

**Submission by Meath County Council
to
Greater Dublin Area Draft
Transport Strategy
2022-2042**

December 2021

1.0 Introduction

Meath County Council welcomes the publication of the Draft Transportation Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and the opportunity to comment on same. The Council wishes to acknowledge the collaborative relationship enjoyed with the NTA over the life of the current Strategy. The work completed in the County in partnership with the NTA has been very beneficial, the ongoing works in Navan being one such example of this successful collaboration. The Council look forward to further engagement on projects of critical importance to the county.

The Council provided a detailed submission at Issues Paper stage of the review process and has had comprehensive engagement with the NTA during the preparation of the Navan Railway Line Assessment Study.

This submission should be considered in conjunction with information previously provided. The submission begins with an overview of County Meath, an outline of the local planning policy and comments are provided using the nomenclature of the Draft Transportation Strategy.

2.0 Location and Overview of County Meath

County Meath occupies a strategic location within the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) area. The EMRA region has a population of 2.3 million people and is the economic engine of the state providing more than 1 million jobs. In Census 2016¹, Meath had a population of 194,044, accounting for 8.4% of the regional population. The portion of the County's population residing in urban areas is 58.6%, therefore with 41.4% are living in rural areas. The overall population is profile is considered young with 83.4% of persons below the age of 65. This compares with an average of 79.6% for the State. Child dependency in the County is the highest in the State with 39% of the population under the age of 14 in comparison to an average of 32.3% for the State.

Meath is uniquely positioned along the national motorway network with 4 national motorways radiating through the county. The county therefore enjoys the benefit of strong transport links to the 2 largest cities on the island, Dublin and Belfast. These routes provide strong connectivity between Meath and the rest of the State. Given this strategic location, the County has benefitted historically from Nationally significant capital investment projects including for example the M1 and M3 motorways, an extensive school building programme, flood relief works, water and waste wastewater upgrades etc. These investments have assisted the Council to deliver the economic transformation, revitalisation and sustainable development of the County. This is an ongoing process that will require additional investment.

County Meath has a strong network of towns that are well serviced with social and physical infrastructure. Navan, the administrative capital of the county, is located on the M3 economic corridor. Designated as a key town in the Core Region of the EMRA, Navan is the dynamic urban centre and the focal point for the economic, cultural and social development of County Meath. The extension

¹ Unless otherwise stated all population, information is sourced from Census 2016.

of the rail line from the M3 parkway to Navan is a long-standing strategic priority for Meath County Council. The inclusion of a supporting objective for this project in the Draft Transportation Strategy is welcomed and is discussed in the body of the submission. The extension of the rail is critical to Navan fulfilling its potential as a Key Town in the Region.

The historic influence of Dublin on population and settlement growth in Meath remains apparent with commuter-based settlements in the south and south-east of the County (including Ashbourne, the East Meath Settlements, and Enfield) experiencing the highest levels of population growth in County Meath. The Council's primary objective is to create sustainable communities. Retaining the attractiveness of the County as a place to live, visit and do business in is critical to achieving sustainable growth.

There is a considerable deficit in the provision of public transport in the County which has resulted unsustainable levels of out bound car-based commuting. Investment in significant public transport projects, for example the Navan Rail project, Dart + North and West in tandem with smaller scale projects for example, increased provision for walking and cycling will increase the modal share in the County for more sustainable transport modes and options.

In summary, County Meath as part of EMRA will be required to meet the demands arising from additional population, increased economic activity, transition to a low carbon economy etc. The integration of land use planning and transport as means of delivering positive economic and social outcomes for all our citizens is strongly supported by the Council.

3.0 Local Planning Policy Context

County Development Plans are the most important Corporate policy document produced by any Local Authority. These plans have significant citizen input and set out a Council's development priorities over a 6-year period in the context of the NDP, NPF and RSES.

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The current County Development Plan was adopted in September 2021 and became effective on 03 November 2021. Further details can be accessed at: [Meath County Development Plan | Meath.ie](#).

A programme of Urban/Local Area Plan preparation will commence in 2022. A number of settlements including: Ashbourne, Navan and Drogheda² require the preparation of a local transport plan.

The County Development Plan sets out the following vision:

'To continue to support the creation of socio-economically progressive vibrant, dynamic, and healthy communities throughout the County and ensure that future growth is based on the principles of sustainable development that delivers a high -quality living and working environment that meets the needs of all residents, in accordance with National and Regional Guidance.'

² In conjunction with Louth County Council.

The Development plan acknowledges that an efficient, integrated and coherent transport network in line with national and regional policy is fundamental to the future economic, social and physical development of Meath. The development of a sustainable transport system, increasing the use of public transport, while also increasing the modal share for walking and cycling in towns and villages across the County is a key priority for the Development Plan and subsequent UP/LAP's.

Chapter 5 of the CDP sets out the Movement Strategy. The integration of land use and transport is identified as essential to the development of a more sustainable approach to transport in Meath. County Meath suffers from a considerable deficit in the provision of public transport which has led to unsustainable levels of commuting by way of private car use.

While the Plan encourages modal shift, it is also recognised that the county benefits from a strong road infrastructure which should be maintained and upgraded as necessary. Given the complexity of road projects, early collaboration between the NTA, TII, national and local authorities on road schemes will be critical to the success of these projects.

It is acknowledged that the NTA Strategy extends beyond the six-year Development Plan period. The submission addresses projects which are relevant to County Meath some of which are beyond the lifetime of the current CDP. The Council considers it essential that a long term strategic view is taken of transport planning.

The revised Strategy will support the sustainable development of Meath, by improved connectivity, encouraging economic growth, assisting in the fulfilling of environmental objectives and will support health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

4.0 Draft Strategy

Part A Background

Chapter 2 Progress made in implementation of previous strategy

As set out above, the Council acknowledges the support received from the NTA which has provided active travel infrastructure. Specific reference to the Navan Rail project, in Section 2.7 Forthcoming Schemes, is required given its importance to County Meath.

Chapter 3 Strategy Challenges

Section 3.3 discusses the Covid 19 pandemic and its likely impacts on future travel patterns/behaviour. Detailed research is not yet available in this regard and alternative future demand scenario planning which predicts a reduced travel demand. In the absence of data to back this claim, it is not in the opinion of the Council advisable to predict the outcomes of what is a constantly changing dynamic.

This section also discusses legacy development patterns which have created a car dependent out bound commuting culture. As set out above, County Meath experiences very high levels of out bound commuting in tandem with significant gaps in public transport provision. It is essential that the Strategy

addresses these issues with constructive proposals at sub-regional, county and individual settlement level. Legacy development patterns on the edges of towns are creating demands for pedestrian connections. A commitment to address these issues would improve connectivity, increase travel options and address safety issues in clusters of residential development scattered throughout the region and on approaches to larger settlements.

It is important that the strategy addresses connectivity for rural areas in the region as these communities are largely car based. Focus on greenways, bus services, footpath provision etc. is required.

Section 4.3.2 lists projects in the Strategy that are relevant to the National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) defined by the NPF which have been incorporated into the NDP. It is noted that under NSO 2 – Enhanced Regional Accessibility protection and renewal of national roads and various national roads projects are both listed. The major national road schemes that are being developed in Meath, and which also provide public realm improvements, enhance public transport infrastructure and reduce peak journey times, and take into account the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are also relevant to other NSO's as follows:

NSO 3 - Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities

Rural Development:

- Strategic road improvement projects in rural areas ensure access to critical services such as education, healthcare & employment;

NSO 4 - Sustainable Mobility

Public Transport:

- Road schemes provide public transport infrastructure to meet the needs of smaller towns, villages and rural areas. Legacy issues in bus routing can also be improved.

Cycling:

- Assist in the development of a comprehensive network of safe cycling routes in towns and villages to address travel needs.

NSO 6 - High-Quality International Connectivity

Airports:

- Enhancing land-side access to airports, particularly in public transport terms.

Ports:

- Improve land transport connections to the major ports.

NSO 7 - Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

Walking & Cycling:

- Major focus on improving walking and cycling routes, including continuous greenway networks are included in road projects.

Given the above contribution that the development of important road schemes such as the Slane Bypass and the N2 Rath to Kilmoon Scheme will make to achieving other NSOs, section 4.3.2 should recognise this under the NSOs listed. This will address any confusion that these schemes simply improve regional connectivity and reflect the multi-faceted analysis and considerations which are an

intrinsic part of major road development projects. This in turn will help support such strategic projects in the region through the relevant statutory processes.

Chapter 5 Strategy Aims and objectives

The aim of the Draft Strategy is *“to provide a sustainable, accessible and effective transport system for the Greater Dublin Area which meets the region’s climate change requirements, serves the needs of urban and rural communities, and supports economic growth”*.

The strategy objectives are as follows:

- An enhanced natural and built environment;
- Connected communities and better quality of life;
- A strong, sustainable economy;
- An inclusive transport system.

The policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 align with the principles set out above. The provision of sustainable, accessible, affordable, carbon neutral and efficient means of travel will assist the Council in the implementation of the policies and objectives of the Development Plan. It is critical that capacity assessments of all existing public transport modes are carried out. This issue is influencing modal choice in East Meath, for example.

Chapter 6 Public Consultation

It is noted that 4,000 submissions were received on the issues paper, over half the respondents who gave a place of residence were from Meath. The Council welcomes the level of engagement by the public which reflects the critical importance of the delivery of the Navan Rail and other strategic projects in the County.

Part B the Strategy

Chapter 8 Planning for Sustainable Transport

Chapter 8 sets out that the integration of land use and transport planning will guide the future location of development. This is supported strongly in the Meath County Development Plan. The Strategy supports the 10-minute neighbourhood concept. Measures PLAN 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 refer to consolidation of development, location of retail and office development and location of Transit oriented development and mixed-use development. These measures are welcomed however, it is important that a balanced approach is adopted having regard to the legacy development pattern issues set out above.

Section 8.7 discusses filtered permeability and acknowledges the importance of a planned approach to provision of walking and cycling at the planning stage for new neighbourhoods. The provision of new measures to support filtered permeability in new neighbourhood facilities is usually addressed as part of the planning process and is supported by Measure Plan 7. It is noted that the strategy

acknowledges that the retrofitting of these links in existing urban areas can be problematic. The inclusion of a supporting measure/amendment to Plan Measure 7 to address this specific issue would be helpful. Concerns in some cases could be addressed with high quality design solutions. The inclusion of worked examples in this regard would be helpful.

Measures PLAN 8-PLAN 9 refer to school site selection. The implementation of Measure PLAN 8 will be very challenging for Local Authorities. It is unclear if the Department of Education have been consulted in this regard taking account of their role in school provision. Will guidance be provided outlining the nature and type of evidence required from applicants to demonstrate that the site in question will achieve the requirement for the *'majority of students and staff will travel to the school by public transport, walking and cycling.'* If such guidance is provided, what is the statutory basis of same? Alternatively, will it be for the NTA to be the arbiter of whether this is achieved by a school proposal? In addition, does this measure apply to year of opening and each subsequent year? Will there be monitoring requirements? How will it be enforceable, and who will be carrying out any monitoring processes?

Measure Plan 9 requires that new sites for schools be accessible for most students by public transport and active travel. Measure Plan 10 requires that in the design of new schools, the design maximises priority for pedestrians and cyclists. It is unclear if the Department of Education has been consulted in this regard taking account of their role in school provision. For example, it is often the case that the connection of a school site to an existing footpath network is not funded by the Department of Education. This matter requires resolution as Local Authorities will be unable to fill any potential funding deficits.

Measures PLAN 12-PLAN 14 focus on the importance of achieving high quality urban design in transport schemes with greater recognition for placemaking qualities, active streets and an attractive public realm to encourage people to take public transport, walk and cycle. Specific reference to greening would be helpful. The Strategy would benefit from acknowledging the changing nature of our streets referencing the increased use of spaces for outdoor dining. A supporting measure in the strategy to future proof urban spaces to address this issue would be helpful.

The strategy supports Local Transport Plan (LTP) preparation and implementation. Measure PLAN 15 Local Transport Plans states the NTA will promote and assist Local Authorities to develop LTPs based on the ABTA methodology, as part of the statutory plan-making process. This is welcomed as the Council will be preparing LTPs for Navan, Ashbourne and Ratoath, MOV OBJ 1 of the CDP refers. In addition, a joint LTP will be prepared for Drogheda in partnership with Louth County Council. The NTA is a key stakeholder in the plan making process.

Chapter 9 Integration and Inclusion

Section 9.3 addresses International Gateways including Dublin Airport and Port. Dublin Airport is located approximately 8 km from the Meath County boundary. Consideration of additional access from the western side of the airport should be given more substantial support in the Strategy. The N2 Corridor can play a significant role in this regard. This would also improve access to the North West of the County. This route can also assist in alleviating congestion on the M1 south of Swords, which is generally operating beyond its capacity at peak hours.

Measure INT 6 – Fare Structure

- It is the intention of the NTA to revise the fare structure for transport in the GDA in the short-term. This new fare structure will be monitored throughout the period of the strategy and further changes implemented where appropriate.
- As part of the Bus Connects Dublin programme, fares will be simplified in a way that will make interchange between Bus, Dart and Luas seamless, resulting in a more affordable, efficient and integrated public transport system.
- The new fares structure will comprise of a short-distance fare on single leg journeys (approximately 3 kms or less) and a 90-minute fare that will allow a customer any combination of travel on Bus, Dart/Commuter Rail and Luas services.
- Provided customers commence the final leg of their journey within 90 minutes of the start of their overall trip, the new 90-minute fare will permit travel on all Bus, Luas and Rail services in Dublin including Dart and Commuter Rail services (up to a certain distance on the heavy rail services).

The inclusion of Measure INT 6 is welcomed in the context of public transport services which exist and are planned for County Meath. Fares are a key factor in encouraging a shift to public transport use particularly in counties with high levels of out bound commuting. Parking costs should also be factored into the overall cost of fares. The daily and weekly cap on public transport fares should be retained and extended to all parts of the GDA.

The 90-minute fare will not address the concerns set out by the Council in its previous submission as customers in the outlying areas of the GDA, for example Drogheda, Navan Laytown, Gormanstown and Enfield may still be impacted by disproportionately higher costs which acts as a disincentive to public transport usage. It is therefore requested a that the 90 min restriction is reexamined in this context and a more detailed analysis takes place regarding the aforementioned settlements to see if they can be facilitated with improved rail frequency and pricing thus creating, accommodating and enhancing a modal shift from the private car to rail.

The inclusion of a section referencing late night transport is welcome, it is important that measures to support access to public transport for the night time economy are developed for the region and not limited to the city.

Chpts 10 and 11 Walking and Cycling

The Council welcomes the inclusion of the following measures in the strategy:

Measure CYC 9 – Pedal Assisted E-Bikes

The NTA and local authorities will take into account the growing use of pedal-assisted E-bikes, and the benefits they may bring, in planning and designing the transport network in the GDA.

Measure CYC 10 – Electric Scooters

Subsequent to the enactment of national legislation, the NTA and local authorities will take into account the growing use of E-scooters and the benefits they may bring, in planning and designing the transport network in the GDA.

Measure CYC 11 – Other Emerging Personal Mobility Modes

The NTA, Local Authorities and Government will monitor emerging trends in personal mobility and respond accordingly in terms of legislation, regulation and infrastructure design.

These devices have potential to change travel behaviour to an extent that has been underestimated, until recently. The Council suggest that given the level of funding available and the establishment of Active Travel Offices in Local Authorities in preparation for a significant roll out of cycling infrastructure, the potential of E-Bikes, E; Scooter and other Personal mobility Modes to affect infrastructure design should be addressed as a matter of urgency. This will ensure that the demand for cycling infrastructure reflects the wide appeal of these devices and the cross section and level of service requirements of new cycling infrastructure takes account of these changing requirements.

The Council notes the changes that have been made to the Cycle Network Plan and request that the NTA engage with them prior to the finalization of the strategy to ensure alignment with the Council's proposals for improving cycling infrastructure.

Chapter 12 Public Transport

The Council welcomes the enhancements to regional bus services since 2016 particularly the 109 NX service to/from Navan. The greatly enhanced town service and associated infrastructure in Navan has the potential to have a transformative effect on the role of bus in the town. The Council recently made comments as part of the Connecting Ireland Public Consultation which included some suggestions on further enhancements to rural services. The Strategy provides strong support for the Council's proposals for bus infrastructure/services. The Council looks forward to engaging with the NTA on further initiatives to promote the use of bus services in the County.

The Council wishes to commend the efforts of the NTA in the advancement of BusConnects. BusConnects will considerably improve connectivity across the Dublin region. The opportunity exists for the NTA to future proof the system by provision of linkage to adjacent conurbations in Meath and by carrying out improvements on identified transport corridors. The corridors of specific relevance to Meath and suitable for expanded linkages include the R125 Ashbourne - Swords Corridor which will ultimately serve to connect into the proposed Metrolink and Dunboyne and Blanchardstown.

The Council welcomes the inclusion of Measure Rail 4 which supports the provision of a new rail line from the M3 parkway to Navan in the Draft Strategy and the accompanying detail provided in Section 12.4.10. There is National, Regional and Local planning policy support for this project which is set out below.

The Navan Rail Project aligns with and supports the achievement of the following National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF:

- Compact Growth;
- Enhanced Regional Accessibility;
- Sustainable Mobility;
- A strong economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills;
- Transition to a Low carbon economy;

- Access to quality childcare, education and health services.

The project fully supports the strategic investment priority of providing environmentally sustainable public transport.

The Navan Rail project supports the following Regional Strategic Objectives in the RSES:

- Sustainable Settlement Patterns

Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth. (NSO 1, 7, 10).

- Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration

Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region's citizens. (NSO 1).

- Healthy Communities

Protect and enhance the quality of our built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling, ensure clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human health. (NSO 10).

- Integrated Transport and Land Use

Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning. (NSO 2, 6, 8,9).

- Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy

Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables-focused energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. (NSO 8, 9).

- A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise and Innovation

To build a resilient economic base and promote innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems that support smart specialisation, cluster development and sustained economic growth. (NSO 5,10).

- Improve Education Skills and Social Inclusion

To improve education and develop the right skills to attract employers and retain talent and promote social inclusion to ensure opportunities for quality jobs across the Region. (NSO 5,10).

- Enhanced Strategic Connectivity

Protect and enhance international connectivity and regional accessibility to support economic development, build economic resilience and support strengthened rural communities and economies including the blue-green economy and tourism. (NSO 2, 3, 6).

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The provision of a rail line from Pace (M3 Parkway) to Navan remains a key objective of the Council in order to facilitate the future development of Navan, a key town as designated in the RSES.

MOV POL 5 'To support the extension of the rail network in the County and to actively and strongly pursue a rail line from Dunboyne/M3 Parkway to Navan subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.'

MOV POL 6 'To actively pursue, in conjunction with Irish Rail and the NTA, the re-appraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan during the Mid-Term review of the GDA Transport Strategy in accordance with the precepts of the RSES.'

MOV POL 7 'To support the reappraisal and thereafter, promote, facilitate and advance the Dunboyne /M3 Parkway line to Navan railway line project and associated rail services in cooperation with other relevant agencies.'

MOV OBJ 5 ' (a) To protect and safeguard the detailed designed alignment of Phase II of the Navan rail route and surrounding lands (including identified station locations), as illustrated on Map Series No. 5.1 in Volume 3, free from development and any encroachment by inappropriate uses which could compromise its future development as a rail facility, prior to the reappraisal of the project as part of Mid Term Review of the GDA Transport Strategy in accordance with the precepts of the RSES. (b) As part of the future planning of the Dunboyne/ M3 Parkway line to Navan, the possibility of a spur serving Ashbourne and Ratoath should be explored subject to compliance with national policy and the Railway Order'.

Strong population growth in recent years and under-investment in public transport services within the County has led to unsustainable levels of outbound commuting by way of private car usage. Recognising the unsustainable levels of out bound commuting, the Council is fully committed to the advancement of the rail project which will result in significant economic stimulus, carbon emissions reductions and societal benefits for residents of the county.

The absence of a rail service from Navan to Dublin places the town and wider county at a competitive disadvantage relative to other similar population growth centres within the region, the majority of which are serviced with rail services. Though the NTA have progressive plans to improve bus services, the delivery of critical rail infrastructure would serve to strengthen the transport links in the County and would significantly improve the County's economic competitiveness. Regionally, the delivery of a rail line would also alleviate land availability pressures in Dublin City and Suburbs in the coming decades, while supporting the Settlement Strategy outlined in the EMRA RSES.

It is essential that the Strategy contains sufficient support and definitive timelines in order to enable the project to proceed to the planning phase without delay. The Railway Order application was substantially complete as was the Environmental Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment in 2011. The route chosen maintained an alignment largely in keeping with the historic Navan – Dublin rail route and was selected as the preferred option after extensive consultations undertaken by Irish Rail with Meath County Council and all relevant stakeholders. This route alignment has been reserved in the Meath County Development Plan, 2021-2027. The Council welcome further engagement with all relevant stakeholders and recommencement of the preparation of the rail order.

The towns of Ashbourne and Ratoath are the second and fourth largest towns in County Meath with a population of approximately 13,000 and 9,000 respectively. Given the substantial growth of these towns in recent years, due mainly to their strategic proximity to Dublin, it is considered imperative to consider the long-term requirement of these towns beyond the lifetime of the County Development Plan. Given the development pressures and potential for the population growth in these towns, it is considered appropriate to include the potential concept of a rail link, having regard to the long-term sustainability requirements for the towns. These towns are considered significant large towns in an Irish context and it is reasonable to consider that if a rail line were to be developed in relatively close proximity, that a spur of the line should at least be considered in planning for same. It is acknowledged, accepted and agreed that a rail link serving Ratoath and Ashbourne cannot be considered or planned in advance of the delivery of the Navan rail line. Nonetheless, it is requested that the NTA acknowledge that early consideration of rail connectivity to towns of this size in the long-term should be at least explored, when delivery of the Navan rail line is realised.

The Council welcome the inclusion of Measure Rail 1 which supports the Dart+ Programme. The benefits of a sustainable, electrified and more frequent rail service, improving capacity on rail corridors serving Dublin will be of significant benefit to County Meath.

The Dart Coastal Northern Line (Drogheda to Dublin) will contain three train stops in County Meath namely Gormanston, Laytown and Drogheda. It is considered that the proposed works to upgrade this rail line will create a unique opportunity to include a new railway station at Bettystown, the result of which would reduce the number of car dependent trips to Drogheda and Dublin and alleviate the current parking issues at Laytown Train Station Car Park. The development patterns in East Meath and South Drogheda support the provision of an additional station in this locality. It is requested that Measure Rail 6 – New Rail Stations be revised to include the provision of a potential new rail station in Bettystown as part of the Dart Expansion works to Drogheda.

The provision of a further Train Station in the Southern Environs of Drogheda, given its designation as a Regional Growth Centre, would prove beneficial to the growth and economic development of the town and is also worthy of consideration.

The DART + West Line expansion is welcomed. This will reduce the requirement for private car commuting in the area while supporting the planned expansion of population and economic development at settlements such as Dunboyne. In this regard, it is requested that a greater emphasis is placed on the potential for a public transport interchange at M3 Parkway, similar to that at Spencer Dock, Phibsborough/Glasnevin and Broombridge in Dublin. As outlined in the Dunboyne Transport Study, there is potential for greater interaction with the Number 109 Bus Eireann bus as well as the potential for additional bus services, such as Dublin Bus services to be provided at this location. It is suggested that Irish Rail engage with the NTA and the Council with a view to providing an improved public transport interchange at the M3 Parkway as part of the subject project.

Chapter 13 Roads

The Council welcomes the recognition in the strategy of the critical nature of roads as part of an effective and sustainable transport system. As noted above, roads form the main transport arteries across the State and provide the corridors for car, public transport (buses, taxis and some sections of Luas), cycling, walking and freight movement. The Council has a number of important road schemes that it is developing with TII and others. It is important that the Strategy supports the delivery of such

infrastructure as it is a vital part of the overall sustainable transport strategy and will ensure that the transport network is fit for purpose.

The Council welcome the intention in the strategy to further manage, develop and enhance the national road network including the delivery of the following projects:

- N2 Slane Bypass and associated public realm and sustainable transport enhancements in Slane Village;
- N2 Upgrade from the M2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross to address safety issues;
- Junction enhancements and lane layout changes, including bus lane provision, to enhance safety, legibility and bus priority along the N3 between Junction 1 and Junction 4;

The significant change in approach in the Strategy regarding the Leinster Orbital Route which will not now be progressed as per previous studies, is noted. Measure Road 6 proposes that TII and the Local Authorities will deliver online improvements to existing road carriageways, and localised schemes on national and regional roads, to cater for orbital traffic movement, where issues related to the safety and capacity of the network have been identified. Orbital traffic movement on roads such as R152, R155, R125, R157 and other local roads is a significant feature in the south of County Meath. This is partly linked to tolling on radial routes into the Capital and traffic congestion in and around the M50. The new proposal in the Strategy will present a number of challenges and is in itself a scheme which requires a considerable amount of analysis. The Council request early engagement with the TII and NTA on this proposal particularly in light of the requirement in the strategy that *'It is recommended that confirmation of consistency with the Strategy is obtained from the Authority in advance of a road authority seeking development consent for a particular road scheme.'*

The Council supports the inclusion of Measure Road 8 and welcomes the commitment that the NTA, in collaboration with TII and the relevant Local Authorities, will develop and construct an appropriate road link between the N3 and N4 national roads to improve resilience on the network.

In relation to both Measure Road 6 and 8 the Council also would like more clarity on the priority of these schemes having regard to funding provided for in the National Development Plan 2021-30 and recent advice received from TII.

Chapter 19 Next Steps

It is essential that the implementation of the strategy is monitored on an ongoing basis and that monitoring results are published in a timely and user-friendly manner more frequently than a single report in 2025. The Strategy should highlight any additional data sources which are likely to be required from Local Authorities to enable mechanisms to be established for early collection of same.

The regions land use strategy is provided by the current RSES which is approved by an Elected Assembly. Each Local Authority Development Plan is required to demonstrate compliance with the RSES. The inclusion of Section 19.3 which sets out considerations for the review of the RSES is considered unnecessary and may cause confusion. Any review of the RSES will be required to align with the NTA Strategy. Section 19.3.4 which sets out what are considered appropriate locations for development fails to align with the RSES, this has the potential to create difficulties for Local

Authorities in the exercising their forward planning and development management functions. This section fails to contribute positively to the document and its inclusion should be reexamined.


5.0 Conclusion

A balanced approach to transport policy which has the ability to respond to the needs of urban and rural communities would best address the multi faceted challenges encountered by Meath County Council.

In conclusion, Meath County Council wishes to express its thanks for the opportunity to input into the review process and requests that the above comments are considered and incorporated in the Final Transport Strategy, where appropriate.

We look forward to further collaboration with the National Transport Authority and await the publication of final document.

Yours Sincerely,



Martin Murray
Director of Services