

PUBLIC TRANSIT IN QUEBEC: GOVERNANCE AT THE HEART OF DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

Montreal, December 7, 2022 – While the development of new public transit infrastructures in Quebec has clearly not obtained the hoped-for consensus, the situation is not improving if we rely on the most recent report from the Centre for Productivity and Prosperity – Walter J. Somers Foundation. “Basically, the effectiveness of the public transit infrastructure development process is undermined by governance issues, explains Jacques Roy, Professor in the Department of Logistics and Operations Management at HEC Montréal and author of the study. Whether in Montreal, Quebec or Gatineau, the projects underway have not always been in line with the principles of governance that should normally govern their conduct, with the consequences we know today”.

In a report published today, the researcher puts into perspective the difficulties encountered in the planning and development of public transit projects in Quebec. Unsurprisingly, the issues are more numerous and above all more important in the metropolitan region of Montreal. “In principle, the governance structure put in place in the Montreal region was adequate, but in practice, the Metropolitan Regional Transportation Authority (MRTA) proved unable to assume the strategic responsibilities entrusted to it, concludes Jacques Roy. Result: the mechanism has derailed.”

The researcher recalls that the MRTA was called to order by the Ministry of Transport of Quebec (MTQ) in the fall of 2021 due to shortcomings in the planning and coordination of projects on its territory. The following year, a damning report from the MTQ described the strained relations maintained by the MRTA while denouncing its stubbornness in not recognizing the skills of affiliated transport companies and its inability to assume its responsibilities.

Independence and credibility

Among the possible solutions proposed to improve the management and planning of transport infrastructures in the Montreal metropolitan area, there is certainly the need to propose an adequate and sustainable financial framework, and the challenge of integrating the REM into the collective transport. The researcher also proposes to review the process for appointing MRTA leaders. “If the Government of Quebec wishes to maintain the MRTA and give it the means to play its role effectively, we must manage to restore some credibility to it, believes Jacques Roy. To achieve this quickly, we will have to make certain that the management of the organization is ensured by leaders credible in the eyes of the transport companies, which implies changes notably in the selection of the board of directors”.

Recall that the MTQ denounced the “lack of experts in the public transit network on the board of directors” in a report published earlier this year, a criticism relayed by several of the stakeholders in the debates. “Billions of dollars in public funds are at stake here and there is an urgent need to act to improve the supply and efficiency of public transport networks. We clearly do not have the luxury of depriving ourselves of the required expertise. On the contrary, we should seek to strengthen it” concludes the researcher.

To learn more:

- Report - [La gouvernance du transport collectif au Québec : Enjeux et pistes de solution](#)

About the Centre for productivity and prosperity – Walter J. Somers Foundation

The Centre for Productivity and Prosperity – Walter J. Somers Foundation has a twofold mission. First of all, it is devoted to research on productivity and prosperity, mainly in Quebec. The Centre then shares its research findings through knowledge transfer and educational activities. hec.ca/cpp - info.cpp@hec.ca

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The Somers family established the Walter J. Somers Foundation in tribute to the founder of the Walter Group. Through different donations, the Foundation pursues the family heritage of commitment to the community and contributes to the prosperity of Quebec society, firstly by helping to improve its productivity but also by supporting excellence in youth education.

Source :

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