

Paris transport strike over wages disrupts daily commute for millions

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File photo of a Paris Metro station

Paris, February 18 (RHC)-- A massive work stoppage in the French capital Paris has crippled the city's metro network and its train grid, affecting the daily commutes of millions of people, as striking workers demand higher wages.

Eight subway lines were shut down on Friday, with the remaining six operating only partially, while two of the city's RER north-to-south and east-to-west lines were also heavily impacted, Paris's RATP public

transport company announced.

The only lines left unaffected by the strikes were numbers 1 and 14, which are both self-driving, without a human conductor aboard, RATP added on its official website. RATP workers have underlined that the walkouts – which come as unions and management head into annual wage talks – resulted from inadequate wage hikes offered by the state-owned company.

Earlier, it said that it was prepared to increase worker salaries by 2.7 percent in 2022, a proposition unions slammed as a “provocation”. Reacting to the major public transport disruption in a Twitter post, French Transport Minister Jean-Baptiste Djebbari said: "We call on businesses to make maximum use of home office working."

In recent years, Paris's public transport system -- one of the world's busiest -- has been flung into disarray several times. The last major strike affecting commuters in Paris was the weeks-long walkouts in the fall of 2019 when public transport and railway workers protested a pension reform scheme introduced by French President Emmanuel Macron. Macron later terminated the reform, citing the changed situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Julien Bournique, who represents Sud-Rail, was quoted as saying by AFP that the year 2022 has been the “ninth year without a universal salary increase,” adding that the network is suffering from a “chronic and significant workforce shortage.” “They are asking staff to make more effort without giving them professional or financial recognition,” he asserted.

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