

Western Inter-County Railway Committee

A joint initiative by members of 6 local authorities to restore passenger and freight rail services on the Western Rail Corridor linking Limerick to Sligo via Clare, Galway and Mayo.

To; **Forward Planning - forwardplanning@galwaycoco.ie**
Galway County Council

8th September 2020

Submission to Galway County Council in regard to the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Western Inter-County Railway Committee expects that the new County Development Plan will have the highest regard to the Objectives adopted in the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy earlier this year.

RPO 6.13 (a) It shall be an objective to deliver the Athenry - Tuam - Claremorris - Sligo Rail to an appropriate level of service and to a standard capable of facilitating passenger and freight transport. (b) It shall be an objective to progress through pre-appraisal and early planning the extension of the railway from Athenry - Tuam - Claremorris - Sligo. RSES 2020

- A Galway-Mayo rail service will directly connect the largest town in County Galway, Tuam, to the national railway network, as well as connecting the Metropolitan Area of Galway City to Tuam and county destinations of Oranmore and Athenry, while a potential new Park and Ride station close to Abbeyknockmoy, at the intersection of the N63 and the railway, will considerably enhance commuter rail and intercity connectivity to those areas.
- The extension of the Western Rail Corridor between Galway and Mayo will also provide direct passenger commuter and intercity connectivity between the Metropolitan Area of Galway and Tuam with the regional towns of Castlebar, Westport, Cklaremorris, Fioxford and Ballina.
- The renewal of the un-used section of railway between Athenry and Claremorris will give Galway direct access to a rail link between the largest inland port in the country at Ballina to the southern ports of Foynes, Cork, Waterford and Rosslare. These ports are of hugely increased significance to Ireland in the context of our exports to mainland Europe post BREXIT.
- The redevelopment of the railway through Tuam provides an opportunity for an inland port development in the county served by NS/EW rail and motorway connectivity.
- The availability of modern rail transport, particularly in the largest county town of Tuam will have co-benefits allowing other developments to take place such as transport-orientated development (TOD) which is associated with increased public transport usage, reduced congestion and pollution, desirable housing provision, and healthier, more walkable communities.
- Thanks to the initiative of Galway County Council and local partners in Tuam, the Station Quarter is currently the subject of a Government funded study under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. It is appreciated that the current vacant station site has all the attributes aspired by TOD and can provide a unique transportation hub close to the heart of Tuam

where Park and Ride, facilities can be provided at a combined Bus & Rail Transportation Centre adjacent to a major residential area, town centre, public services and a regional sports facility at Tuam Stadium.

- The new Galway-Tuam-Mayo rail passenger services from the heart of Galway to the heart of Tuam will help to spread the 1.6m visitors to Galway northwards with a particular benefit accruing to Tuam and potentially the Ballyglunin Heritage project in the event of a new Park and Ride facility being developed there.
- Mid-way between Athenry and Tuam, the railway crosses the N63 which is a major commuting artery between North East Galway/South Roscommon and Galway City. A suitable site close to Finns Cross Abbeyknockmoy for a new Park and Ride Station adjacent to the rail/road intersection is in public ownership and is currently used solely for road attenuation purposes.
- Government has applied to the EU to include the Limerick-Donegal, so-called Atlantic Arc, in the soon to be revised Ten-T Core Network. Projects such as the further extension of the Western Rail Corridor are essential if the fullest benefits of such designation are to be achieved.

The Western Inter-County Railway Committee wish to record our appreciation to Galway County Council for adopting the objective to restore rail services to the Western Rail Corridor in successive County Development Plans since 1976. The Councils determination, combined with that of its neighbouring Planning Authorities has protected the route and ensured that Regional Planning Guidelines and National Development Plans over the years have acknowledged the routes importance.

Signed

Michael Connolly

Chair

Western Inter-County Railway Committee