

Paris region cuts public transport further in virus fight

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Metro and rail services in Paris and its suburbs will be cut to a minimum as part of the nationwide coronavirus lockdown, officials said Wednesday.

Both Paris transport operator RATP and national rail group SNCF have already sharply reduced services since the home self-confinement orders came into effect on March 17. They apply to all but essential employees and those who cannot work from home.

Starting Thursday, about 50 of the roughly 300 Paris metro stations will be closed, and service across the network, as well as on RER commuter lines serving the suburbs, will run only from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm (0500 to 2100 GMT).

The operators said the goal was to keep just enough trains running for [health workers](#) and others who need to get to work during the coronavirus crisis.

Bus and tramway services have already been scaled back, with overall traffic on the Paris public transport system just 30 percent of normal—although dedicated shuttles have been put in place for major hospitals in the region.

Beyond the traffic fall-off, the service reductions also take into account the fact that many transport employees cannot come into work, either because of [sick leave](#) or the need to take care of children since schools were closed in a bid to slow the COVID-19 outbreak.

The SNCF also said Wednesday it had further reduced the number of high-speed TGV and regional trains in operation, to just seven percent of normal capacity.

Fewer passengers are also allowed into each carriage to ensure the necessary safety distance of one metre (3.3 feet) between individuals.

Police are carrying out checks at stations to prevent unnecessary travel, not least by people hoping to escape confinement in large cities.

Also Wednesday, Paris airports operator ADP said it would temporarily shut Orly airport, the main domestic hub, to [commercial flights](#) because of the "significant and sudden" drop-off in [passenger traffic](#) because of coronavirus travel restrictions.

"Yesterday passenger traffic at Orly was down 92 percent and down 89 percent at Charles de Gaulle," the main Paris international hub, ADP's managing director Edward Arkwright told journalists.

The group had already shut several terminals at both airports as airlines slashed flights.

France has reported 1,100 official [coronavirus](#) deaths since the first case was reported in January. Nearly 10,200 people have tested positive for the virus.

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