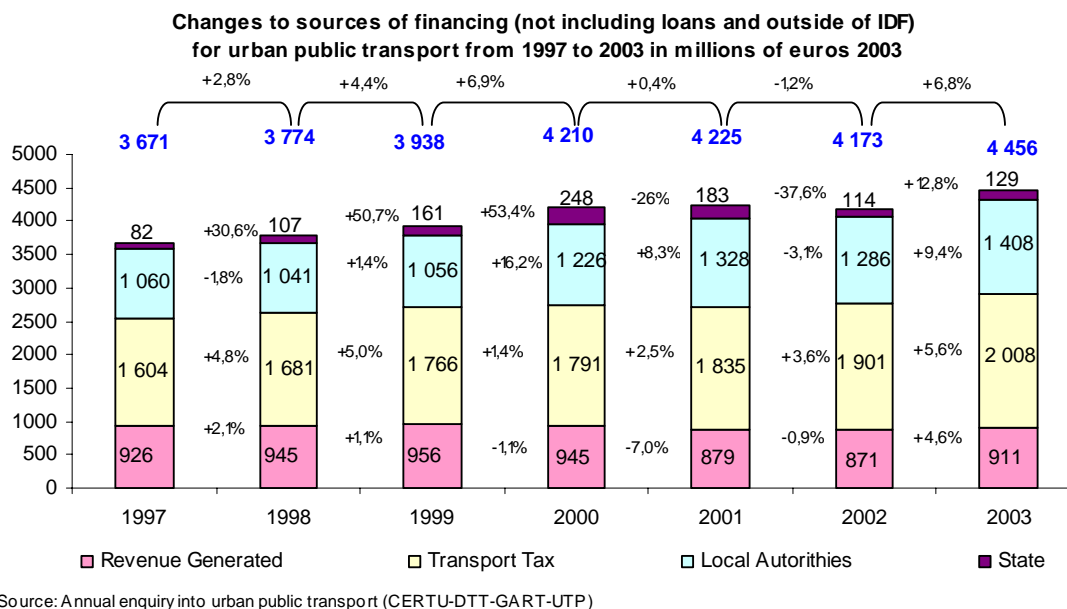
##### 4-1 Change in the use of public transport



The use of public transport is quite stable, which is not so bad given the development of suburban sprawl. But more interesting is the difference between cities: where local authorities have a strong policy promoting public transport and discouraging car use, public transport use is better.



#### 4-2 Change in the financing of public transport



This graph stops at the year 2003 since, by 2004, local authorities were no longer receiving any subsidies from the State.

For the period between 1997 and 2003, fares stagnated because the aim of local authorities was to promote public transport, and fare level was an economic tool to promote its use. For this reason, financing by local authorities increased.

## **CONCLUSION**

To improve the quality of public transport and attract users, it is very important to have a local “proximity” policy: decentralization is a means of achieving this.

Decentralization makes it easier to co-ordinate land use, housing and transport policies.