



SECTION 25A REPORT

REPORT DATE	PUBLIC BODY	PREPARED BY
15 February 2024	Department of Transport	Michael Devane, Public Transport Investment and Policy Division

The purpose of the table below is to assist the public body in completing the Section 25A (1) report to the Southern Regional Assembly. This report will be used by the Regional Assembly to complete the Section 25A (2) Monitoring Report to be submitted to NOAC and which will focus on progress made in securing the overall objectives of the RSES.

It is intended that the Monitoring Report will be succinct, covering the 2-year period 2022-2024, and therefore we would ask that the response to the questions are as short as possible and for example we do not need the full detail of each policy or programme outlined.

For further information, please contact Brigh Ryan at bryan@southernassembly.ie or Claire Breen at cbreen@southernassembly.ie

Please return the report to this office by **Friday, 2nd February 2024**.

This can be submitted by email to: cbreen@southernassembly.ie

PLEASE OUTLINE ANY PROGRESS MADE IN SUPPORTING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RSES WHICH ARE RELEVANT TO YOUR DEPARTMENT-

In framing your response please provide a short overview of key public investment mechanisms and proposals by reference to:

- 1. Please provide an overview of spending on transport priorities for the Region for the years 2022 and 2023, indicating how alignment with the NPF and Southern Region and outline the key mechanisms which the Department has put in place to ensure that investment decisions are aligned with the NPF and Southern Region RSES.**

The Department of Transport published the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) in December 2021. NIFTI is the Department's high-level strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport. It represents the Department's contribution to Project Ireland 2040 and has been developed to ensure sectoral investment is aligned with the NPF and supports the delivery of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

Land transport investment in the Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford metropolitan areas are guided by the metropolitan area transport strategies which have been developed for each city by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in collaboration with the local authorities and other stakeholders. The strategies set out programmes of proposed transport investment in active travel, bus and rail for each metropolitan area over a 20-year period and they have been developed in line with the NPF and the regional spatial and economic strategies.

NIFTI has placed active travel at the top of the transport investment hierarchy. This is reflected in the significant increase in funding for walking and cycling in recent years, equivalent to 20% of the 2020 transport capital budget or €360m per year. The provision of 1,000km of walking and cycling infrastructure by 2025 is targeted in the National Sustainable Mobility Policy, with over half of that already provided by 2022. It is important that active travel infrastructure is provided in areas which will feel the greatest impact, such as built-up urban areas with fast growing populations. It is important that resources, such as schools, are connected to residential areas through walking and cycling infrastructure in order to provide the greatest number of people with the option of active travel as a transport mode. The Department is liaising across government such as the Department of Education and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in this regard.

The Climate Action Plan 2023 highlights the importance of embedding transport orientated development (TOD) at all stages of planning and development, particularly the siting of services and multi-use development at transport nodes. TOD is a key policy objective of the Government's Housing for All plan, and a working group was established in December 2021 under Action 26.1 of Housing for All to consider opportunities for TOD in major urban centres. The working group is jointly chaired by the Department and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and includes representatives from the NTA and the Land Development Agency. The role of the working group is to consider opportunities for TOD in the five cities well as the wider eastern region. The working group published a report on TOD opportunities in Dublin in June 2023. A report on TOD opportunities in the eastern region (counties Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow) will be published shortly and a report on TOD opportunities in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford will be finalised in the coming months. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 commits to investing significantly in high capacity public transport that will facilitate TOD in major urban centres.

In Budget 2024, a €613m funding package was secured to support the Public Service Obligation (PSO) and Local Link public transport services. Funding was secured for the continuation of the 20% average fare reduction on PSO services, the Young Adult Card, the 90-minute fare, and the continued roll-out of new services (BusConnects, Connecting Ireland, new town services, service enhancements). Funding was also provided for the extension of the upper age limit of the Young Adult Card from 23 to 25-years-of-age.

The Department provides substantial grant funding for the maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads. Allocated grant programmes for local authorities are to maintain the road network to a serviceable condition. The funding that each local authority receives under these grant programmes is based predominately on the road length with some allowance for traffic factors in several local authority areas. Other grants are available

and are aimed at maintaining and renewing key elements of the overall regional and local road network, including safety and bridge programmes, drainage works, climate adaptation measures, community involvement projects and the maintenance of former national roads. Furthermore, there are road improvement schemes which are funded under either the Specific Grant Programme (for projects under €5m) or the Strategic Grant Programme (for projects over €5m).

The importance of regional airports in facilitating international connectivity is reflected in Project Ireland 2040 as well as related regional economic and spatial strategies. The Government's commitment to regional airports, as part of these long-term planning and investment strategies, is evident in the capital provision for the Regional Airports Programme (RAP) under the NDP. Government policy on regional airports seeks to optimise conditions for regional development and connectivity – both for social and economic benefits. Government recognises that as employers, airports contribute to the local economy and employment is also supported through the various ancillary services that are provided to the airport. As these benefits can be derived from facilitating access to and from the associated regions, the capacity of these airports to handle scheduled services is fundamental to the Programme.

2. Please outline any progress made in supporting the objectives of the RSES and MASPs which are relevant to your organisation. Specifically, your response should include details on progress relating to:

- **Integration of Planning and Transport Policy to achieve more sustainable settlement and travel patterns as identified in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), and in the Cork, Limerick-Shannon & Waterford Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASP)**
- **Strategic connectivity to support economic competitiveness including investment in the Trans-European TEN-T road and rail network**
- **Delivery of key public transport projects within the Cork, Limerick-Shannon & Waterford Metropolitan Areas, delivery of Bus Connects, Cork Light Rail, along with park and rides and new stations to provide interchange with bus, Light Rail to provide a fully integrated metropolitan transport network; undertake appraisal for further initiatives to support the Cork, Limerick-Shannon & Waterford Metropolitan Areas Transport Strategies**
- **Delivery of key public transport projects in the Region to support compact growth and regeneration. Rail infrastructure projects including improved level of commuter rail service in the Region, development of improved bus services throughout the Region including services to small towns and villages and the Local Link rural transport programme, Delivery of roads projects including on-going management and protection of national road networks**

Integration of Planning and Transport Policy

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23, published December 2022) was the first statutory climate action plan that incorporated both the economy-wide emissions abatement targets set under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the legally binding sectoral emission ceilings, set by Government in July 2022.

For transport, we are now obligated to pursue a decarbonisation pathway to achieve a 50% reduction in transport emissions by 2030, in a manner that is consistent with a sectoral emissions ceiling of 54 Mt for the first carbon budget period (2021-2025), and a sectoral emissions ceiling of 37 Mt over the second carbon budget period (2026-2030). Compliance with our sectoral emissions ceiling targets will only result from an integrated combination of measures, and the decarbonisation pathway for transport set out in CAP23 and which has been maintained in the draft Transport chapter of CAP24 (which was published in draft form December 2023) is premised on an 'AVOID-SHIFT-IMPROVE' framework to achieving greater transport sustainability. Greater emphasis has now been included on the importance of Enhanced Spatial & Land-Use Planning and Strategic Transport Planning (in particular through the Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies).

The application of the Avoid-Shift-Improve framework for transport sustainability to categorise all CAP actions, also emphasises the crucial role of spatial and land-use planning in designing transport systems that can support our net-zero ambition. In addition to enhanced spatial and land-use planning measures that can reduce the need to travel by private car in the first instance (where measures will be further developed in the context of our forthcoming National Demand Management Strategy).

The transport chapter of the CAP acknowledges that achieving these targets and reducing traffic volumes will require sustainable alternatives to be enhanced and improved, along with an increased focus placed by local authorities on better integration of transport and planning policy to address low-density/suburban sprawl, which increases the distance people must travel and ultimately can lock in car-dependent patterns of behaviour, in favour of sustainable, compact, and transport-orientated development.

Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies

The **Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS)** was developed by the NTA in collaboration with Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Since its publication in 2020, there has been good progress in delivering key elements of CMATS, including the Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme, BusConnects Cork, Cork Light Rail and the Active Travel Programme.

The NTA published the **Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS)** in December 2022. The strategy was prepared by the NTA in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and TII, with the cooperation of Iarnród Éireann.

The NTA published the **Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (WMATS)** in December 2022. It was developed in collaboration with Waterford City and County Council, Kilkenny County Council, the Southern Regional Assembly and TII.

Active Travel and Greenways

A large number of active travel projects, varying in size and significance, are being progressed across the 9 counties of the Southern region in the period 2021-2025. A full list can be found on the NTA's website, which details project level allocations for the past 3 years. 2024 Active Travel allocations were announced on 7 February, with €290m being invested in walking and cycling projects across the country.

Key projects in the region which have been completed or are under development include:

- MacCurtain Street, Cork
- Vernon Mount Bridge and Grange to Tramore Valley route, Cork
- Bilberry to City Centre Greenway, Waterford
- River Suir Sustainable Transport Bridge, Waterford
- Father Russel Road Scheme, Limerick
- Killarney Active Travel Pathfinder Project, Kerry

Significant Greenway schemes developed/ being progressed in the Southern region in the period 2021-2025 include:

- Midleton – Youghal Greenway
- South Kerry Greenway
- North Kerry Greenway
- Limerick Greenway
- South East Greenway
- Suir Blueway
- West Cork Greenway
- West Clare Greenway

Public Transport Infrastructure

Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract

The five-year funding programme from 2020 to 2024 for the maintenance and renewal of the rail network, the Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract (IMMAC), will deliver €1.3bn of Exchequer investment in the network. Additional funding secured as part of the NDP will see the delivery of a rehabilitation programme on the Dublin-Cork line, delivering journey time improvements of up to ten minutes.

Approximately €340m of Exchequer funding was invested in IMMAC-related works in 2022, which included €64m for the commencement of rehabilitation works on the Foynes-Limerick freight line and €6.4m for track renewal on the Limerick to Ballybrophy line, which saw track renewal of the full line, delivering journey time improvements of fifteen minutes. Approximately €281.5m of Exchequer funding was paid to Iarnród Éireann in 2023 in respect of IMMAC related works. Current funding under the IMMAC programme ensures the rail network is funded at 'steady state' level.

BusConnects Cork

Following an extensive public consultation process, the NTA published the proposed BusConnects Cork network in June 2022. The draft network provides an increase of over fifty percent in bus services across the city, to allow more people to gain access to more places quickly. Planning for the implementation of the new bus network has commenced and it is expected that the new network will be roll out over the coming years.

A key component of the overall BusConnects Programme for Cork is the implementation of bus priority measures, generally bus lanes, on key bus corridors serving the city. In June 2022 the NTA also published detailed proposals for 12 Sustainable Transport Corridors, setting out proposals for bus and cycle infrastructure along those key corridors. Public consultation in relation to these plans ran until early in October 2022, with close to 3,000 submissions received.

The NTA reviewed and revised the scheme designs to take account of feedback received. A further round of public consultation on the 11 Preferred Route Options, ran from March until May 2023. A third round of public consultation on what are now the Preferred Route Options for the 11 corridors concluded last December. There was positive stakeholder engagement in relation to the latest proposals. Following on from this, data gathering, and survey work necessary for the production of the Environmental Impact Assessment for a submission to An Bord Pleanála will continue.

Cork Light Rail

The Cork Light Rail project seeks to provide a high capacity, high quality east west public transport corridor connecting Ballincollig in the west to Mahon Point in the east via the city centre as identified in CMATS.

An engineering design team has been appointed to undertake an alignment options study and identify the optimum alignment for the proposed light rail line. A public consultation on the emerging preferred route had been due to launch in June 2023 but, on foot of concerns from Cork City Council, this was postponed to allow further consideration to the feasibility of different route alignments through Cork city centre. A public consultation is expected to launch in the coming months.

Cork Area Commuter Rail

The Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme represents the largest investment in the rail network in Cork undertaken by the State. The programme comprises a number of separate but interrelated projects that encompass:

- The integration of the three existing railway corridors in the Cork area, which arrive in the city at Kent Station, providing a high-frequency north-east connection through the city and creating an integrated network;
- Full electrification, or alternative fuelling, of the suburban rail network;
- Other infrastructure improvements required to accommodate a transformative 10-minute frequency (from current 30-minute frequency) for the suburban rail network in Cork;
- Additional rolling stock to be introduced to meet the potential of existing and future demand;

- A multi-modal integrated transport hub for the city provided at Kent Station to promote modal shift from the private car and enhance attractiveness of the city docklands regeneration and development; and
- New stations at prime regeneration sites, Park & Ride interchange points and new development areas.

A four-week non-statutory public consultation on the preferred option for double tracking the current single line between Glounthaune and Midleton concluded in August 2022. The feedback received fed into the Railway Order application, which was submitted by CIÉ to An Bord Pleanála in November 2022. An Bord Pleanála granted a Railway Order with conditions to CIÉ for this work in October 2023. Procurement preparations have started following this approval and a contract award is expected later this year prior to construction commencing.

In addition to the Kent Station and double-tracking works above, Iarnród Éireann awarded a contract to Alstom for a major signalling upgrade project on the Cork commuter rail network in June 2023. This signalling upgrade is required to increase the number of trains which can operate between Cork and Cobh, Midleton and Mallow.

In addition to the infrastructure works described above, the frequency of a number of rail services in the Cork Metropolitan Area were doubled in July 2022, with a frequency of every 30 minutes to/from Cork-Cobh and Cork-Midleton and a frequency of every 15 minutes to/from Cork and Glounthaune.

BusConnects Limerick

Work also continued in 2022 on a draft new bus network for Limerick City, which was then published for public consultation in February 2023. It was developed by the NTA with the assistance of Jarret Walker & Associates, a specialist bus network designer, in collaboration with Limerick City & County Council, Clare County Council and Bus Éireann.

The NTA published its final new bus network for Limerick in December 2023. The redesign of the bus network is one of the nine key elements of BusConnects Limerick that aims to transform the city's bus system, making public transport more useful to more people.

Half of the fleet in Limerick was converted to Hybrid buses in 2021. The ongoing installation of charging infrastructure at Roxboro bus depot will allow for further decarbonisation of bus services in Limerick.

Waterford Regeneration Project

In November 2022, the Government approved the final business case for the Waterford North Quays project under Decision Gate 3 of the Public Spending Code. This approval also included €170.6m in Exchequer funding for the project. This investment includes funding for a new sustainable transport bridge linking the North Quays to the South Quays for pedestrians, cyclists and buses and funding to relocate Plunkett Station to a new location on the North Quays, a move which is supported in the Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy.

BusConnects Waterford

Workshops have been undertaken on the redesign of Waterford's City bus network under BusConnects Waterford. The new network will be published for public consultation in Q2 2024 with the final network will be published in Q4 2024.

Public Transport Services

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

- Over 100 new or additional service per week introduced since commencement in mid-2022.
- Phase I in 2022: 38 new and enhanced services implemented.
- Phase II in 2023: 65 new and enhanced services implemented.
- Over 190 towns and villages have been connected to the public transport network, and over 280,000 people have access to new and enhanced bus services.
- Continuation of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan will continue the roll-out of routes until 2026.

Town Services

- The new Carlow town service launched in July 2023 operated by Bus Éireann.

- The new Clonmel town service launched in December 2023 operated by TFI Local Link Tipperary.
- The NTA are planning to enhance some existing town services during 2024 and 2025 and introduce some entirely new town services in Ennis, Letterkenny, Mullingar and Portlaoise.
- All locations are funding dependent through the annual estimates process.

TFI Local Link

- Funding for TFI Local Link has increased from €12m in 2016 to over €25m in 2024.
- There has been an increase of 267% in passenger numbers utilising Local Link PSO Services. From approx. 3,000 (pre-covid) in 2020, to 11,000 in December 2023.

National Roads

The Minister for Transport has responsibility for overall policy and exchequer funding in relation to the National Roads Programme. Once funding arrangements have been put in place with TII, under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, and in line with the NDP, the planning, design, improvement and upgrading of individual national roads is a matter for TII, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. TII ultimately delivers the National Roads Programme in line with Project Ireland 2040, the NPF and the NDP.

TII has contributed to the objectives of the RSES through the ongoing progression and delivery of significant major projects on the National Roads Network:

- N25 New Ross Bypass opened in 2020.
- N11 Gorey to Enniscorthy opened in 2019.
- N22 Ballyvourney to Macroom opened in 2023.
- M8/N25/N40 Dunkettle Interchange opened in February 2024.
- N69 Listowel bypass project is under construction.
- N28 Cork to Ringaskiddy has advance works underway. Decision Gate 2 approval to go to tender was given in January 2024
- N21/N69 Foynes to Limerick Project has received a positive planning decision from An Bord Pleanála. Government has agreed to “fast-track” the Adare Bypass element of the project with the objective of having it in place ahead of the Ryder Cup in 2027.

Other major projects are being progressed through planning and design in line with funding availability:

- N/M20 Cork to Limerick project: Preferred option was selected in 2022 and the project is now in the Design Phase. It is expected that a business case will be submitted to the Department in late 2024/early 2025 for approval at Decision Gate 1 of the Public Spending Code.
- N21 Abbeyfeale and N21 Newcastle West Relief Roads: Projects are progressing through Design and Environmental Evaluation Phase.
- N22 Farranfore to Killarney: Preferred route will be announced in the near future.
- N25 Waterford to Glenmore: Preferred route identified.
- N11/N25 Oilgate to Rosslare Harbour: Design and Environmental Evaluation phase is underway – project has received funding through Connecting Europe Facility.
- N24 Waterford to Cahir: Preferred route identified.
- N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction: Preferred route identified, Design and Environmental Evaluation phase is underway.
- N25 Carrigtwohill to Midleton: Project is at options selection stage.
- N25 Midleton to Youghal is at early appraisal and preparation of a strategic assessment report.
- N71/N72 Mallow relief road: Preferred route selected.
- Cork City Northern Transport Project: Strategic Assessment Report provided to the Department and responded to.

TII also fund many minor schemes as well as pavement and safety improvements on the network on an annual basis.

Regional and Local Roads

Under the Regional and Local Road Grant Programme, the strategic road improvement projects listed in the current NDP are the schemes which were included in the original 2018-2027 NDP along or schemes that have been added over the lifespan of the plan. Planning and implementation of these schemes is the responsibility of the local authority.

Schemes under the NDP and within the Region are as follows:

- Shannon Crossing/Killaloe Bypass/R494 Upgrade
- Coonagh/Knockalisheen Distributor Road
- Carlow Link Road
- R498 Latteragh Upgrade
- Carrigaline Western Relief Road

Strategic road network improvements not included in the current NDP for the period 2018-2027:

- Great Island Access, Cork
- Tralee Northern Relief Road
- Killarney Strategic Links Project

Airports

Cork Airport's Runway Remediation Project – Phase Two

Cork Airport's Runway Remediation project commenced in 2021, when Phase One delivered a complete runway overlay at the airport. Phase Two of this project commenced in 2022 and delivered a new electrical substation at the airport. This new electrical substation, which was officially opened in 2023, has replaced the existing substation which opened in 1961.

This runway remediation project is the single-biggest construction project, and the biggest investment by daa, at Cork Airport since the opening of the new terminal building in 2006. This runway upgrade will be a key strategic asset for the South region for the next 20 years.

The total cost of Phase Two of this project was €6.2m with Government providing funding of €4.65m. Overall Government funding for both the Runway overlay (Phase One) and the electrical substation (Phase Two) amounted to €14.65m.

Waterford Airport's Runway Extension Project

In June 2019 a previous Government gave approval, in principle, of an expression of support for an expansion proposal at Waterford Airport and to providing Exchequer funding of €5m towards a runway extension project. Planning permission for this project was granted by An Bord Pleanála in February 2022.

The project was then estimated to cost €12m and the €5m Government support provided at the time was contingent on local authority and private investment necessary to complete the project, being committed.

Given the changed circumstances in the context of the project timeline and the impacts of COVID-19 on the aviation market and wider economy, Waterford Airport was informed that any renewal of a commitment to provide Exchequer funds of €5m for development works will need to take account of these circumstances as well as the enhanced obligations under the revised Public Spending Code. The airport was requested to provide clarity on the level of private investment available to support this project, as well as a detailed project specification and delivery programme, outlining a breakdown of costs and timeline for works to the anticipated opening of the runway for use.

Waterford Airport submitted this detail to the Department in December 2023 along with an increased request of €12m in Exchequer funding.

The Department is currently appraising the detail submitted by Waterford Airport. Any proposal for Exchequer funding that may be provided will also need to be considered by Government at the appropriate time.

Ports

Port of Cork

The Port of Cork Company's Ringaskiddy Redevelopment Project was completed and became operational in April 2022. The €90m Cork Container Terminal (CCT) at Ringaskiddy was officially opened in September 2022. The new 360m-long quay has a 13m depth of water, meaning it is capable of handling some of the biggest container ships in the world, typically 300m long and 16 containers wide. The development will enable the Port to increase capacity and throughput, accommodate larger vessels and further develop it as an international gateway for trade. The completion of the project represents the first phase of the Port's Strategic Development Plan and capital investment programme which will see new cargo handling equipment, an extension of the deep-water berth, and a further extension of Ringaskiddy over the coming years.

The project was part funded by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) which is European grant funding along with finance from the European Investment Bank and Ireland Strategic Investment Fund.

Shannon Foynes:

Shannon Foynes Port Company's (SFPC's) Infrastructure Development Programme is well underway and will consist of a jetty expansion program, the joining of the East and West Jetties and the infill behind, land purchase and 38-hectare site development for a new port logistics park at Foynes Port and the Foynes Rail Reinstatement. The investment programme will improve international connectivity and increase capacity through the construction of new quay walls and associated port infrastructure and external connectivity with the upgrade of the N69 and the reinstatement of the Limerick-Foynes rail line. The project has successfully been awarded European Grant funding from the CEF.

Port of Waterford

The company has invested €1.84m in 2021 and €1.1m in 2022 in infrastructure improvements. The long-term infrastructure plan for Port of Waterford is set out in detail in the Port's Masterplan to 2044. The focus of Masterplan 2040 in the early years is to encourage utilisation of the Ports container terminal which is running with spare capacity. The reopening of the rail freight connection to the Northwest is a positive step in this respect.

3. Please outline any progress made by agencies that operate under the aegis of your Department, in supporting the objectives of the RSES which are relevant to that agency

Active Travel and Greenways

The delivery of the Greenways programme is managed by TII with an annual budget of €60m per annum. The Greenways programme aligns to a range of regional policy objectives principally RPO 53, 124, 174 and 201 (tourism, green infrastructure, walking and cycling etc.)

Similarly, the NTA administers the Active Travel Infrastructure Programme across the country with an average allocation of €290m for all 31 local authorities. This Programme also aligns to a number of the RPOs set out in the RSES including, but not limited to, RPO 4 (Infrastructure Investment); RPO 91 (Decarbonisation in the Transport Sector); RPOs 130 and 131 (Air Quality and Noise); RPO 160 (Smart and Sustainable Mobility); RPO 174 (Walking and Cycling)

Public Transport Services

Iarnród Éireann

In September 2023, the Ireland-France Sail-Rail initiative was launched, meaning travellers between the two countries who use both the ferry and the train to start or continue their journeys are now able to book their Sail-Rail tickets from the Brittany Ferries and Irish Ferries websites, or in-person at 12 rail stations around the country, offering a more sustainable environmentally friendly form of international travel. Travel is possible from Kilkenny in the South of Ireland, connecting the south of Ireland to Cherbourg. Tickets can be purchased in Killarney, Limerick, Mallow, Thurles, and Tralee.

CIÉ - Property

Cork Kent Bus Station. Planning is underway on the redevelopment/refurbishment of the depot.

Bus Éireann

Alongside the NTA, under the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility plan, there have been several enhanced and new services, creating inter region connectivity.

Number	Location	Date implemented
314	Limerick - Ballybunion via Foynes	23/10/2022
320	Charleville - Limerick	23/10/2022
328	Limerick - Mitchelstown	23/10/2022
332	Limerick - Cashel	23/10/2022
345	Scariff - Limerick	23/10/2022
354	Portlaw - Dunmore East	01/11/2022
257	Macroom - Killarney via Mill Street	11/12/2022
270	Skibbereen – Bantry – Kenmare - Killarney	25/06/2023
329	Limerick – Ballyneety – Bruff – Kilmallock – Kilfinane	10/09/2023
354	Carrick-on-Suir – Portlaw – Waterford	24/09/2023
272	Tralee - Listowel - Ballybunion	01/12/2023
279	Tralee - Castlemaine - Milltown - Killorglin - Killarney	01/12/2023
360	Tramore - Waterford	12/12/2023
360A	Tramore - Waterford	12/12/2023

4. Please provide details of any policy initiatives/developments that have been finalised or are in preparatory stages that support the objectives of the RSES

All-Island Strategic Rail Review

Project Ireland 2040 commits toward an evaluation of the economic benefits and value for money of high-speed rail on the main inter-urban rail network against improvements to existing and planned line speeds along the lines. In 2020, it was decided to expand the scope of this evaluation into an all-island Strategic Rail Review. In consultation with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and other relevant stakeholders, terms of reference were agreed, and consultants appointed. As well as the potential for high/higher speed rail, the Strategic Rail Review is considering inter-urban and inter-regional connectivity, regional connectivity including to the northwest, and connectivity to our international air and sea ports, including the potential for rail freight.

The Review was published in draft for the purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) public consultation in July 2023. Both Departments are in the process of reviewing these responses. Following the completion of the SEA process and finalisation of the report, the Review will be submitted for approval by the Minister for Transport and, ultimately, to Government, as well as to the Minister for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

The Department has been engaging with the European Investment Bank (EIB) in relation to the development of an implementation strategy in order to deliver on the Strategic Rail Review's ambition.

Shared Mobility Hubs

The Department will shortly undertake a public consultation regarding the development of policy around shared mobility hubs, supporting the objectives of RPO 160 Smart and Sustainable Mobility, in particular the facilitation of inter-modal travel.

National Demand Management Strategy

The Department, as committed to in CAP23, is also developing a National Demand Management Strategy with the overall objective of reducing vehicle kilometres travelled by 20%, compared to projected growth, by 2030. The regional assemblies have been involved in this process throughout. It is intended to go to public consultation in Q2 this year and it is intended to publish the Strategy in Q3 this year.

Climate Action Plan

A draft Climate Action Plan 2024 (with updated Transport sectoral chapter) and accompanying Annex of Actions for key actions to be delivered in 2024 was published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in December 2023. A public consultation on the plan will commence in early 2024.

The new Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR), which mandates minimum infrastructure requirements on the European transport network will apply from 13 April 2024. AFIR replaces the existing 2014 Directive, setting mandatory minimum infrastructure requirements for the TEN-T network to ensure that there is a sufficient and interoperable recharging and alternative fuel refuelling infrastructure in place to support the transition of our low-duty and heavy-duty vehicle fleets.

The implementation of the AFIR, which sets targets out to 2035 for both core and comprehensive TEN-T, will provide fast recharging stations for cars and vans, as well as for heavy-duty vehicles, in addition, requiring hydrogen refuelling stations serving both cars and lorries must be provided for on the TEN-T Core network and in urban nodes on the TEN-T network by 2030.

Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland (ZEV) are currently working with TII and local authorities on delivery of EV charging network, in line with AFIR's requirements, including the development of a National En-route EV Charging Network Plan. ZEV are also developing Universal Design Guidelines and a Data Strategy that will support its implementation. Over the coming year the Department will work to progress a draft update to Ireland's National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuel Infrastructure in line with expected AFIR requirements, which will be informed by supporting Government policies, e.g., National Hydrogen Strategy.

National Cycle Network

The recent publication of the National Cycle Network (NCN) is a policy initiative that support the objectives of the regional spatial and economic strategy. The NCN identifies a coherent and coordinated inter-urban network that integrates with existing and proposed cycle routes providing a transport alternative to cars that does not currently exist in many rural area. The implementation of the NCN would result in a network of ~3,500km in length across 85 corridors connecting to over 200 settlements with a combined population of over 2.8m people. The policy initiative aligns to the commitment in the RSES that *'greenways in the Region shall be linked up to a network to improve connectivity within the Region for walking routes and commuter cyclists in addition to recreational amenity functions'* as well as creating *'a cycle network that is coherent, continuous and safe'*.

Regional Airports Programme

A Regional Airports Programme for the period 2021 to 2025 was published in February 2021. This Programme will continue to support Ireland's smallest airports i.e. those that handle fewer than one million annual passengers. In addition to targeting funding at safety and security projects and activities, the scope of the Programme was expanded to encourage airports to reduce emissions and build climate resilience.

National policy on regional airports is designed to optimise conditions for regional development and connectivity in line with Project Ireland 2040. Social and economic benefits can be derived from facilitating access to and from the associated regions. For this reason, the capacity of these airports to handle scheduled services is fundamental to this Programme.

When the new Programme commenced the only airport eligible in the Southern region was Kerry Airport. However, due to suppressed passenger numbers, as a result of COVID-19, Shannon and Cork airports were eligible for funding in 2022. In 2023, Cork Airport had recovered sufficiently and was no longer eligible for funding but Shannon Airport remained eligible in 2023.

Neither Cork nor Shannon airports are eligible for funding under the Programme in 2024.

In order to consider how the Regional Airports Programme is currently delivering on its objectives, primarily in the context of supporting connectivity and balanced regional development, a mid-term review was completed in December 2023. It is anticipated that the outcome of this review will be published when Minister Chambers has had the opportunity to consider the review along with the proposed actions set out therein.

5. Please provide a summary of the funding programmes administered by your Department (or agency under the aegis of your Department), over the last two years, which have been awarded within the Southern Region with the following details requested:¹

- Funding Programme
- County Project Name and Description
- Amount Awarded (€)
- Stage of Project

Active Travel Programme

2021 Allocations can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#) (Rural and Urban Allocations were not amalgamated in one programme until 2022)

2022 Allocations can be viewed [here](#)

2023 Allocations can be viewed [here](#)

2024 Allocations can be viewed [here](#)

Greenways Programme

2023 Allocations can be viewed [here](#) (summary by county is listed on pg. 36)

2022 Allocations can be viewed [here](#) (summary by county is listed on pg. 7)

The majority of Greenway schemes in the Southern Region are being progressed through the design and feasibility stages. Spending incurred on planning and construction costs in 2022 and 2023 include the Midleton to Youghal Greenway, South Kerry Greenway, North Kerry Greenway and South East Greenway.

National Roads

The table below outlines expenditure that has taken place across the Southern Region in 2022 and 2023:

Capital Investment - Protection & Renewal	2022	2023	Total
Carlow County Council	2,177,137	1,851,865	4,029,002
Clare County Council	1,476,037	834,143	2,310,180
Cork City Council	2,704,947	2,862,201	5,567,148
Cork County Council	25,772,478	17,718,573	43,491,051
Kerry County Council	17,555,597	19,479,269	37,034,866
Kilkenny County Council	4,644,594	13,614,667	18,259,261
Limerick City and County Council	8,974,386	6,997,774	15,972,160
Tipperary County Council	11,635,744	8,972,921	20,608,665
Waterford City and County Council	6,606,325	4,995,435	11,601,760
Wexford County Council	6,547,995	1,068,553	7,616,548
Total	88,095,240	78,395,401	166,490,641

¹ Southern Region comprises 10 local authorities: Cork City, Cork County, Clare, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford.

Capital Investment - Construction of New Roads	2022	2023	Total
Cork City Council	628,982	128,177	757,159
Cork County Council	86,663,289	85,633,783	172,297,072
Kerry County Council	23,410,514	25,534,341	48,944,855
Kilkenny County Council	1,656,963	1,790,495	3,447,458
Limerick City and County Council	7,204,905	18,040,972	25,245,877
Tipperary County Council	1,429,277	2,504,660	3,933,937
Wexford County Council	878,386	1,247,069	2,125,455
Total	121,872,316	134,879,497	256,751,813

Regional and Local Roads

Regional and Local Roads Grant Programme funding of €562m was provided to the region in the period 2022-2023

RLR Grants Programme Allocations		
County	2022	2023
Carlow	€8,010,618	€8,223,795
Cork City	€10,306,120	€10,647,850
Cork County	€65,817,488	€71,340,042
Clare	€34,917,364	€38,784,600
Kerry	€29,564,872	€30,950,225
Kilkenny	€16,981,877	€17,767,860
Limerick	€35,845,150	€34,515,990
Tipperary	€31,218,438	€33,532,399
Waterford	€17,600,573	€19,717,250
Wexford	€23,749,787	€22,811,650
Total	€274,012,287	€288,291,661

Regional Airports Programme

Funding to regional Airports in 2022 and 2023 was provided under the Regional Airports Programme 2021-2025. All funding was drawn down on a reimbursement basis by airports. In 2022 and 2023, capital funding totalling €15,876,830 was drawn down by eligible airports in the Southern region – Shannon, Cork, and Kerry airports.

In addition, additional emergency funding to Shannon Airport in 2022 (in orange on table below) was provided as follows:

- **HBS:** EU Commission Implementing Regulation 2015/1998 requires the upgrade of security screening equipment at European airports to improve explosive detection in hold baggage. Specifically, it provides that Standard 3 Explosive Detection Systems be implemented by 1 September 2020. The EU Commission has since extended this deadline to 1 September 2021, in light of Covid-19, but Shannon Airport had already commenced the project before the pandemic. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the Department agreed as a once off measure to fund part of this project. €836,650 was paid to Shannon Airport in respect of the HBS project in 2022.
- **Embankments:** The embankment project related to refurbishment works on the East and West Coastal Embankments at Shannon Airport. The works were required to repair the embankments following storm

damage during winter 2013/2014. Government agreed support would be provided through a Memo for Government in 2014. The Department subsequently part-funded the repair project. €289,889 was paid to Shannon Airport in respect of the Embankments project in 2022. This work was completed in 2023, with €695k (50%) of the cost provided by the Department in total.

Funding to Regional Airports – Southern Region

AIRPORT		2022	2023
Kerry Airport	Capital Funding	1,077,242	325,155
	Operational Funding	1,434,355	1,422,775
	Subtotal	2,511,597	1,747,930
Cork Airport	Capital Funding	4,057,463	1,369,591
	Operational Funding	10,402,880	
	Subtotal	14,460,343	1,369,591
Shannon Airport	Capital Funding	3,674,539	5,372,840
	Operational Funding	6,836,610	7,171,721
	Subtotal	10,511,149	12,544,561
	TOTAL	€27,483,089	€15,662,082

Note: Waterford Airport had previously been eligible for funding under the Regional Airports Programme but since 2016 has ceased scheduled passenger services. Funding under the Regional Airports Programme 2021-2025 remains targeted at airports that operate scheduled passenger services and have annual passenger numbers of fewer than one million (during the two financial years preceding the year in which aid is granted). Scheduled services must facilitate international connectivity, either directly or via another national hub airport such as Dublin. In the absence of scheduled passenger flights, Waterford Airport operations fail to meet the connectivity objective associated with Government policy on regional airports. There is no policy objective under which Government can fund general aviation.

The list of projects supported under the Regional Airports Programme are listed below.

Kerry Airport: Project Name and Description	Funding (€)
Fire Training Simulator	€720,000
Upgrading of Vaisala Hardware and Associated UniATIS Associated UniATIS	€67,500
Airfield Ducting Survey	€45,786
Replacement Airfield Windsocks	€31,275
Flight Strip Survey	€28,524
Titan eRR20 EV Aircraft Refueller	€184,158
Kerry Airport Subtotal 2022	€1,077,242
Fire Station Bird Control	€30,915
Green (Electric) Aircraft De-icing Vehicle	€257,865
Green Energy Generation	€36,375
Kerry Airport Subtotal 2023	€325,155
Kerry Airport Total 2022-2023	€1,402,397

Cork Airport: Project Name and Description	Funding (€)
HRET Fire Tender	€675,000
Cork Airport Substation (Phase 2 of Runway Remediation Works)	€3,280,910
Multi Storey and Baggage Hall LED Upgrade	€27,480
2 x Electric Vehicle Upgrades – Electrical Team	€74,074
Cork Airport Subtotal 2022	€4,057,463
Cork Airport Substation (Phase 2 of Runway Remediation Works) * <i>contd.</i> From 2022	€1,369,591
CAT 3 Security Project **	€6,000,000
Cork Airport Subtotal 2023	€7,369,591
Cork Airport Total 2022-2023	€11,427,054

Shannon Airport: Project Name and Description	Funding (€)
Fire Station Works	€387,000
Replacement of Fire Service Vehicles with EV	€222,075
Access Control Upgrades	€89,725
Relocate Crash Siren	€45,000
Airfield Rehabilitation	€1,748,250
2 x Airbridge Replacement (Gates 8 & 11)	€299,030
EV Chargers	€187,500
Water Supply System	€148,125
Replacement of Operations Vehicles with EV	€111,300
Upgrade Airfield Ground Lighting Circuitry	€176,965
Advisory/Supports for Solar PV Farm	€45,000
Passenger Boarding Bridge Project	€214,569
Hold Baggage Screening Project	€836,650
Embankments Project	€289,889
Shannon Airport Subtotal 2022	€4,801,078
Security Screening Equipment Upgrades	€394,668
Airfield Rehabilitation	€2,250,000
3 x Passenger Airbridge Replacements (Gates 7,9 &14)	€1,290,077
Water Supply System Upgrades	€450,000
Replacement of airport vehicles with Electric	€153,650
Security Fencing - Phase 2	€270,000
2 x Airbridge Replacement (Gates 8 & 11) <i>contd.</i> from 2022	€564,445
Shannon Airport Subtotal 2023	€5,372,840
Shannon Airport Total 2022-2023	€10,173,918

Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland

- **Funding Programme** – ZEV Pilot project
- **County Project Name and Description** – Shannon Airport Public and taxi EV Chargers. A project with Shannon Airport to install and test the use of higher-powered chargers in the context of a) heavy taxi usage at a major transport hub or related major amenity site and b) public-facing destination and top-up charging in the same space.
- **Amount Awarded (€)** €303,604.20
- **Stage of Project** - Complete

- **Funding Programme** – ZEV Pilot project
- **County Project Name and Description** – Limerick City & County Council EV Strategy. The pathfinder regional strategy developed with Limerick City and County Council, implemented and forming the basis of ZEV's forthcoming regional Local Authority strategy development workstream. Used to test the needs, challenges and other matters arising from the development of a local EV strategy within the context of the National EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy.
- **Amount Awarded (€)** €88,312.03
- **Stage of Project** - Complete

- **Funding Programme** – ZEV Pilot project
- **County Project Name and Description** – Installation of EV charge points at 13 locations in Limerick City & County Council jurisdiction. The dedicated testbed model for ZEV's work in rolling out varied charging types across a diverse geographic and social range. Conditional on the City and County Council rolling out a mix of urban and rural focused public charging, targeting key areas and using a mix of commercial and residential locations.
- **Amount Awarded (€)** €710,035.92
- **Stage of Project** – In progress

Please provide any other comments that you would like to make with respect to your Department (including any agencies under the aegis of your Department) in implementing the RSES and addressing the issue of balanced regional growth, to fully realise the ambition and targets set out for the Southern Region under *Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework* and the RSES. This may include any recommendations that you consider would improve the implementation process and provide a greater focus on addressing regional imbalance.

Active Travel and Greenways

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy outlines a target of an additional 500,000 daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 based on 2021 levels. The provision of safe and accessible walking and cycling infrastructure is key to encouraging modal shift away from private car use and towards walking and cycling. The role of local authorities in the development of active travel infrastructure cannot be overstated, and the increase in the capacity of active travel teams has already helped to deliver hundreds of kilometres of new and improved cycling and walking infrastructure around the country. It is important that this capacity remains within the local authorities to continue the high level of delivery going forward, and the Department will work with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to provide the necessary supports to local authorities to ensure this remains the case.

It is critical that active travel infrastructure is implemented in a considered manner that has been informed by multi-criteria analyses that consider a range of factors including potential demand, safety, and social benefits. In this regard, two cycling strategies are due to be published in 2024 that set out a cohesive cycling infrastructure network. The National Cycle Network (NCN) sets out the inter-urban cycling network (approximately 3,500km) around the country linking urban centres, this network includes many existing and planned Greenway routes. Delivery partners include TII, NTA and the Department in conjunction with the relevant local authority. CycleConnects represents the intra-urban cycling network which sets out routes within urban centres in each county, this plan will be delivered by the NTA and the relevant local authority. Extensive collaboration will continue between the relevant agencies and local authorities to ensure coordinated linkages between the intra-urban and

inter-urban cycling plans ensuring a cohesive national network. These two strategies will inform future investment by local authorities in the coming years.

It is envisaged that the only cycling infrastructure projects suitable for progression outside of the NCN and the CycleConnects plans will relate to the development of scenic Greenways that do not qualify for inclusion within the NCN as they do not link urban centres of sufficient population density. These projects are expected to be limited in number. The Department recognises and supports the wide range of benefits arising from Greenways including their positive economic impact on local businesses, enabling increased physical activity that will benefit the health and wellbeing of users and supporting safe journeys to and from home, work, education and shops.

Regional Airports Programme

The Regional Airports Programme takes account of existing policy objectives to help mitigate the impacts of aviation on the environment and to help facilitate the sustainable growth of the sector in line with Ireland's Action Plan for Aviation Emissions Reduction and the Climate Action Plan.

While the Programme's focus remains resolutely targeted at safety and security projects and activities, it now also takes account of sustainability objectives in line with State aid rules.

Many of the projects supported under the Programme incorporated valuable climate benefits, such as the replacement of vehicles at our airports with more efficient, low emission equivalents and the replacement of airfield and external lighting with LED. Other projects funded include new safety and security systems which incorporate more energy efficient components, as well as components that are recyclable at the end of their service life. The sustainability projects supported to date under the Programme will have a high impact in terms of reducing the carbon footprint of regional airports, supporting them to achieve 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and Net Zero emissions by 2050.

The Department has encouraged all regional airports, eligible under the Regional Airports Programme, to develop Masterplans for carbon reduction, with a view to future capital project proposal applications being directly linked to these plans, where appropriate.

All Irish airports are encouraged to sign of up to ACI's carbon accreditation programme. Where feasible, the Regional Airports Programme seeks to support eligible airports to achieve goals in this respect. To date, Cork and Shannon airports has received level 2 accreditation. While not signed up ACI Airport's Carbon Accreditation Programme, Kerry Airport has committed to the Science Based Target Initiative (SBTi). Kerry Airport has reached phase 5 and is now in an annual reduction/monitoring phase where annual calculations of Scope 1 and 2 emissions are submitted, and Scope 3 emissions are calculated.

The Programme also supports any consultancy work undertaken at airports in order to identify climate associated risks and solutions to address their impacts.

PLEASE PROVIDE A CONTACT POINT IN THE EVENT THAT WE NEED TO CONTACT YOU ABOUT THIS FORM.

Name: Michael Devane

Position: Administrative Officer, Public Transport Investment and Policy Division

Email: michael.devane@transport.gov.ie

Contact phone number: 01 6041665