

France climbs aboard hydrogen train revolution

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A hydrogen-powered train built by the French group Alstom is already in service in Germany

France is joining the hydrogen train revolution, the head of state rail operator SNCF said Thursday, announcing an order for 15 emissions-free regional trains to replace polluting diesel models.

Hydrogen trains are equipped with fuel cells that produce electricity through a combination of [hydrogen](#) and oxygen.

Germany was the first country to roll out the technology a year ago, deploying two trains built by French TGV-maker Alstom on a 100-kilometre (62-mile) stretch of rail in the country's north.

"We hope that in a few weeks... we will sign an order to build 15 [hydrogen trains](#)," SNCF chief executive Guillaume Pepy told France's BFM news channel, adding that he hoped the trains would be in service in "about two years."

While hydrogen trains are far greener than diesel models, until now France has had a problem with obtaining "clean" hydrogen, with 95 percent of the hydrogen used in the country obtained from [natural](#)

[gas](#).

Alstom has proposed to adapt the model adopted by Germany for the SNCF by using use a mix of electricity and hydrogen.

Pepy said that he aimed to get the French government, SNCF, Alstom and six regions interested in having eco-friendly trains crisscross their territory around a table "in a few weeks" to finalise the Alstom order.

Pepy said the SNCF's objective was "to have not a single diesel (train) left on French railroads in 15 years."

Apart from hydrogen, French railways also plan to replace some all-diesel models with new diesel-electric hybrid trains in the northeast, west and south of the country in 2021.

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