

Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 – Issues Paper

Context

Sustainable Mobility Policy Review

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is carrying out a review of sustainable mobility policy. The phrase ‘sustainable mobility’ includes both active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport. It is the first review in 10 years and the aim is to put in place a new policy that supports -

- a shift away from the private car to greater use of active travel and public transport;
- travel by cleaner and greener transport; and
- comfortable and affordable journeys to and from work, home, school, college, shops and leisure.

The new policy will deliver on the ambitions of the new Programme for Government in the area of active travel and public transport. It will replace the existing sectoral policy documents which were published in 2009 - *Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework*. A lot has changed in the 10 years since these policies were published and further changes are forecast over the next 20 years. Ireland has a growing population and an expanding workforce and this growth needs to be catered for in a sustainable manner.

The Department held a public consultation on the policy review between November 2019 and end-February 2020. The call for views was supported by the publication of a wide range of information, analysis and discussion papers across different areas of sustainable mobility¹.

The submissions received through the public consultation process will feed into the development of a Sustainable Mobility Policy over the course of 2020.

The new sustainable mobility policy will be closely aligned with the national strategic outcomes of *Project Ireland 2040* particularly in relation to compact growth; enhanced regional accessibility; strengthened rural economies and communities; sustainable mobility; and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. *Project Ireland 2040* recognises that planning and transport policies are highly interdependent and a number of its key objectives support better integration of land use planning and transport planning. An important approach in this area in recent years has been the development of metropolitan area transport strategies – including the *Galway Transport Strategy* which was developed in 2016 in partnership with the National Transport Authority.

The new policy will also support the actions in the *Climate Action Plan* to reduce emissions in the transport sector.

¹www.gov.ie/en/consultation/f1b503-public-consultation-on-a-review-of-sustainable-mobility-policy/

The Department will develop the new sustainable mobility policy over the coming months. The aim is to develop a new policy framework that better supports sustainable mobility – linking more people, to more places, for more of their journeys and promoting increased use of active travel and public transport. The new policy will also need to consider the impacts of COVID-19 and if we need to do anything differently around the provision of sustainable mobility infrastructure and services.

Investment Framework

In 2015 the Department published its *Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport* which established priorities for Departmental investment strategy. Alongside the sustainable mobility policy review, the Department is finalising a review of the *Framework* to ensure consistency of approach across Government in relation to *Project Ireland 2040* and will shortly launch a public consultation on a revised set of priorities to guide transport investment in the years ahead.

Comments on Issues Paper

A number of the key themes and questions in the Issues Paper relate to key themes of the Department's policy review and its published discussion papers such as integrating land use and transport planning; promoting use of active travel; and addressing climate change issues.

Since the previous Development Plan was published there has been a number of important policy developments which the Department considers should be reflected in the 2022-2028 Plan. These relate to public transport in rural areas and accessible public transport and are outlined below.

Integrating land use and transport planning

The Department supports the recognition in the Issues Paper of the importance of aligning land use and transport policies. It is vital that both land use and transport are planned in ways that are mutually supportive to bring better cohesion in the planning between where people live, and their places of work, of education, where they can shop, location of public services, entertainment and social interaction. This can influence the type of transport needs that will arise, and shape the way that those needs can be effectively addressed. As outlined above, the links between land use and transport are recognised in *Project Ireland 2040* and the Department is working to strengthen the policy links between these areas.

Climate change mitigation

The Department's policy approach to achieving a greener transport sector is aligned with the Avoid-Shift-Improve principle, which is recognised internationally as a best practice approach in this area. One of the Department's published discussion papers outlined the current climate change challenges facing Ireland and the steps that are being taken in the transport sector to reduce emissions in line with climate action policies. The paper examined the suite of mitigation measures already in place and the potential role of new measures to avoid, shift or improve emissions through -

- reducing the frequency and distance of trips;
- shifting towards more environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as walking, cycling or using public transport; and
- promoting efficient fuel and vehicle technologies.

Public transport in rural areas and accessible public transport

- (i) the publication by the National Transport Authority (NTA) of its *Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022*. Its mission statement is “to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs.” Its key priorities include the reduction of social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. In addition, one of its key objectives is greater interaction/co-ordination with Local Authorities regarding the assessment of strategic transport needs and in the development of proposed transport plans for local areas.

- (ii) the publication of the “whole of Government” *National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2021* and the ratification by Ireland in 2018 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The UNCRPD puts obligations on State Parties, including Local Authorities, to ensure access for persons with disabilities to, inter alia, the physical environment and transportation in both urban and rural areas.

- (iii) To make public transport fully accessible to people with disabilities requires a ‘whole journey approach’ which refers to all elements that constitute a journey from the starting point to destination. Local Authorities are a key stakeholder in this regard in the context of ensuring a universal design approach to the built environment, including footpaths, roads, pedestrian crossing points and bus stops/shelters.

The Department can assist with appropriate text in the Development Plan regarding integrated, accessible public transport, in both rural and urban areas.