

# COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE



Cherbourg, 10 December 2024

## FREIGHT TRAINS RETURN TO CHERBOURG-EN-COTENTIN

On 10 December 2024 a test train rode the track linking Cherbourg-en-Cotentin's railway station to the docks for the first time. The purpose of the test was to validate the railway system within the dock area before freight services reopen. A freight train will start providing a return service between Cherbourg-en-Cotentin and Bayonne from the spring of 2025. Initiated by Brittany Ferries, this rolling road project was realized by Ports of Normandy, Cherbourg Port and SNCF Réseau with support from the French government and the European Union. It will contribute to decarbonizing the logistics sector. A major awareness campaign relating to the use of level crossings will be undertaken to ensure public safety.

### Relaunching Rail Freight to Decarbonize Logistics

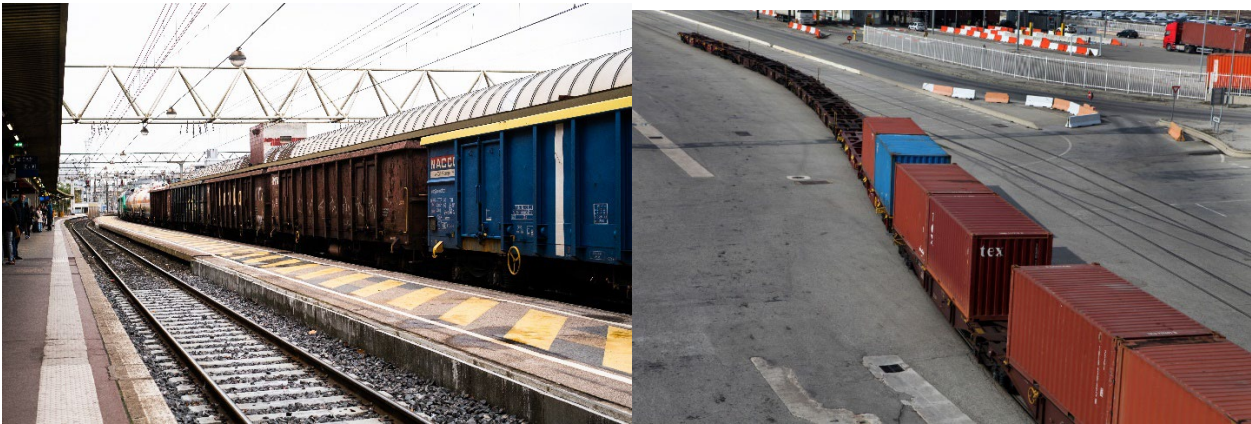
It's been nearly 20 years since the track linking the Port of Cherbourg to France's national rail network last saw a regular service. Up until 2008 Toyota cars were transported by boat from Japan via the UK to the Port of Cherbourg where they were loaded onto rolling stock for delivery throughout Europe. In 2019 four rotors were transferred from the Port of Cherbourg to the EDF power station in Flamanville. Even though the railway has in recent years been able to run the occasional train, the projects implemented by Brittany Ferries and Ports of Normandy to develop rail freight services required major works to connect – in optimal conditions of safety – the rolling road terminal (built by Ports of Normandy) to France's national rail network.

For its initial deployment next spring the service will comprise three return trips a week between Cherbourg-en-Cotentin and Bayonne. Full service will see five freight trains a week running in both directions.

The timetable will be:

- 19:10 Leaving Port of Cherbourg terminal → 19:20 Passing through the railway station
- 11:00 Passing through Cherbourg-en-Cotentin railway station → 11:10 Arriving at Port of Cherbourg terminal

Trains will comprise up to twenty-one wagons, carry up to forty-two articulated lorries, and measure up to 750 metres long. Annually, this project will transport the equivalent of up to 30,000 heavy goods vehicles by train, thus avoiding the emission of 30,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. This project will significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions and the noise nuisance created by lorry traffic.



## First train run on 10 December



On Tuesday 10 December the first train departed Cherbourg railway station for Cherbourg docks. The purpose of this trial run was to validate the proper functioning of the infrastructure, the signals, and the multimodal terminal on Cherbourg docks. Particular attention was paid to the following:

- Geometry of the railway
- Proper functioning of the points
- Proper functioning of the LOHR equipment

The run on 10 December between the SNCF railway station and Cherbourg docks took about **thirty** minutes. For the purposes of the trial the train was driven at low speed. In the future, freight trains will take less than 10 minutes to reach the docks from the SNCF railway station.

## Safety at level crossings

Along its route the railway encounters eight level crossings which are used by motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. SNCF Réseau has been running a major awareness campaign involving flyers, posters, school visits and more to inform the general public of the basic rules that will keep them safe when using a level crossing:

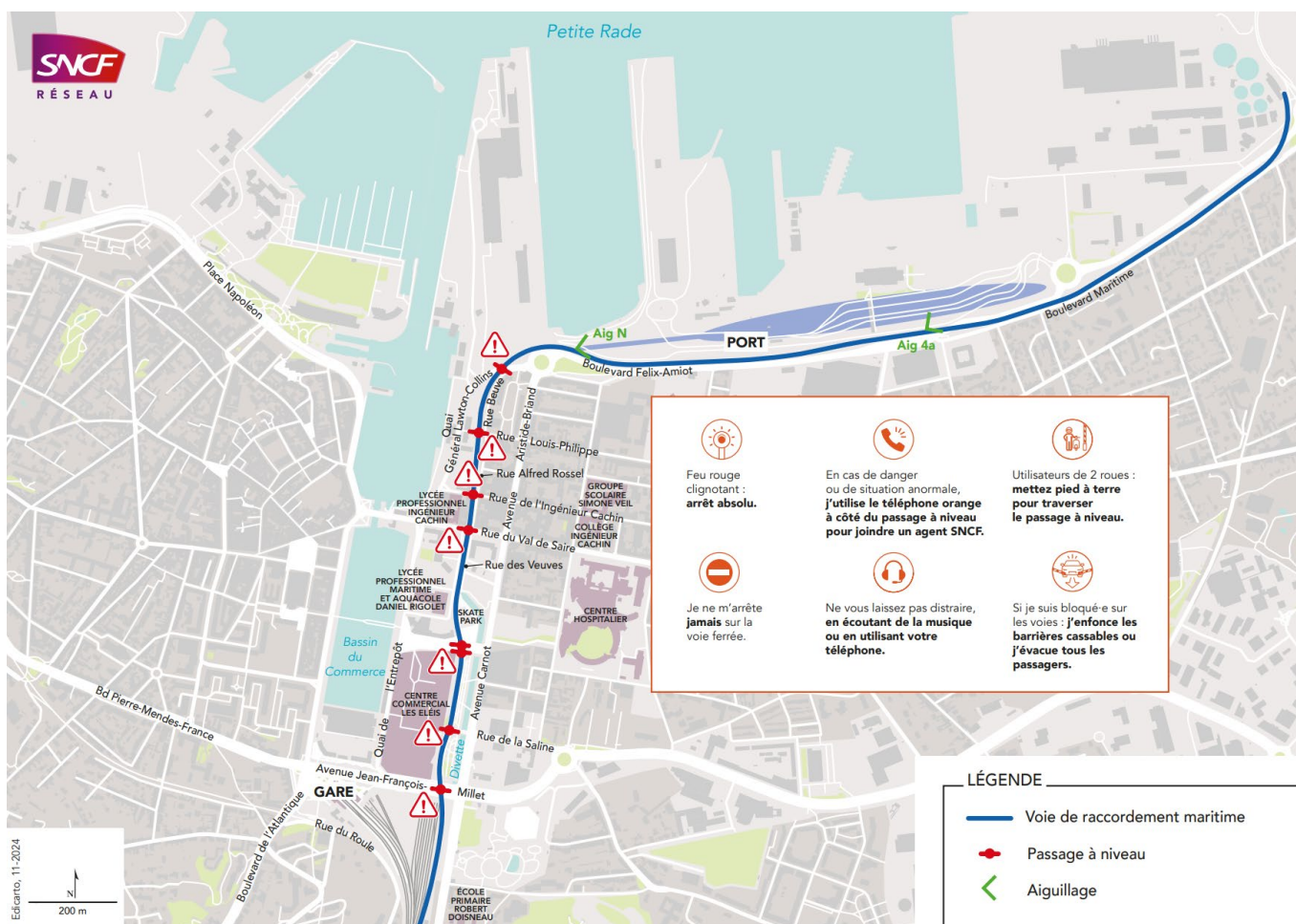
- Slow down when you approach a level crossing
- Never stop on the tracks
- Stop when you see a flashing red light

# 500 m

a 750 m freight train travelling at 30 kph needs 500 m to come to a halt.

# 98%

of road accidents involving level crossings are the consequence of not adhering to the highway code.



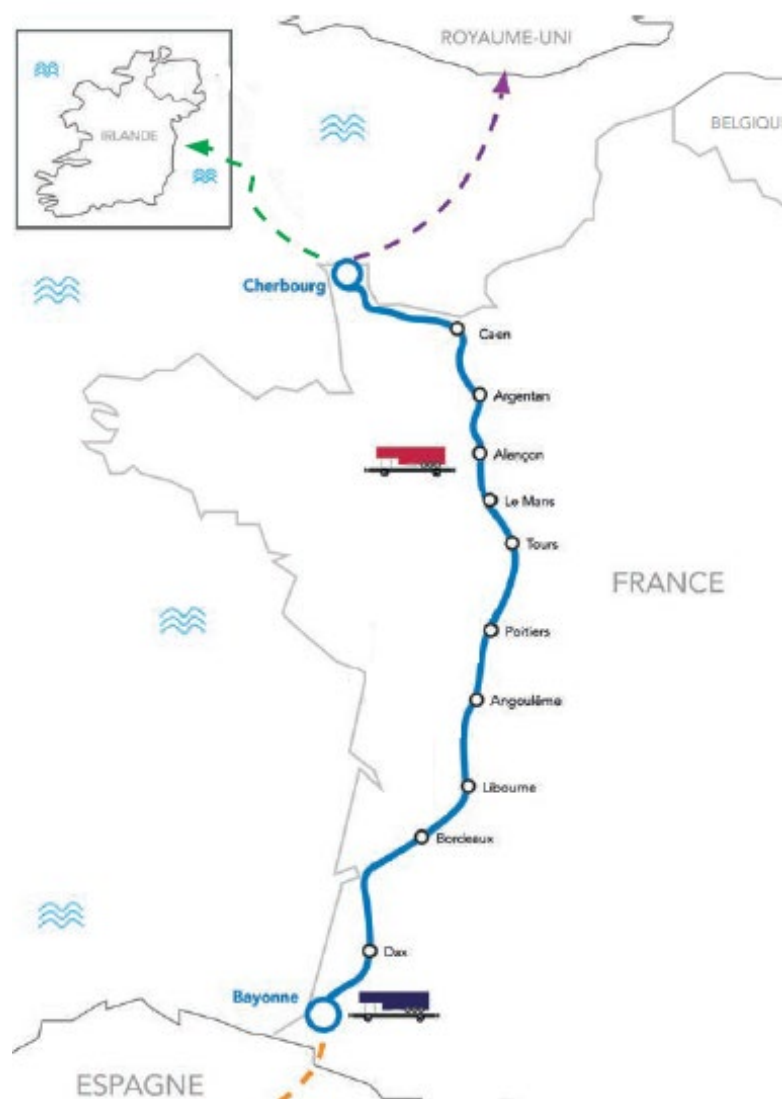
The main causes of accidents on level crossings are inattention, impatience and ignorance of the risks. Contrary to popular opinion, most accidents at level crossings involve people who are regular users of the route and/or live nearby. Routines often lead to inattention or taking risks, such as ignoring signals or trying to force or weave a way across the level crossing. Such behaviours are inappropriate, dangerous, and can be fatal.

## And in the future? The train will run from Cherbourg to Bayonne

From spring 2025 the train will start using the railway which runs through the centre of Cherbourg. Train loading and unloading times take into account:

- **Unloading times of ships** operated by Brittany Ferries
- **Peak traffic times** in Cherbourg, so as to limit the impact of the level crossings when they close to road traffic. After a public consultation undertaken by Brittany Ferries and Ports of Normandy in 2022, it was decided to delay the departure of the train until the end of the day to avoid the rush hour. SNCF Réseau carried out works to upgrade the freight line so trains can travel at higher speeds, thus minimizing level crossing closing times.

Works were carried out to upgrade the entire line. SNCF Réseau undertook works on three road bridges between Caen and Tours, and in the future, four tunnels will be enlarged to accommodate freight trains between Poitiers and Bordeaux. This project is part of the French government's national strategy for developing the country's rail network with a view to decarbonizing the logistics sector. This rail service prefigures a larger motorway provision along the Atlantic seaboard which will connect Dourges in northern France with Vitoria-Gasteiz in northern Spain.



### Did you know?

This project will create a rail link between Spain, Great Britain and Ireland. It is a significant step towards decarbonizing the transport of goods in Europe.

## Close coordination between the project's stakeholders

Bringing this project to fruition required the close collaboration of SNCF Réseau, Ports of Normandy, Brittany Ferries, Port of Cherbourg, Cherbourg-en-Cotentin City Council, the Council of the Cotentin Urban Area, and Manche Council. An efficient organization was set up to ensure that the various components of the project interfaced properly and advanced in unison.

**Hervé Morin, President of Ports of Normandy:** « Concerns for the environment, the increasing size of vessels and Brexit are all having a profound impact on cross-Channel traffic. Ports of Normandy and Brittany Ferries have decided to rise to the challenge of these issues by developing an alternative mode of transport. This first test freight run is a key step within our ambitious project that will ensure a greater catchment area for the Port of Cherbourg and thus allow it to pursue its development, without compromising the cross-Channel traffic passing through Dieppe and Ouistreham. Instead, it is offering an alternative and complementary solution that is environmentally. »

**Jean-Marc Roué, chairman of Brittany-Ferries:** “A new step has been taken today for this fabulous project driven by Brittany Ferries. I would like to take the opportunity to thank our faithful partners: the elected representatives of Normandy Council, Manche Council, Cherbourg Council, and the Council of the Cotentin Urban Area, and of course everyone at SNCF Réseau. They have made all of this possible and if we are close to achieving our goal, it is thanks to them! This initial test run might seem anecdotal. And yet, it is an essential step on the road to establishing the multimodal service between Spain and the British Isles that we will soon be inaugurating. It also contributes to consolidating, for Cherbourg and for the rest of the peninsula, the predominant role that our dear region has carved out for itself in just a few years at the heart of France’s decarbonization effort.”

**Jean Morin, Chairman of Manche Council:** “Today’s first test freight run is a new stage in the rolling road project that will connect Cherbourg-en-Cotentin and Bayonne. This rolling road for freight traffic, to which Manche Council contributed funding of €850,000, will consolidate the Port of Cherbourg’s position in cross-Channel trade. I am delighted that this new service which is not only competitive but also offers an alternative, complementary solution to road transport, is reducing the port’s environmental impact on Manche and the department’s inhabitants.”

**Xavier Brunetière, prefect of Manche:** “Rolling roads are the solution of the future, combining economic development and protection of the environment. These trials on the Cherbourg-Bayonne line are a key moment in the development of sustainable and safe transport. However, such technological progress requires us to be vigilant in the areas surrounding level crossings. It is imperative that we bear in mind the two essential rules for ensuring the safety of every pedestrian, cyclist, scooter rider or car driver:

- When the red light and sound signal are in operation, you must stop.
- Never move onto a crossing until the way is clear on the other side.

Respect these rules for a rolling road that is safe and beneficial to all.”

**David Margueritte, Chairman of the Cotentin Urban Area:** “The Port of Cherbourg is one of the economic drivers of the Cherbourg Peninsula. The leading French provider of services for Ireland and a central location in the deployment of marine renewable energies, our port is enjoying a boom. But for all that, this flourishing activity must not stop at the gates of the docks. The rolling road project that will become a reality in 2025 is

very much part of this approach. It will contribute to strengthening the strategic position of the Cherbourg Peninsula in the flow of trade to Great Britain and Ireland. It is also a response to environmental issues because it reduces the number of heavy goods vehicles on the roads in the surrounding region.”

**Vincent Palix, director of SNCF Réseau Normandie:** “Through this project, SNCF Réseau is supporting local companies in their efforts to decarbonize their logistics and pursue their economic development. It is a great illustration of the role played by SNCF Réseau as a promoter of rail freight in Normandy and a linchpin in numerous projects, alongside industrial stakeholders in the region. By removing heavy goods vehicles from our roads, it will also benefit the inhabitants of Cherbourg-en-Cotentin and the surrounding area. SNCF Réseau is proud to contribute to this project, in close partnership with all the local companies and authorities.”

## Funding for the project

The construction of the rolling road terminal at Cherbourg docks was funded by Ports of Normandy (close to €13 million) and Cherbourg Port (€4.5 million). To renovate and secure the track connecting the harbour to the station, an additional €3.4 million of funding came from the French government (€1 million) and Ports of Normandy (€2.4 million).

Close to €13 million was allocated to developing the harbour area in readiness for the rolling road and was funded as follows:

- Normandy Council: €2.9 million
- Manche Council: €1 million
- Council of the Cotentin Urban Area: €341,000
- Ports of Normandy: €7.2 million
- European Union: €1.4 million



## The next stages of the project

- 10/12: First train to run on the new railway developed by SNCF Réseau and Ports of Normandy.
- From 10/12 to 20/12: Works to finish and test the rolling road terminal.
- Mid-March 2025: Test trains running between Cherbourg and Mouguerre.
- Late March 2025: Regular freight services reopen.

**1,000 km**

separates Cherbourg-en-Cotentin from Bayonne.

**€13 M**

funded by Ports of Normandy and the European Union for the rolling road terminal.

**€3.4 M**

funded by the French government and Ports of Normandy for the renovation of the freight railway linking the SNCF station to the docks.

**1 train = 42 HGVs**

**30,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>**

saved each year

## Press contacts

### **SNCF Réseau**

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*Potential stories:* Follow the outreach team as they raise awareness of the risks of level crossings in schools. / Special awareness day devoted to the risks of level crossings in Cherbourg when the first freight train arrives in the spring of 2025.

### **Port of Normandy**

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### **About SNCF Réseau**

In response to the growing need for transport and the development of railway solutions to drive France's transition to a green economy, SNCF Réseau is developing services for the freight and passenger markets on the 28,000 kilometres of track it is tasked with maintaining, modernizing and ensuring the safety. As network manager, it markets and guarantees an unbiased and fair access to the rail infrastructure. A partner to public bodies, local authorities and railway companies, SNCF Réseau's absolute priority is customer satisfaction.

It is a public company of Groupe SNCF and employs over 50,000 people and generated a turnover of nearly €7.6 million in 2023. [www.sncf-reseau.com](http://www.sncf-reseau.com)

### **ABOUT PORTS OF NORMANDY**

*Owner and administrator of the ports of Caen-Ouistreham, Cherbourg, and Dieppe, Ports of Normandy represents: 9,000 direct and indirect jobs (INSEE Study 2016) / €435m invested in Normandy since its creation in 2007 / 100 ha dedicated to Marines Renewable Energies, a maintenance base in Caen-Ouistreham, and another in Dieppe to come / 2 million cross-Channel passengers per year / 6.5 million tonnes of cargo per year / Close to 60 cruise ship visits per year and more than 100,000 cruise passengers / 3,200 marina berths, a dry stack marina, 33,600 overnight stays – 7,500 visitors per year / over 12,000 tonnes of fish i.e. 1/3 of all fisheries landings in Normandy / more than 300 dry dockings per year.*

*Ports of Normandy, an alliance between Normandy Council, the Departments of Calvados, Manche and Seine-Maritime, and the urban areas of Caen-la-Mer, Le Cotentin and Dieppe-Maritime, serving economic development in the region. Learn more about Ports of Normandy at [portsdenormandie.fr](http://portsdenormandie.fr)*