

## **Clermont Auvergne Métropole and the Clermont City Public Transport Service (SMTC-AC) award Keolis a contract to test a hydrogen-powered bus service**

**As part of their energy transition policy and their desire to invest in the technologies of the future, Clermont Auvergne Métropole and SMTC-AC<sup>1</sup> will test a fleet of hydrogen-powered vehicles on a major line of the T2C public transport network.**

Starting in September 2024 and for a period of ten years, Keolis will be tasked with the operation and maintenance of 14 new and retrofitted hydrogen-powered vehicles. The Group will also fulfil the role of project manager for this unprecedented experiment. As such, it will coordinate the partner companies involved in the project's implementation, covering everything from the production of renewable hydrogen to fuelling the fleet and sharing the experience gained.

The project's partners presented this pilot test on Wednesday 18 October at the national transport congress (RNTP), in the presence of Marie-Ange Debon, Keolis Chairwoman and Group Chief Executive Officer, Olivier Bianchi, Mayor of Clermont-Ferrand and President of Clermont Auvergne Métropole, and François Rage, Chairman of SMTC-AC.

### **Olivier Bianchi, Mayor of Clermont-Ferrand and President of Clermont Auvergne Métropole:**

*"The issue of mobility and alternatives to the private car is a major challenge in the fight against climate change and in making everyday life easier for the people who live in our region. Our city, our urban area and their partners are fully mobilised on this issue, in particular with the implementation of the InspiRe project. By testing a fleet of hydrogen-powered vehicles, we hope to rise to the challenge of innovation and create the mobility solutions of the future."*

### **François Rage, First Vice-President of Clermont Métropole in charge of sustainable mobility,**

**and Chairman of SMTC-AC:** *"As a mobility-organising authority, SMTC-AC has to think long-term by preparing for the future of public transport on our network. Although future BRT lines will be electric – a tried and tested technology – we are already thinking ahead by experimenting with hydrogen-powered buses. The objective is twofold: to invest in a high-potential sector and to gain the expertise required to deploy this technology once it reaches maturity."*

### **Marie-Ange Debon, Keolis Chairwoman and Group Chief Executive Officer:**

*"As a mobility operator, our role is to guide our customers through their energy transition and their decision making so that their region may benefit from the most adapted solution in terms of energy, vehicles and infrastructure. We would like to thank Clermont Auvergne Métropole and SMTC-AC for having commissioned us with the management of this innovative project. We are proud*

<sup>1</sup> Clermont City Public Transport Service

*to be supporting the implementation of 100% hydrogen-powered mobility on this line in the heart of the Clermont-Ferrand metropolitan area.”*

### **A “100% low-emission” fleet by 2035**

With concerns such as health issues caused by air pollution, climate change and the cost and depletion of fossil fuels, new, efficient and sustainable energy solutions need to be implemented. The SMTC-AC has been committed to achieving this for several years, particularly as part of its policy of renewing its rolling stock. Since 2020, the public-private entity has stopped purchasing diesel-powered buses and, in late 2025, will be commissioning 40 new battery-electric BRTs. Its aim is to have a fleet made up entirely of “low-emission” vehicles by 2035. This new hydrogen-based experiment is fully in line with the energy and ecological transition strategy set out by the Clermont-Ferrand metropolitan area.

### **An ecosystem of expertise based on renewable hydrogen**

The project includes the development of a local ecosystem dedicated to hydrogen, from the production of 100% carbon-free energy (Gravanches station), to the fuelling of the vehicle fleet (compression and fuelling station at Cournon-d’Auvergne), and the commissioning of ten new buses and four retrofitted coaches.

Line 35-36 – on which these vehicles will operate – is composed of two combined urban routes. It runs between Clermont-Ferrand city centre (Delille Montlosier) and the towns to the east of the city: Lempdes, Mur-sur-Allier and Pont-du-Château. It will be operated and maintained by Keolis as of autumn 2024.

SMTC-AC has been working with Ingérop since the project's inception to provide assistance to the project owner, and Keolis will act as project manager. It will coordinate the activities of the partners involved in the value chain:

- **HYmpulsion**, a pioneer in hydrogen mobility in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, is tasked with building and operating the hydrogen refuelling station.
- **Symbio**, a leader in fuel cells for on- and off-road mobility, based in France. It equips and maintains new and retrofitted vehicles.
- **SAFRA**, an accelerator of low-carbon mobility, France’s leading manufacturer of hydrogen-powered buses and a stakeholder in hydrogen retrofitting, will deliver ten new hydrogen-powered buses.
- **GCK**, a group of industrial companies working to decarbonise transport, based in Puy-de-Dôme, will see its subsidiary GCK Mobility retrofit 4 buses belonging to Keolis.

Keolis will work with its in-house training institute to develop a hydrogen training programme for drivers and maintenance staff. In addition, a partnership with the **SIGMA** engineering school in Clermont-Ferrand has been set up to manage and monitor the data collected by the vehicles and the hydrogen station, to enhance and share feedback with the SMTC-AC and its operator T2C.

### **KEY FIGURES**

**2** combined urban lines

**Route:** From Clermont-Ferrand city centre to Lempdes, Mur-sur-Allier and Pont-du-Château

**23 to 41** stops, depending on the route  
**450,000** commercial km travelled per year

#### About Keolis

Keolis is a pioneer in developing public transport systems and works alongside public authorities who want to enhance shared mobility systems to grow the appeal and vitality of their regions. A world leader in operating automated metro and tramway systems, Keolis and its partners and subsidiaries Cykleo, EFFIA, Hove, Keolis Santé, Kisio and support the core business with innovations offering new and bespoke shared mobility solutions for modes including trains, buses and coaches, trolleybuses, on-demand transport, transport for people with reduced mobility, driver and sea shuttle services, bikes share services and long-term rental, car sharing and fully electric driverless shuttles. In France, Keolis is the second largest provider of parking management solutions through its subsidiary EFFIA, and the country's leader in medical transport since the creation of Keolis Santé in July 2017. The Group is 70%-owned by SNCF and 30%-owned by the Caisse de Dépôt et Placement du Québec (Quebec Deposit and Investment Fund) and employs 68,000 people in 13 countries. In 2022, it posted revenue of €6.7 billion. [www.keolis.com](http://www.keolis.com)

\* Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, France, India, the Netherlands, Qatar, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

#### About SMTC-AC:

The *Syndicat mixte des transports en commun de l'agglomération clermontoise* (SMTC-AC) is the public transport authority (PTA) for the Clermont-Ferrand metropolitan area, comprising 23 municipalities. Serving a population of nearly 300,000, SMTC-AC implements urban and suburban public transport policy, and supports the development of active mobility services (bike sharing and long-term bicycle hire) and shared mobility services (carpooling, car sharing). SMTC and Clermont Auvergne Métropole are working together on the InspiRe project, which is driving the energy transition in Clermont-Ferrand. At the heart of the project are the restructuring of the public transport network and the creation of two new bus rapid transit (BRT) lines, better sharing of public space between different modes of transport, the redevelopment of urban spaces and a new bus depot housing a 4 MWp photovoltaic power plant. By carrying out major investment and transport infrastructure projects, and supplying its CNG and electric buses from local sources, SMTC-AC is a key player in the ecological and energy transition of the Clermont-Ferrand metropolitan area.

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