

Opinion on Project Ireland 2040

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We welcome:

The Irish government's Public Consultation on the National Investment Framework as part of the 'Ireland 2040' strategy to improve public transport and regional accessibility on the island of Ireland.

It is, however, regrettable that:

The historic and proposed preference for private car use in infrastructure investment and the profound issues of equity and environmental degradation this causes, noting that the €116 Billion 'Project 2040 National Development Plan' does not contain a single 'committed investment in interurban rail' versus €6.6 Billion committed to improvements to the primary road network (Consultation Briefing Paper No. 11 and the Ireland 2040 Plan).

The failure of public transport to serve all communities - notably the widespread inequity of access to DART services due to many station lifts being out of use as a regular occurrence.

The apparent belief amongst state officials (as noted in Consultation Briefing Paper No. 11 [Page 25]) that falsely asserts that Ireland lacks the population density required for a public transport system, when examples from other European countries clearly refute this (e.g. Croatia).

The degraded state of existing railway services, noting that both the Dublin-Sligo and Dublin-Rosslare routes have an average speed of under 70km/h.

It is further noted:

The fact that the great majority of Trinity College Dublin students who are regular transport users, both of services in the Greater Dublin Area and regional public transport services.

We are:

Submitting a response to the Department of Transport as part of their consultation on behalf of students that elucidates the following:

- The need to rewrite the Public Spending Code (2019) to prioritise investment in public transport over expanding the trunk road network as part of the Ireland 2040 National Development Plan. The need to include adherence to our climate commitments and the universal right to accessible, quality public transport in cost-benefit analyses of new infrastructure projects.
- Further expansion of the railway network to the Border-North West Region and Northern Ireland, with a specific focus on rail provision in the counties of Cavan,

Monaghan, Fermanagh, Tyrone, and Donegal. Cooperation with Northern Irish Railways to achieve an hourly rail service between Dublin and Belfast.

- Demand-Responsive Transport (DRT) and 'Local Link' bus services should be expanded in rural areas and integrated with
- Investment in railway services to reduce interurban journey times to a level comparable or below existing car journey times and improvements in frequency to allow for an hourly clock-face timetable on all Intercity routes. Reopening of closed or dormant railways, including but not limited to the Western Rail Corridor Phases 2; 3 and; 4, the South Wexford Line (Rosslare-Waterford) ,and the Navan-Drogheda Railway Line.
- Increased investment in Luas, DART and Metrolink services to provide a comprehensive and integrated multi-modal public transport system in the Dublin Metropolitan Area (roughly defined as the Dublin Bus catchment area). Increased pedestrianisation of streets in the Grafton Street area (e.g. Drury Street) and improved active transport provision, amenity and quality of public realm in the city. Support for the BusConnects programme, but highlighting the need for the ending of car dominance in the city rather than car facilitation on major arterial routes that requires controversial and costly road widening projects ,
- Abandonment of new road schemes serving urban areas that go against the 'Ireland 2040 National Strategy Outcome No. 1 - Compact Growth', such as the €600m Galway Ring-Road, in favour of investment in active transport, local bus services and provision of bus rapid transit (BRT) or light rail in urban areas.
- Decarbonisation of the national public transport network, with electrification of trunk railway lines and the utilisation of alternative fuel sources such as hydrogen for regional rail and bus services.
- Investment in new infrastructure should be paid for by state borrowing rather than the failed Public-Private Partnership model. High levels of public transport investment and patronage are a corollary of affordable, subsidised transport for students and other low income groups.