Department of Transport,
All Island Strategic Rail Review,
Lesson Lane,
Dublin 2.
strategicrailreview@arup.com

29th September 2023

Re: Submission to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review- Draft Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment Consultation
Technical Follow Up to Initial Submission on the All-Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation
SRA File Ref: 22/GD001

A Chara,

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) welcome the publication of the final draft of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review.

It is important that the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) takes into full consideration the statutory planning hierarchy with alignment of the goals and objectives of the final rail review strategy with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region.
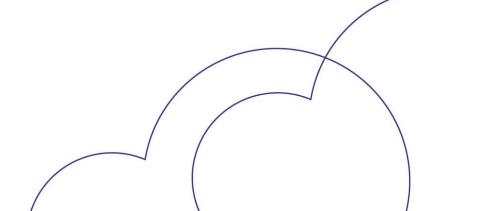
This submission is made as a technical follow up to our submission on the Draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation in January 2021. Our original submission is also attached for context.

The overarching recommendation of the SRA on the first stage consultation was for capital investment to maintain, improve and extend the existing rail network of the Southern Region as a priority. The SRA recommended a series of actions to strengthen the goals and objectives of the draft review to deliver on priorities and objectives of the RSES.

Actions were recommended to align the draft review with Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) for a low carbon and sustainable region, enhanced regional accessibility and sustainable mobility. Our submission recommended strengthening and expanding our Region's rail infrastructure and services for world class public transport connectivity between our cities and metropolitan areas, Key Towns, ports, airports and along our economic corridors (Atlantic Economic Corridor and Eastern Corridor) for the movement of people and goods (freight).

Teil/Tel: +353 (0)51 860700
R-phost/Email: info@southernassembly.ie
Idirlíon/Web: southernassembly.ie

Such enhanced infrastructure is essential to meet our climate action carbon reduction targets (50% reductions from transport by 2030 and net zero by 2050) and essential for our Region's attractiveness for people to live, work and invest in our Region.

Our submission also supported the role of our rail infrastructure, as part of integrated public transport and active travel networks, to enable effective land use and transport planning integration, compact growth and infrastructure led development to meet our Region's population and employment growth targets.

The SRA welcome the inclusion of strengthened goals, objectives, thematic recommendations, and the stated aims of the strategy to decarbonise transport, enhance regional accessibility and support balanced regional development.

This submission will outline the core points in our past submission, observe on how these recommendations have been addressed and provide final recommendations to strengthen the final rail review. The recommendations seek to achieve the stated aims to deliver balanced regional development and align with the RSES for the Southern Region.

Section 1.0   Context of the RSES

In line with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP), the RSES sets a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development of Southern Region to become one of Europe's most "**Creative and Innovative**", "**Liveable**" and "**Greenest**" Regions.

The Southern Region has the State's most significant proposition to achieve the aim of Regional Parity. The NPF and RSES targets our three cities to grow by 50%-60% to 2040 as part of a structural realignment away from the Greater Dublin Area with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands region and the Southern and Northern and Western Regions. Compact growth of at least 50% of all new homes that are targeted in the region's three metropolitan areas are to be delivered within their existing built up footprints and a corresponding target of at least 30% within all other settlements in accordance with NPF National Policy Objective 3b and 3c.

The settlement strategy builds on the Region's three cities and metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick - Shannon and Waterford as engines of growth supported by a network of 14 strategically located Key Towns namely Kilkenny, Ennis, Carlow, Tralee, Wexford, Clonmel, Killarney, Mallow, Nenagh, Thurles, Newcastle West, Clonakilty, Dungarvan and Gorey.

Regeneration and growth across our Region's Cities, Key Towns and further through its network of towns, villages and rural communities are supported to build an economically resilient, competitive, and growing region.

The economic strategy aligns with the spatial strategy and supports our Cities and Metropolitan Areas as economic engines of growth supported by the Atlantic Economic Corridor, Eastern Economic Corridor and a network of Key Towns and other towns and villages for an economically resilient region (urban and rural). Our Tier 1 Ports (Port of Cork and Shannon-Foynes Port) and Tier 2 Ports (Port of Waterford and Rosslare Europort), State airports (Cork and Shannon) and Regional Airports (Kerry and

Waterford) are strategic assets to service the regional economy, drive economic growth and strengthen our international connectivity.

By 2040, the population of the Region is projected to rise by up to 380,000 people (to almost two million) and employment is expected to increase by over 225,000 (to almost 880,000 employed) requiring infrastructure led planning. The RSES recognises the strategic role played by all areas in achieving regional and national targets outlined in the NPF. Achieving such ambitious targets will require an equally ambitious alignment in funding priorities and service delivery.

Rail infrastructure is fundamental to service this growth sustainably (population and employment) and it plays a critical role in achieving our RSES Strategy outcomes for Sustainable, Planned and Infrastructure Led Development.

In this regard, under the Population and Material Assets assessment of the SEA, it is important that the socio-economic benefit of delivering rail infrastructure and services to help achieve national, regional, and local planning and economic policy, enable targeted population and employment growth in the Region in a sustainable and infrastructure led manner and support the Region's transition to a zero carbon future is identified as a positive impact.

To reinforce guidance provided in our first submission, Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) of direct relevance to the implementation of the All -Island Strategic Rail Review under Chapter 3 People and Places include:

- RPO 4 Investment Infrastructure, RPO 6 Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas, RPO 7 Delivery and Funding, RPO 8 Investment to Deliver the Vision for Metropolitan Areas, RPO 9 Holistic Approach to Delivering Infrastructure, RPO 11 Key Towns, RPO 26 Towns and Villages, RPO 30 Inter-Urban Networks, RPO 35 Support for Compact Growth.

Relevant RPOs under Chapter 4 A Strong Economy-Innovative and Smart include:

- RPO 41 Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC), RPO 42 Eastern Corridor, RPO 68 Regional Investment.

Relevant RPOs under Chapter 5 Environment include:

- RPO 90 Regional Decarbonisation, RPO 91 Decarbonisation in the Transport Sector, RPO 139 Low Carbon International Connectivity**.**

Relevant RPOs under Chapter 6 Connectivity include:

- RPO 141 Regional Freight Strategy, RPO 146 High Quality International Connectivity Ports, RPO 150 High Quality International Connectivity Airports, RPO 151 Integration of Land Use and Transport, RPO 166 Investment in Strategic Inter Regional Multi-Modal Connectivity to Metropolitan Areas and Economic Corridors, RPO 155 Managing the Regions Transport Assets, RPO 156 Steady State Investment, RPO 157 Local Transport Plans, RPO 158 Intra Regional Rural Connectivity, RPO 159 Role of Transport in Enabling Access for All, RPO 160 Smart and Sustainable Mobility, RPO 162 Multi-Modal Travel Integration, RPO 164 Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies, RPO 170 Rail, RPO 171 Bus, RPO 172 Rural Transport, RPO 173 Tourism Corridors.

Relevant RPOs under Chapter 7 Quality of Life include:
- RPO 175 Improving Regional Quality of Life through Infrastructure Led Planning, RPO 176 10 Minute City and Town Concepts.

Relevant Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) Objectives include:
- Cork MASP Policy Objectives 7-8 Integrated Land use and Transport Planning and Key Objectives of the Cork Metropolitan Transport Strategy, Limerick-Shannon MASP Policy Objectives 6-7 Integration of Land use and Transport and Sustainable Transportation and Waterford MASP Policy Objectives 6 (a-b) and 7 Integration of Land use and Transport, Sustainable Transport and Regional Connectivity.

References to the final published RSES and the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans for Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford can be obtained through:
- http://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/rses

Section 2.0	The Case for Change

The SRA welcome the inclusion of the section "The Case for Change" and concur with the policy response to addressing gaps in the existing network coverage, addressing poor frequency of services, station facilities, modal interchange, and low rail freight mode share. The SRA welcome identification of addressing connectivity gaps between Cork and Waterford and Waterford and Wexford.

There are two areas of strengthening recommended for addressing further connectivity gaps and factoring in future demographic and employment growth which will make higher frequency rail services viable.

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

Direct Rail Connections Between all Cities and Metropolitan Areas
- A connectivity gap is the potential for direct rail connections between Cork and Limerick. This will significantly strengthen inter-city connections between the cities and metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick -Shannon and Waterford in the Southern Region and Galway in the Northern and Western Region and support the sustainable growth of a counter pole to Dublin and the Eastern and Midland Region. Servicing direct connections between our cities with high quality, frequent rail services will align to NPF and RSES policy for balanced regional development.

Future Population and Employment Growth along Rail Corridors
- A constraint identified for the rail network was that demographics in rural areas are not conducive to support high density, high frequency rail networks in all places. The SRA request that future proofing the rail network is undertaken as future targeted population and employment growth in the Regions under the NPF, RSES and Local Authority City and County Development Plans over the short, medium, and longer term to 2040 and beyond is significant (an additional 380,000 population and 225,000 in employment in the Southern Region by 2040). The distribution of this growth needs to be infrastructure led. Existing rail routes and stations on the network are assets and their patronage will change considering:
  - The distribution of growth within the Region and in each Local Authority will target urban regeneration, compact growth and employment growth across our Region's

network of urban areas directly serviced by the rail network. Our Cities and Metropolitan Areas have targets to grow by 50-60% by 2040. Designated Key Towns, almost all of which are serviced by the rail network including Kilkenny, Carlow, Ennis, Tralee, Wexford, Killarney, Mallow, Nenagh, Thurles, Clonmel and Gorey, have targets to grow by at least 30% to 2040. Key Towns are economic drivers for the sub region and rural hinterland. Public transport infrastructure connecting them to other towns in the sub region, to each other and to the cities and metropolitan areas will enable their population and employment growth targets to be achieved and enhance the population and employment density not only along rail corridors but in wider hinterland catchments. This will strengthen the feasibility for higher rail usage for people and goods and a higher frequency of services.

- o This is especially an opportunity in the Southern Region where the RSES fosters towns to economically grow and attract inward investment as networks (such as the Kerry Hub and Knowledge Triangle, Galway-Ennis-Limerick Network, North Cork Agri-Food Network, Limerick-Waterford Transport and Economic Network, Waterford- Kilkenny -Carlow Network etc.) Improving public transport connectivity between towns within these networks and between the towns and their rural catchments (bus and rail interchange) is key to the functioning of the networks. Each of these networks are anchored with Key Towns possessing rail connectivity which is an asset to develop further opportunities.

- o The final review must reflect the future growth trajectory of the regions through the NPF and RSES, ensure the rail network services regional parity and have the infrastructure in place to attract growth.

- o The imperative to transition to zero carbon transport and use the opportunity of rail for more frequent intra-regional journeys between cities, towns, and rural hinterlands (interconnecting with rural bus networks); and

- o Low usage patterns are likely a response to existing low frequency of services and a lack of integration with other rural public transport modes at present. With improved services and interconnection with rural bus networks (NTA's Connecting Rural Ireland network especially), rail stations will be hubs for modal interchange for wide rural catchments. We urgently need more sustainable transport patterns across rural areas and our rail assets, existing and expanded, are key to achieve this. This holistic and future outlook needs to be considered where current demographics are seen as a justification to not maintain, strengthen or expand existing routes, stations, and services.

Section 3.0   Decarbonisation

In our submission to the first consultation of the rail review, the SRA made recommendations under the theme of Goal 1 Decarbonisation to:

- Maximise the rail network for decarbonising transport by increasing the movement of people and freight by rail, especially between our Region's urban centres, along the Atlantic Economic Corridor, Eastern Economic Corridor and to our international Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports and airports.
- Invest in commuter rail stations and services and multi modal interconnection.
- Transition rail transport to renewable and low carbon emission energy sources.

The SRA welcome the strengthened recommendations under this goal and the commitment to deliver the infrastructure to operate a net zero emissions network by 2050 and the commitment to roll out electrification of rail lines (inter-city) and explore other options such as battery and hydrogen for regional services.

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

Region Wide Electrification

- The SRA welcome the commitment to rail electrification but seek the roll out to be ambitious, seek Overhead Line Equipment as strategic infrastructure for regional development, extend electrification to all inter-city routes and further routes connecting Key Towns with cities and metropolitan areas on a region wide basis. The opportunity for electrification should also be an opportunity to increase line capacity (upgrade single lines), upgrade station facilities and increase the frequency of services.

Pilot Innovative Technology in Smart Regions
- The SRA welcome the commitment to deploy other forms of lower carbon energy sources for rail fleets. The SRA have an ambition, and are currently active, in the development of a Smart Southern Region. There may be significant potential for project collaborations with other stakeholders and innovation actors to test and pilot projects for battery, electrification and hydrogen powered rail services in our region. Such pilots, and their outcomes, should be widely communicated to the public as a demonstration of a green region in action (a good precedent is the positive national communication of electric bus pilot programme in Athlone).

Section 4.0   Inter-City

In our submission to the first consultation of the rail review, the SRA made recommendations under the theme of Goal 2 Inter -City to:

- Assess the feasibility for delivering high speed direct inter-city rail services and electrification of rail connecting with our Region and connecting each of our cities and metropolitan areas (Dublin- Limerick Junction-Cork rail line and Limerick-Limerick Junction- Waterford rail line).
- Connect towns on the Atlantic Economic Corridor with the Eastern Corridor with a higher frequency of services for people and freight via our Region's rail network.

The SRA welcomes the commitment to deliver cross country increased capacity, services, and frequencies over the rail network, especially improving journey times so rail is a competitive and attractive alternative to private car transport between cities.

However, the SRA consider that in the recommendations and upgrade proposals for the national network, there is an under appreciation of the future demand for rail, driven by regional and county level population and employment growth targets to 2031 and 2040 plus through the NPF, RSES and City and County Development Plans (See SRA comments in Section 2.0 above). Infrastructure and recommendations focus on the east and the Greater Dublin Area. There is a need for greater regional ambition.

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

Rail Infrastructure to Achieve Balanced Regional Development
- To achieve the stated aim of the rail review to achieve greater regional accessibility and balanced regional development, a greater level of ambition for infrastructure delivery needs to be signaled to the regions beyond the Eastern and Midlands Region. As noted in Section 2.0, it is important to plan infrastructure for future population and employment growth in the Regions, targeted to grow at twice the rate of growth under national and regional planning policy in the Southern and Northern and Western Regions than the Eastern and Midland Region.

Deliver for the Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies in Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford
- There is much emphasis on delivery for the transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. Equally, the rail review must deliver for the Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford prepared by the NTA, TII, Local Authorities and in consultation with stakeholders including the Regional Assemblies. Investing and delivering on transport infrastructure projects, especially rail infrastructure, identified in each of these transport strategies is an objective of the RSES and MASPs for Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford. These priorities and infrastructure requirements need to be reflected in the recommendations of the rail review.

Section 5.0	Regional and Rural

In our submission to the first consultation of the rail review, the SRA made recommendations under the theme of Goal 3 Regional and Rural to:

- Enhance passenger facilities and improve the frequency of services to our Region's network of towns in support of urban and rural regeneration, rural economic growth and to support sustainable mobility for our Region's tourism corridors of the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.
- Strengthen rural public transport interconnection between bus and rail services for the movement of people, freight and tourism including plan led coordination through Local Transport Plans, the NTA's Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and scheduling rail, regional bus, and Local Link services.

The SRA welcome the strengthened commitment to connect towns (targeting towns of 10,000 plus) to the rail network, addressing missing rail links, rail improvements and re-opening lines for improved intra-regional connectivity. The re-opening of the Limerick to Foynes rail for both passenger services and freight, servicing commuter public transport in the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area, tourist destinations including Adare and servicing industry and freight movements at Shannon Foynes Port is welcomed.

We welcome the recommendations to strengthen rail connectivity to the South East and reinstate the Waterford to Rosslare line and upgrade Dublin to Waterford and extending to Wexford new services.

We also welcome the commitment to upgrade the Limerick to Waterford Rail Line and with a spur route (curve) to allow for direct Cork-Waterford rail services as a feasible alternative Cork-Waterford direct route.

All these lines should be developed as a priority.

In addition, the SRA welcome the commitment to increase rail freight mode (see section 7.0 Below).

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

Inter-Modal Transport Integration
- Recommendations need to be included to deliver interchange facilities and services between different modes of transport (bus services especially) connecting with rail stations to ensure smaller rural towns and rural communities are well connected by public transport and rail services (coordination with Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and Local Link).

On-Going Review Process to Re-Assess Project Feasibility
- It is important that the implementation structures for the rail strategy allows an opportunity to re-assess rail projects and "missing link" infrastructure on a regular basis. As the Regions grow, technology advances and the economy of the Region evolves, the business case, technical ability, and cost benefit justification to deliver projects will adjust and change. The rail review should set a framework for on-going project evaluations to be supported.
- We would note that the feasibility of some projects which have been parked under the current review could be significantly improved through an integrated approach to land use and transport planning which identifies opportunities for Transit Oriented Development. This is particularly relevant to potential commuter services.
- The list of interventions in Appendix A indicates that a reopening/reinstatement of the rail link between Charleville and the Limerick to Foynes line has not been considered or has been discounted prior to Stage 3. As demonstrated in Figure A.2, the current alignment of the Cork to Limerick connection via Limerick Junction is highly inefficient and discourages demand. As Cork and Limerick continue to grow in line with NPF projections, the justification and rationale for a direct rail link will grow stronger and should be subject to ongoing re-assessment. The feasibility of this project should be viewed in the context of national objectives for balanced regional growth and the strategic importance of a connection between Cork and Limerick. The reinstatement of the link would also enable a more effective links between Kerry and Limerick, provide a more effective connection along the entirety of the Atlantic Corridor, and compliment the reintroduction of passenger services on the Limerick to Foynes line.

Additional Infrastructure Interventions
- The SRA welcome the innovation to propose a curve rail line allowing direct Cork-Waterford connections to run on the Limerick-Waterford line, by-passing waiting time at Limerick Junction. A similar proposal should be considered for direct Cork to Limerick services, similarly by passing the need for rail line changes and wait overs at Limerick Junction. This is a significant opportunity for improved rail services between all three cities and metropolitan areas and should be subject to reappraisal in future reviews of the strategy.

Rail Corridors Connecting Key Towns with City and Metropolitan Areas
- The focus on improved rail connectivity between the cities is important but considering the economic role of Key Towns driving sub regional population and employment growth, there is less focus by comparison on improved connectivity for regional rail lines that connect Key Towns to each other and the Cities and Metropolitan Areas. Examples include the Tralee, Killarney, Mallow line in the South West, Limerick-Nenagh, Ballybrophy Line in the Mid-West, Carlow, Kilkenny, and Waterford in the South East. In addition, more frequent and higher quality services on the Cork to Dublin line would benefit connections between the Key Towns of Thurles and Mallow with Limerick and Cork. Improved services on the Waterford to Limerick Rail Line would benefit connections between the Key Town of Clonmel with Waterford and Limerick. Improved services on the Dublin to Wexford and Rosslare Route will benefit connections between the Key Towns of Gorey and Wexford. Improving the rail line capacity, station infrastructure, potential for electrification, improving signaling and level crossings, greater frequency in services and interchange facilities at stations in each of our Key Towns and other towns along the rail route will achieve the aims of the review. The review should reflect this ambition for the Regions.

Section 6.0   Sustainable Cities

In our submission to the first consultation of the rail review, the SRA made recommendations under the theme of Goal 4 Sustainable Cities to:
- Support the opportunities of rail in the future of mobility, especially in leveraging innovation and technology to improve planning, design, operation, and management of rail services as an attribute of zero carbon smart cities, towns and rural areas and the role of rail in Smart Mobility and Mobility as a Service Systems.
- Support multi-modal transport integration, especially walking and cycle route connectivity with rail stations, enhanced bike and ride, facilities for bicycles on rail carriages and integrated ticketing.
- Support connections to rail stations by increasing the opportunity for walking and cycling filtered permeability as an attribute of 10/15 minute cities and towns across our Region.

The SRA welcome the strengthened commitment to developing rail infrastructure and services in each of the cities and support for implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies. In addition, a new spur rail line connecting Limerick City to Shannon Airport via Sixmilebridge or Cratloe is proposed, which is positive and aligns with the objectives of the Limerick-Shannon MASP.

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

Connectivity to Airports
- The SRA welcome the inclusion of a proposed rail spur connection between Limerick City and Shannon Airport. To encourage greater sustainable mobility for tourism, it is important the rail review also supports connectivity to all our Region's airport assets with greater interconnection and frequency of services between airports, bus services and rail stations (an opportunity for improved connectivity between Kent Rail Station and Cork Airport for example). In addition, the review should maximise the opportunities for modal integration through the close proximity of the Regional Airport at Kerry to Farranfore Rail Station and maximise the proximity of Waterford Regional Airport to the rail network of the South East.

Rail Services as Integral Assets to Smart and Sustainable Cities
- As recommended previously, the rail review should support multi-modal integration with rail stations across cities and metropolitan areas such as Bike and Ride, Park and Ride, Bicycle Sharing Stations, EV's and car sharing stations, Mobility Hubs) and Mobility as a Service systems to strengthen the role of rail in the sustainable future of our cities. In addition, it would be positive to see support for permeable walking and cycling routes interconnecting with rail stations across cities and metropolitan areas to support 10/15 Minute Cities in action.

Section 7.0	Freight and Economy

In our submission to the first consultation of the rail review, the SRA made recommendations under the theme of Goal 5 Freight and Economy to:
- Support economic growth of the region with efficient and sustainable logistics and supply chain networks, especially through guaranteed journey times between cities, Key Towns, ports, and airports which are strategic nodes on the Trans European Network Core and Comprehensive Network that connect our State and Regions to Europe. There is a strategic opportunity to increase rail freight in our transport systems, especially connecting with our Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports and by the reactivation of closed or disused rail lines. Opportunities for the Region include:
    - Re-instate the Limerick – Foynes Freight Line.
    - Potential to strengthen freight and logistics at Rosslare and Waterford/Belview ports with improved rail connectivity to both ports.
    - Deep water wharf and rail connection at Marino Point in Cobh as part of the Port of Cork.
    - Provision of multi-modal freight interconnection and break bulk distribution centres, where freight can be moved via zero carbon emission mobility on approach and within our cities and urban centres.
- Assess the potential for a national rail hub designation at a central location in the Southern Region for the movement of people and goods. Such a hub would allow inter connections at a regional cross-roads for moving people and goods from east/west (Waterford to Limerick and onwards to Galway, connecting the Atlantic Economic Corridor, Western Rail Corridor to the Eastern Corridor) and from north/south (Belfast-Dublin-Cork corridor). A potential location supported in the RSES is Limerick Junction.

The SRA welcome the significant strengthening included for rail freight which addresses our past recommendations. It is positive the rail review aligns with Iarnród Eireann's 2040 Rail Freight Strategy.

The freight network as outlined extends comprehensively connecting the Atlantic Economic Corridor to the Eastern Corridor through our Region with strengthening of freight services along Core Routes (Cork Dublin Line). The SRA welcome the re-opening of Claremorris to Athenry line in the Northern and Western Region, Limerick to Shannon Foynes Port and Waterford to Rosslare in the Southern Region, which is strengthening the economic connectivity between the west and east coast through the heart of our Region centred on our rail network.

The SRA welcome increased capacity along existing freight lines, re-opening previously closed lines, enhancing rail access to our ports, incentivising rail freight for commercial use by lowering track

charges and supporting a network of inland freight distribution terminals adjacent to the rail network (Limerick Junction identified as a hub opportunity).

In addition, we welcome investment to re-open rail connections with Shannon-Foynes, Waterford to Wexford and Rosslare and Cork City to Marino Point in Cobh for accessing facilities in the Port of Cork. The potential for Limerick Junction to be developed as a logistics hub serving the region and optimizing the rail network is a significant opportunity for our Region.

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

On-Going Opportunities to Expand Rail Freight Networks
- As part of the on-going implementation and review process of the rail review, new opportunities for rail freight across the entire network of the region's rail infrastructure should be facilitated as new economic activities emerge, regional growth targets are achieved and technology innovations in the freight and logistics sector advance. The SRA welcome the improved freight corridors across our Region and consider the wider network has potential and should be evaluated in future reviews of the strategy.

Section 8.0   Economic Feasibility

In our submission to the first consultation of the rail review, the SRA made recommendations under the theme of Goal 6 Economic Feasibility to:

- Support for the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) to assess projects for the funding and delivery of strategic transport projects in the Regions. Such investment should support balanced regional development and address historic under-investment in rail infrastructure in the Region.

The SRA welcome the inclusion of capital cost estimates and holistic consideration of quantitative and qualitative criteria to appraise the recommendations. The analysis identifies net economic benefits for Ireland in implementing the review's recommendations. Strengthening is recommended for delivery of infrastructure.

To support our previous recommendations, the SRA reiterate for the final All Island Strategic Rail Review:

Roadmap for Delivery

- In the roadmap for delivery, projects over the short, medium, and longer term need to prioritise delivery of rail infrastructure to the Southern Region and Northern and Western Region to achieve regional parity, enable targeted levels of population and economic growth under the NPF and RSES and address historic under-investment in rail infrastructure in the Regions. Including the Regional Assemblies in implementation governance structures and as key consultees in future reviews will be welcomed.

Conclusion

The SRA welcome this consultation opportunity on the final draft of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review and are a committed stakeholder and key consultee for the Department of Transport, Irish Rail, and consultants ARUP. Continued engagement with the SRA in the final plan and its implementation governance will be welcomed.

I trust the above recommendations can be taken on board to help strengthen the final review's objectives and recommendations from the Region's perspective. The SRA would welcome the opportunity to engage with the Department of Transport on these recommendations and are available for future consultation and clarities as required.

Mise le meas,

David Kelly
Director, Southern Regional Assembly