



Transport
report

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 A portrait of Transport Minister Darragh O'Brien TD, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue blazer over a white shirt. A small circular pin is visible on his lapel. In the background, a portion of the Irish flag is visible on the left, and a window with a view of a building is on the right.

Transport Minister Darragh O'Brien TD: 'A transformative programme of investment in transport infrastructure'

A connected and sustainable transport network is key to Ireland's economic growth and achieving our climate goals, writes Minister for Transport and Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment Darragh O'Brien TD.

My vision for the next five years of this government is to drive forward a transformative programme of investment in sustainable and modern transport infrastructure to drive economic growth for the country.

Sustainable public transport is one of the most effective tools we have to reduce emissions and meet our climate targets. As Minister for Transport – and also for Climate, Environment and Energy – I know that the next five years are critical for delivering real change.

But this is not just about policy or targets. As a father to a 16-year-old daughter, I am reminded daily that climate action is not optional – it is urgent. For my daughter's generation, the climate crisis is the defining issue, and they are rightly demanding that we act now. We owe it to them to build a future that is cleaner, fairer, and more sustainable.

As Minister, my priorities for the next five years include expanding our bus and rail fleets, building new rail stations, and accelerating the electrification of public transport through significant investment

in electric buses and charging infrastructure. I am also committed to supporting people in making the switch to electric vehicles (EVs) through grants that reduce purchase costs and by improving the supporting infrastructure.

Connectivity and liveability

We will also continue to invest in reliable, accessible, and efficient transport links between our towns, cities, and rural areas. At the same time, we will continue to upgrade and improve our road

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Minister for Transport and Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment Darragh O’Brien TD

network – making it safer, more efficient, and better aligned with the needs of local communities by removing unnecessary traffic from city centres and making our towns and cities more liveable.

At the end of May 2025, I officially opened the Killaloe Bypass, a transformative road project which will reduce traffic and support the local economy in both Killaloe in County Clare and Ballina in County Tipperary. This was a €90 million investment by my department and will greatly improve the quality of life for residents of both towns. The alternative route will take through-traffic and HGVs out of both town centres, thereby significantly reducing congestion, protecting both heritage areas, and providing a much-needed boost to the local economy and the region’s tourism sector. The project also included active travel to encourage more people to use sustainable travel options.

International connectivity

Looking at the big picture, international connectivity is also essential for economic growth, which is why enhancing the capacity of Dublin Airport remains a priority for me as Minister for Transport and for the Government as a whole, working with key stakeholders and residents. I am also committed to strengthening connectivity across the entire country by investing in our regional airports – Kerry, Donegal, and Ireland West – as well as supporting the continued development of Shannon and Cork airports.

Public transport

In public transport, we are now progressing several major projects nationwide which will significantly improve Ireland’s transport system.

BusConnects is a transformative programme of investment in the bus system, providing better bus services across our cities. In Dublin, the major infrastructure element of BusConnects comprises the Core Bus Corridor schemes. These corridors aim to provide over 200km of enhanced bus and cycling infrastructure in Dublin. I am pleased to say that An Bord Pleanála has approved all 12 Core Bus Corridor applications in Dublin. My department aims to have the first of the Core Bus Corridors in construction this year.

We have also made strong progress in rail investment. In April 2025, I was pleased to open a new ‘through’ platform at Kent Station in Cork city. Works are also continuing on the other Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme Phase 1 works and I look forward to these works being complete in 2026. And the Luas Cork, the new light rail project for the city is progressing.

Cork, along with Dublin, has been selected by the European Commission to become one of Europe’s first climate-neutral cities. The proposed Luas Cork line supports this ambition by promoting sustainable, high-capacity public transport and reducing reliance on private cars.

We have also received planning approval for DART+ West and full approval for DART+ South West and the new DART+ Fleet, which is currently undergoing testing, will start rolling out on the Northern line from Dublin to/from Drogheda in 2026.



“I want to see construction work begin on the Dublin Metro during this term of government.”

The Metrolink is a critically important project, not just for the airport and the region but nationally too. I want to see construction work begin on the Dublin Metro during this term of government.

Safety on public transport

One of my key priorities is addressing safety on public transport. While significant progress has been made in

recent years through increased investment in safety measures, antisocial behaviour – or even the perception of it – remains a serious challenge.

Those who rely on or work within our public transport system must feel secure as they go about their daily lives. That is why I have initiated work to establish a dedicated Transport Security Force. This is a priority for me, and legislative proposals are currently

being developed in collaboration with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to bring this commitment forward.

Dependability

We also need public transport to be dependable. Workers, tourists, and businesses alike rely on a system they can trust. By and large, our public transport operators perform very well, as evidenced by record passenger numbers last year with a record 330 million journeys. The increase in usage reflects public confidence and the positive impact of affordable fares. However, there are challenges – particularly with buses not turning up as scheduled. I have met with the NTA to address this challenge and have tasked them with conducting a full review into the causes and solutions.

Affordability and accessibility

In the Programme for Government, we committed to keeping fares affordable and examining the further expansion of free public transport for children. Budget 2025 included a measure to extend free child fares on PSO services to children aged 5 to 8 years old. This is designed to help with the cost of living for families and encourage children to start using public transport from an early age. This cost saving will come into effect later this year.

Also from September 2025, all those aged 70 years or over in receipt of Free Travel will have an entitlement to receive a Free Travel Companion.

The Department of the Taoiseach has established a dedicated unit to focus on disability matters, reflecting a core commitment in the Programme for Government to drive a step change in the supports and services available to disabled people.

The Department of Transport will work with this unit to address broader accessibility challenges – particularly in ensuring that all public transport operators deliver safe, accessible, and inclusive services for all passengers.



Road network

Our road network plays a vital role in ensuring regional accessibility and supporting balanced economic development across the State. Strategic projects currently under construction – such as the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy and the Adare Bypass – are clear examples of this commitment in action. These investments are not just about improving transport links; they are about connecting communities, enhancing regional competitiveness, and enabling long-term growth

The M28 project will greatly improve access to the Port of Cork at Ringaskiddy, ensuring the safe and efficient movement of goods to and from the port, while also supporting the additional port activities to Ringaskiddy. As a result, lands at Tivoli Docks in Cork city can be repurposed for much-needed residential and commercial development.

The Adare Bypass will greatly reduce congestion, air pollution, and noise in Adare. And with the Ryder Cup taking place in September 2027, this new road which will have a significant and positive impact on the local area in terms of economy and tourism.

Active travel

In 2025, we are investing €360 million in walking and cycling infrastructure,

recognising the proven economic, social, and health benefits that active travel brings to individuals and communities alike. Greenways and safe urban cycling routes are not only about mobility – they are about improving quality of life, supporting tourism, and enabling more sustainable, connected communities.

EVs

At the same time, we are driving forward the transition to EVs with a major expansion and modernisation of the national EV charging network. A reliable and accessible charging system is essential to support drivers in making the switch to electric.

New infrastructure schemes currently in development will form a critical part of this network, including a motorway charging scheme with 131 new high-powered recharging points, additional high-powered chargers along the primary and secondary national roads, and destination charging initiatives at sports clubs and in the midlands. Local authority pilot projects will also play a key role in delivering tailored, community-based charging solutions.

Over the next five years, I want to build on the progress already achieved and build a transport network Ireland needs to thrive economically while transitioning to a greener and cleaner environment.



Major public transport infrastructure programmes:

An insight into Jacobs' approach to successfully unlock Irish growth



Ireland's rapid growth over the last 20 years has led to a significant step change in the scale and complexity of projects required to meet its growing needs. Jacobs has been a leading player in delivering transport infrastructure across the globe for over 50 years, contributing to some of the most exciting projects worldwide and in Ireland.

Jacobs sits down with Willie Fraser, its Global Rail and Transit Market Director, to talk about the new era of mega projects dawning over the country. These transformative projects promote innovation and technology, transform regions, unlock economic growth and provide for our collective future.



Some of our recent infrastructure delivery contributions in Ireland include the emerging preferred route for Cork Luas, the North Runway project at Dublin Airport, and supporting the NTA to take BusConnects Dublin through tendering and into construction. In the UK, we have supported the Thames Tideway Tunnel programme, safeguarding the River Thames from pollution, and the Crossrail project, revolutionising London's transport network with the new Elizabeth Line.

Our portfolio extends globally, with our recent work in Canada leveraging European experience to drive major schemes including the Metrolinx scheme in Toronto and the Translink BRT programme in Vancouver. We consistently focus on sustainable development and providing environmental benefits for the local community. We are seeing a huge focus on investment in rail projects because of their sustainable attributes.

Our success in these major infrastructure projects is underpinned by three key factors – our technical expertise, our programme management capability and our ability to inject our global experience into local project teams. We have local talent on the ground in major hubs across Ireland and the UK. These teams have a real stake in the communities we work in and are able to harness our global network and innovation to bring significant change at a local level. Our

global expertise enables us to offer unique insights to every project, no matter the scale.

“We offer unique expertise, deploying technical and programme delivery specialists on diverse global programmes, bringing lessons from one city's first-of-a-kind project to another,” says Willie Fraser. “You need to have delivery capability, but also the ability to support clients with the bigger picture, such as understanding the business case and maintaining public support through stakeholder engagement. Our commitment is to sustain projects across political cycles, ensuring continuity and resilience.”

What do you think of the changing transport landscape?

“We are fortunate to be working within one of the pivotal technological shifts of our time that ties in with the increasing demand for sustainable local transport around the world,” says Fraser. “Major cities are becoming more and more congested, increasing commuter travel times, local traffic, loss of productivity, and reduced air quality. Cities from the Middle East to the USA, India to Malaysia, and across Europe are turning to rail systems to provide faster, more reliable, and sustainable transport solutions.”

In Ireland, rapid growth combined with urbanisation is being increasingly

served by electrified rail projects to compliment the major active travel and bus network benefits of BusConnects. DART+, Luas and MetroLink are prime examples. Jacobs has been at the forefront, developing schemes to enhance communities around the world.

So why are governments investing in rail projects such as high-speed, LRT, metro, and other electrified modes?

“The answer lies in the global themes of supporting city growth, promoting sustainability, improving connectivity for affordable housing and realising the economic benefits of faster movement of people to where they want to go.” Connectivity and economic activity go hand-in-hand; transport enables balanced growth across regions, improving productivity gaps and income inequality.

What are the key success factors for these generational mega projects?

With projects of this scale, the challenge is significant. Major projects are technically complex and capital-intensive. Clients need to secure experience and deep domain expertise to maximise value generation and safeguard their investment, balancing aspiration with affordability and their



own capability. The technical aspects involve highly complex engineering and construction delivery, while the social and economic benefits are transformational. Commercially, these projects require very high capital investment over long development periods, and they involve multiple governments across the project lifecycle.

Strong leadership with a positive and inspirational public narrative is key to securing and retaining support for a transformative mega-project through its journey of setbacks and successes. Communicating a project's expansive social and economic benefits, how they serve the community, and the 'why', is crucial.

"The challenge is even greater when it is new," says Fraser. "Governments that have done this before roll out new projects or expansions in cycles – like the Metro in Madrid. Once they have done it once, they are not deterred by the pitfalls – but unless you have this experience and have done it elsewhere, there will be unseen things you are not prepared for or willing to risk. That is where Jacobs comes in."

At Jacobs, we support our clients in navigating complex projects that span changes in leadership and economic cycles, to provide for future generations. Some of the projects we are delivering today were first conceived decades ago. Sustained commitment, supported by delivery expertise, is essential to realising our clients' long-term vision.

We build teams that combine our global experience with deep local knowledge and insight to ensure successful project outcomes. It is crucial that our project teams bring the right blend of technical and programme management capabilities tailored to the sector – such as rail – and within that, possess specialised knowledge in submodes like metro and light rail.

These programmes require technical understanding, delivery capability and global expertise. We must not only grasp the technical specifics but also understand the socioeconomic value and the business case. Supporting our clients in making programmes affordable – and in maintaining the support of both governments and the public – is essential for major investments. A deep understanding of these critical factors shapes our delivery focus, driving key outcomes such as meeting project milestones, minimising community disruption, controlling costs and achieving innovation-led efficiencies.

Risks emerge and evolve throughout a project's lifecycle – and for mega-projects, they do so on a far broader and more complex scale. To safeguard project outcomes and our clients' interests, we must anticipate and manage a full spectrum of risks: from known-knowns and known-unknowns to the elusive unknown-unknowns. The latter are particularly prevalent in mega projects due to their scale, complexity, and many stakeholders.

We establish agile and experienced delivery teams to respond and adapt as the project develops, maintaining strong collaboration throughout. We also connect our clients directly to share lessons learnt, and we bring in Jacobs' subject matter experts to help solve emerging challenges.

What does holistic programme delivery look like for Jacobs?

We manage major projects with a true cradle-to-grave approach, partnering with our clients to shape the programme structure, vision and success factors. From the outset, we engage clients and stakeholders to understand and build in the project's fundamental requirements in the early stages, before tracking them through delivery. We thrive on translating technical, environmental and operational requirements into controlled, efficient delivery. By combining our best global talent, tools and solutions with strong local capability, we deliver transformational outcomes.

We also encourage contractors to innovate, bringing their expertise to the project, and aim to set up projects to enable this. We support contractors throughout design development and provide robust guidelines to ensure the final outcome meets project objectives and stakeholder expectations.



“Step-change projects affect communities during construction, with pain before gain. We work hard to minimise this while also delivering the benefits.”

For instance, project management of construction delivery in a congested urban environment – such as Dublin – poses unique challenges. We draw on our in-depth local knowledge to collaborate closely with local stakeholders, identifying key traffic flows to enable effective traffic management and minimise local disruption. Stakeholder engagement is continuous throughout construction, with dedicated teams keeping local communities informed about working hours, diversions, and major activities such as piling or blasting.

Major projects span several years. We use this time to train and develop staff, build sustainable teams and create career-enhancing opportunities. This

strengthens the growth and resilience of local teams. We extend our culture into schools through site safety and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) learning sessions, positively contributing to the communities we serve.

Do any flagship programmes showcase your global capability at a local level?

The Doha Metro Project is a testament to our ability to deliver a comprehensive suite of services and capabilities, showcasing our role as an integrator in one of the world’s largest metro projects. We provided Project Management and Construction Management services, ensuring seamless coordination and integration across 42km and 18 stations, from downtown Doha to the New Doha International Airport. We implemented rigorous quality control measures to uphold the highest standards. Our role was pivotal in bringing together stakeholders – including government agencies, contractors and local communities – for better decision-making and problem-solving.

“Doha was a real testament to what a team as large as ours at Jacobs can offer in the major programmes space,” says Fraser. “Our services included

project management, construction management, quality assurance and stakeholder coordination. We oversaw the entire project lifecycle, from planning and design to execution and completion, ensuring that construction activities were carried out efficiently, safely and within budget. Our integration efforts contributed to the first section being opened to the public a year earlier than planned.”

What are some of the key challenges Jacobs navigates in the earlier project stages, to lay the groundwork for successful delivery?

All major projects are subject to rigorous and complex local permissions. It is essential to meet local and national expectations on environmental impact (such as ecological, noise, vibration, electromagnetic compatibility and air quality), as well as constraints like limited working space (particularly in urban areas), flood risk, managing heritage buildings and minimising impact to existing local services. Jacobs’ experienced planning teams are skilled at understanding and addressing local concerns. They work with planning authorities, engaging our design teams to develop sustainable, effective solutions that respond to

community needs and environmental priorities.

Our Dublin-based team holds significant expertise in Environmental Impact Assessments and Transport Impact Assessments, providing appropriate solutions which enhance the local community and minimise disruption. We are always conscious that designs need to evolve with changing circumstances and account for the impact of parallel projects.

We are in a new age of automation and digital disruption. How are we harnessing the latest technology?

Technology is transforming how communities use transport and is essential for building a sustainable future. Jacobs continually monitors emerging developments to ensure our transport solutions and delivery capabilities remain at the forefront of the industry.

“In rail projects, we collaborate with leading suppliers to provide innovative solutions, such as the installation of Computer Based Train Control (CBTC) systems,” comments Fraser. “These systems allow for remote management of driverless trains, offering energy-saving operations and more frequent services than would be possible with traditional signalling.”

We have successfully implemented CBTC on new lines such as Dubai Metro and the Ampang (Malaysia) line, as well as retrofitting PATH in New York/New Jersey and the New York Subway. “We hope to bring what we have learned from this global cross-pollination and the automated transport revolution back to our Irish projects,” adds Fraser. “Much of our rolling stock team’s experience was earned through our various roles in Irish Rail over the last two decades.”

Technology advancements extend beyond physical improvements in design and construction – they are also transforming how we deliver projects. We use industry-leading tools, including proprietary solutions, to automate and enhance our design, construction and programme management processes. This includes live progress tracking across multiple data sources, 4D/5D modelling for integrated cost and schedule planning and control, and demand modelling to optimise construction resource and materials planning.

How do we embed safety across every aspect of our delivery?

“Safety is who we are; it is at the core of everything we do. For that to prevail as the fabric of the fast-paced and complex major programmes we deliver, it must be a matter of culture and behaviours, embedded in our people and our partners.”

Our strong safety culture is underpinned by our BeyondZero® programme, which has been running for over 20 years. All staff are encouraged to think actively about safety in everything they do. We foster a mindset that drives safer practices and positively impacts design, construction, operation and maintenance. “Our BeyondZero approach also has a positive effect on our client team culture, threading safety-first thinking through the project lifecycle,” adds Fraser. “Ultimately, we need to look after each other, and to care – about what is in front of us, and the bigger picture.”

In our projects across the world, we relentlessly navigate safety in design, evolving construction practices, operational improvements and sustainability challenges to set the benchmark for best practices and deliver outstanding results for our clients. Our deeply ingrained culture of caring ensures that safety and excellence are inseparable. “If anyone is up to the task, it is Jacobs.”

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FuelEU Maritime enters effect

An EU regulation mandating the promotion of the use of renewable, low-carbon fuels, and clean energy technologies for ships has entered effect.

The FuelEU Maritime Regulation, formally titled Regulation (EU) 2023/180, entered effect in January 2025.

Introduced as part of the *Fit for 55* legislative package, the Regulation sets maximum limits for the yearly average greenhouse gas (GHG) intensity of the energy used by ships above 5,000 gross tonnage calling at European ports, regardless of their member state of origin.

Vessels with a gross tonnage of more than 5,000 account for more than 90 per cent of carbon dioxide (CO₂) maritime emissions, despite the fact that they only constitute 55 per cent of the global shipping fleet.

The targets outlined in the Regulation aim to ensure that the GHG intensity of fuels used in the sector will gradually decrease over time, starting with a 2 per cent decrease by 2025 and reaching up to an 80 per cent reduction by 2050.

In addition to CO₂, the targets also cover methane and nitrous oxide emissions over the full lifecycle of the fuels used onboard on a 'well-to-wake' (WtW) basis.

From 1 January 2030, under the Regulation, all passenger or cargo ships meeting the 5,000 gross tonnage must use on-shore power supply (OPS) or alternative zero-emission technologies and from 1 January 2035 in all EU ports that develop OPS capacity. However, EU member states are permitted to choose to apply the obligation to ports not covered by Article 9 of AFIR, from 1 January 2030.

National Ports Policy

The National Ports Policy is set to be reformed following a commitment in the Programme for Government, with the document stating that the Government will "support investment in our commercial and passenger port infrastructure through a new National Ports Policy".

As highlighted in the *Irish Ports Capacity Study 2023*, growing trade volumes and the energy transition demand urgent investment in port infrastructure. The policy framework encourages ports like Shannon Foynes, Dublin, and Cork to deliver enhanced connectivity, climate readiness, and capacity expansion.

Speaking on the importance of this strategy in the Dáil in February 2025, Minister for Transport Darragh O'Brien TD said: "The continued commercial development of Shannon Foynes Port Company is a key strategic objective... Government expects the ports of national significance to lead the response to future national port capacity requirements."



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The future is bright for light rail in Ireland



In the 20 years since Luas commenced passenger service it has delivered substantial benefits to the city. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is constantly striving to build on this success and have significant plans underway to renew and upgrade the existing service and expand Luas services in Dublin and nationwide. TII believes Luas can play a key part in delivering Ireland’s ambitious economic, housing and sustainability goals.

From the private to the public sector, a sense of urgency pervades the system. Irish people cannot enjoy a good quality of life and the housing crisis cannot be solved without the basic utilities of water, energy, and transportation.

The challenges of supplying water and energy are not often noticed by the public who turn on a tap to find it flows and (except after a destructive storm) flick a switch and the lights come on.

Transport is a very different experience. Whether people travel by car, public transport, or bike, getting from A to B is a daily adventure, often successful but at times unpredictable, creating stress, and costing time and money.

Shifting from private car to public transport is universally accepted as the only way the growing population can travel reliably while reducing carbon emissions – a third of which are created by transport.

Different modes suit different journeys, but when it comes to high demand routes in urban areas, light rail is the king of public transport. Last year Luas celebrated 20 years in Dublin and its benefits have far surpassed original expectations.

It has broken all forecasted demand, carrying 54 million passengers in 2024.

In addition, Luas has the highest rate of customer satisfaction of any Dublin-

based public transport operator with 89 per cent satisfaction rating. When passengers were asked; “Were you satisfied with your most recent trip,” 97 per cent said yes.

Apart from its attractions to the passenger – high-capacity, permeable into neighbourhoods, universal accessibility, quiet and attractive trams, high-frequency and reliability – Luas is a highly sustainable mode of transport. Trams generate zero emissions and can carry over 300 people, the equivalent of four buses. This capacity not only reduces carbon emissions per passenger; but is also more efficient as fewer drivers are needed to carry so many people.

Luas also stands out among large scale transportation projects, particularly in Ireland, as a series of capital projects delivered on time, within budget and over-delivering on benefits. All lines were delivered by Transport Infrastructure Ireland within five years of receiving planning approval.

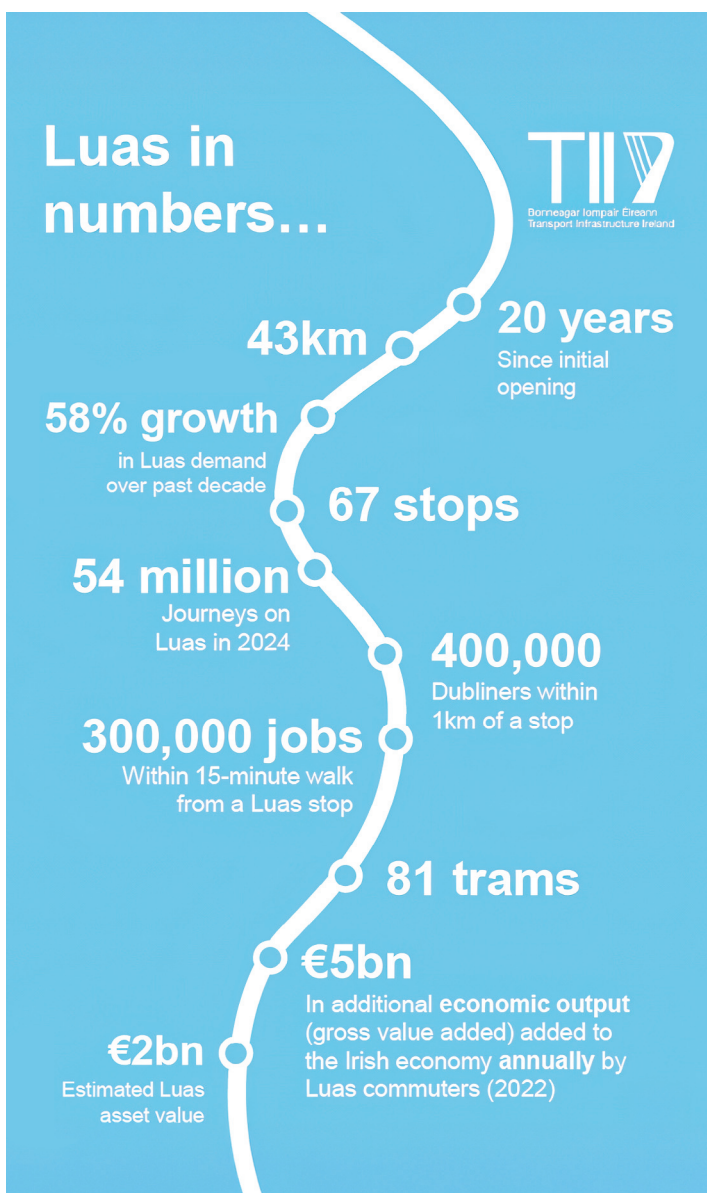
But Luas delivers far more than satisfied passengers. In 2024, TII commissioned a report to assess the contribution Luas has made to living, working and socialising in Dublin over the 20 years of its operations. It showed that Luas is a key enabler of sustainable growth.

In the Dublin metropolitan area, one quarter of its population, one third of its jobs, and 45 per cent of those without a car live within a 15-minute walk of a Luas stop.

In the last 20 years over 10,000 new jobs in the services and technology sectors have located along the Luas Corridors.



Artist's Impression of proposed new bus interchange facilities at Red Cow Transport Hub.



Luas has also assisted significant expansion and re-development in areas such as Tallaght, Citywest, Sandyford, Smithfield, Fatima/Rialto, Docklands, and Cherrywood/Brides Glen.

With this huge success, there are two challenges now for Luas. First, how to maintain the excellent service on the existing network? Second, how does TII expand the network to bring the benefits of Luas to more people, both in Dublin and other cities?

Asset renewals and upgrades

With regard to the current network, TII is procuring a contract to supply new trams for the network with an order expected in early 2026 to supply 35 new trams for the Red Line to replace the current fleet. These trams will start arriving in 2028 and the entire fleet should be replaced by 2029 at an investment cost of almost €200 million.

When Luas was first procured 20 years ago, TII acquired the very best in tramway technology. Light rail depends much more heavily on electronics than other public transport modes like heavy rail and buses. We know how fast technology advances so TII is engaged in a major programme to renew and replace existing equipment, software and hardware. TII are also looking at new ways of working in areas such as security (digital CCTV), communications (5G), and signalling as part of a digital asset management and renewal system.

TII are also renewing and replacing tracks, overhead lines, and energy systems, which are nearing end of life. With the new Red Line trams due, TII will start replacing the Green Line trams between 2035 and 2040.

Other projects include an upgrade to the Red Cow Depot and the improvement of facilities at Red Cow Transport Hub, including new bus stops and parking, shelters, public toilets, bike parking, EV charging and driver facilities.



Artist's Impression of New Luas Finglas line – View looking towards Resource Centre on Mellowes Road.

“All going well, Luas Finglas could be operational by 2031, Luas Cork in 2035, Luas Lucan in 2036 and more new lines to follow.”

There will also be a new Luas stop on the Naas Road to facilitate the new ‘City Edge Town Development’.

New projects

All of this investment is needed to optimise the existing network. But what Dublin and other regions need is an expansion of the network so more people can avail of Luas’ benefits.

The project closest to delivery is Luas Finglas, a 4km extension of the Green Line from Broombridge to Charlestown. TII is optimistic that a Railway Order will be granted soon and TII are looking forward to delivering this project promptly. Luas Finglas has a significant advantage as much of the line is segregated from traffic, which improves running times. With two major regeneration projects and significant residential and commercial

development planned in the Finglas area, this Luas line will be key to housing development and job creation in Finglas. All going well, passenger services could be available in 2031.

Meanwhile, an emerging preferred route for Luas Cork is currently out to non-statutory consultation. This is a very complex project – 18.5km in length running east to west, from Ballincollig to Mahon Point through the city centre. It passes key destinations such as CUH, UCC, and Páirc Uí Chaoimh, it will run down St Patrick’s Street and interchange at Kent Station. TII is targeting a Railway Order submission in 2027/2028 with passenger services possible in 2035.

TII are also studying route options for Luas Lucan which is a high demand route. TII hope to publish an emerging preferred route this year with passenger services forecast to be operational in 2036.

Luas Poolbeg is currently undergoing a pre-feasibility study and TII expect to procure engineering designers later this year to commence route selection work in late 2025 or early 2026.

Luas 2050

TII is constantly striving to build on the Luas success. Our Luas 2050 plan is a vision for how the ambitious plans for light rail

“By coordinating with other public stakeholders including the NTA, LDA, and local authorities, our Luas projects can also enable delivery of other such as residential, infrastructure and active travel projects.”



Artist's Impression of New Luas Cork Line – View along Patrick Street.

TII's Luas 2050 Vision



outlined in the *Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy* could be delivered and integrated into the current network. In it, TII suggests that, like other light rail networks in Europe, it maintains a steady rate of incremental extensions and consistent delivery. This would build and maintain both a skilled team and secure supply chain, which would speed up delivery and procurement, and improve cost efficiency.

By coordinating with other public stakeholders including the NTA, LDA, and local authorities, our Luas projects can also enable delivery of other schemes such as residential, infrastructure and active travel projects. For example, there are two areas separate planned for redevelopment adjacent to Luas Finglas (Jamestown and Broombridge 9) and the project is delivering cycle lanes alongside the light rail line.

TII is interested in working with NTA and local authorities to investigate the potential for light rail transport solutions in other cities across Ireland such as Galway and Limerick.

As Ireland faces the challenges of population growth and climate change, Luas is one of the obvious solutions to some big challenges. TII looks forward to delivering more projects and bringing light rail to more of Ireland's population in the coming decades.

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Transport Ireland 2025

Peter Walsh, Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Jack Chambers TD, Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation; Houssein Jerbi, Smart PMO; Derval Cummins and Diane Cowin, AECOM; Seán Sweeney, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Ciarán Galway, *eolas Magazine*.

Transport Ireland 2025, in partnership with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and sponsored by AECOM, took place on Friday 6 June at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Dublin. The conference brought together 200 key stakeholders for a day of discussion and networking. Transport Ireland 2025 hosted a variety of expert domestic and international speakers who comprehensively explored the latest ambitions, challenges, and tangible opportunities for decision-makers and practitioners across the transport sector to accelerate the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure.

Delegates heard from speakers, both visiting and local including Jack Chambers TD, Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Reform and Digitalisation; Seán Sweeney, Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Diane Cowin, AECOM; Dearbhla Lawson, Land Development Agency; Mark Conroy, Iamróid Éireann and Andrea Lennon, Department of Transport.



Jack Chambers TD, Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation gives the Ministerial address.



A delegate asks a questions to the panel.



Clare Lammas, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Barry Lennie, AtkinsRéalis.



Tara Spain, Michael Horan, and Audrey Keogh, Transport Infrastructure Ireland.



Ciarán Galway, *eolas Magazine*; Dearbhla Lawson, Land Development Agency; Geraldine Fitzpatrick, Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Garret Doocey, Department of Transport; Karen Kenny, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Finola O'Driscoll, National Transport Authority and Barry Kehoe, Westmeath County Council.



Caoimhin Ó Ciaruáin, Department of Transport.



Michael Frew, Jacobs and Séan McCaffery, Iarnród Éireann.



Delegates at the Transport Infrastructure Ireland exhibition stand.



Stephen Smyth, Transport Infrastructure Ireland; Andrea Lennon, Department of Transport; Mark Conroy, Iarnród Éireann; Andrea Carroll, daa; Brian Caulfield, Trinity College Dublin; and Caoimhin Ó Ciaruáin, Department of Transport.



Gavin O'Donnell, Arup; Nigel O'Neill Transport Infrastructure Ireland; and Paul Lavery McCann Fitzgerald LLP.



Delegates at the 2025 Transport Ireland conference.

KEOLIS

Leveraging our shared global experience to deliver for our passengers, PTAs, people, and the planet



Keolis is the world's leading operator of automatic metro systems and tramways. We operate public transport networks on behalf of 300 transport authorities in 13 countries worldwide, with expertise in 13 different mobility modes, ranging from metros and trams to trains, bicycles and buses. Each year, more than three billion passengers use our services.

The Keolis model

From Hyderabad to Dijon and from Manchester to Boston, Keolis' 70,000 employees share the same values: "We Imagine, We Care, We Commit." These values are an intrinsic part of Keolis' culture and history.

We deliver multimodal mobility solutions tailored to each town, city, or region's

specific issues and financial constraints. While the fundamentals of service delivery – safety, security and performance – are our top priority, we continuously innovate to create attractive transport solutions that deliver for our stakeholders against four additional key criteria: passengers, public transport authorities (PTAs), planet, and people.

Placing passengers at the heart of everything we do

At Keolis, we ensure millions of people are satisfied every day by placing the passenger at the heart of everything we do. Our dedicated employees bring this to life by staying attentive to passengers' needs and delivering exceptional service

on the ground. We deploy our Keolis Signature Service model to implement and then continuously monitor and refine.

Partnering with our PTAs

We secure the trust of PTAs by forging partnerships based on collaboration and transparency, and regularly independently assess this through ISO 44001 certification. We focus on what is important to PTAs, with shared objectives, agreed approaches and learning through open feedback.

Acting responsibly for the planet

We work with PTAs to decarbonise mobility. Keolis' greenhouse gas reduction targets are in line with the 2015 Paris Agreements, with an aim to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Our climate transition plan is validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), confirming that our efforts are consistent with global climate action standards.

Protecting our people's health and safety

The health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees are our top priorities. We encourage diversity and inclusion, and we create the right conditions for our employees to feel fulfilled at work.

The world's leading operator of automatic metro systems and tramways

Keolis operates 26 tram networks and eight automated metro networks worldwide and is the world's leading operator in both modes. This expertise ensures that we meet the highest standards of safety, comfort, punctuality, and satisfaction.

We operate three of the UK's most prestigious networks, including the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), Manchester Metrolink, and Nottingham Trams, carrying over half the UK's light rail passengers.

In London, our award-winning DLR operation, a joint venture between Keolis and Amey, carries almost 100 million passengers annually. The DLR is an essential part of London's transport system and is renowned internationally as a leading metro.

KeolisAmey Docklands was awarded the franchise in July 2014, and we have



“Keolis fosters collaboration and shares best practices among peers to ensure all our networks can deliver to the best of their ability.”

recently secured a new eight-year contract, extending our responsibility for the DLR until 2033. Under this renewed agreement, we continue to build on the strong foundations of collaboration developed with Transport for London and invest in accelerating the network's social value for customers, colleagues and its communities. We aim to take an already industry-leading 99 per cent departure record and raise it further.

In Manchester, the Metrolink tram system, the largest in the UK, is a joint venture between Keolis and Amey, managing operations and maintenance on behalf of Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). Handling over 40 million journeys annually, we keep Manchester moving.

In Manchester, people are at the heart of everything we do. We provide an excellent service to our passengers while investing in our team, creating career pathways and growth opportunities, fostering a supportive, inclusive, and engaging work environment.

In Nottingham, Keolis is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the tram system, and is also part of the Tramlink consortium which was responsible for more than doubling the size of the network and fleet in 2015.

Nottingham trams offers sustainable transport for millions of passengers every

year, and we are proud to be a key part of the city's ambition in becoming the first carbon neutral city in the UK by 2028.

Our commitment to delivering safe, smart, and sustainable public transport solutions extends beyond the UK. For example, in Dijon we have been operating France's first global mobility contract since 2017, covering all transport modes in Greater Dijon including trams, buses, bikes, and parking, with the aim of changing travel habits to reduce car usage. In Dijon, private car usage is falling as a result, set to drop from 53 per cent in 2016 to 38 per cent by 2030.

Keolis operates networks around the world, including the iconic Dubai tram and metro – the longest fully driverless and automated metro network in the world. We have launched many of these 'greenfield' operations too, including in Doha, Qatar; Shanghai, China; and Hyderabad, India.

Across the world, through our centres of excellence and regular internal events including Tram and Metro clubs, Keolis fosters collaboration and shares best practices among peers to ensure all our networks can deliver to the best of their ability. For our passengers, PTAs, people, and the planet.



Addressing transport emissions

The transport sector is on course to exceed its sectoral emission ceiling of 54 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂eq) set in the first carbon budget (2021-25) according to the *Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25)* published in April 2025.

Cumulative transport emissions from 2021 to 2023 have totalled 34.64 MtCO₂eq, leaving a budget of 19.36 MtCO₂eq for 2024 and 2025. For transport to remain within the sectoral emissions ceiling, it would require “an unprecedented 12.4 per cent decrease in emissions in both 2024 and 2025”, the Plan asserts.

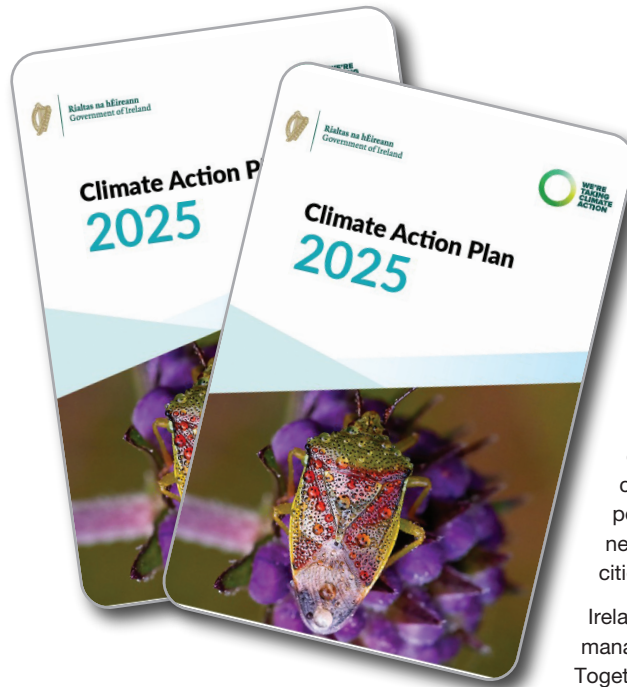
CAP25 indicates that failure to remain within the first budget’s emissions ceiling would have a knock-on effect on the second carbon budget (2026-30), which sets a ceiling of 37 MtCO₂eq.

It cautions the third consecutive increase in sectoral emissions by outlining the 5 per cent increase in GNI* and 3.5 per cent population growth in 2023, along with the population

growing by almost 2 per cent to April 2023. It states: “This suggests that some de-coupling of transport emissions from economic and population growth is occurring.”

The sectoral emission ceilings were agreed by the Government in July 2022 and stipulate the legally binding objective of reducing the 2018 emissions baseline of 12.3 MtCO₂eq to 6.1 MtCO₂eq by 2030, a 50 per cent reduction. Overall, transport emissions have decreased by 4.2 per cent between 2018 and 2023, with the sector contributing 19.5 per cent of Ireland’s total emissions.

The Plan asserts that “emerging challenges” will impede the transport sector in meeting targets set out in the first carbon budget.



To address this, the Department of Transport states that it will engage with stakeholders in the transport sector to achieve the following:

- recalibrate existing emissions modelling;
- develop refined proposals for amplified or additional decarbonisation policies; assess the decarbonisation potential of these proposed measures and set national targets for a renewed policy pathway;
- determine whether the transport sector can help address cross sectoral ‘unallocated savings’ for second carbon budget period (2026-2030); and
- look forward to longer-term pathways for post 2030.

CAP25 asserts that fleet electrification and the use of biofuels will “continue to provide the greatest share of emissions abatement in the medium term”. Numerous targets to address transport emissions are featured in the Plan including:

- 20 per cent reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled relative to business-as-usual;
- 50 per cent reduction in fuel usage; and
- “significant increases” to sustainable transport trips and modal share.

CAP25 asserts that public transport needs to be modified as it contributes 28 per cent of the public sector’s overall greenhouse gas emissions, its second largest contributor after buildings. The Plan states that the sector must decarbonise its fleet and address transport demand generated by the sector through employee commutes and service users.

To achieve this, it recommends that the sector builds on existing mechanisms like the National Transport Authority’s (NTA) Smart Travel Mark and the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland’s M&R System. CAP25 also outlines the following developments in the transport sector:

- public transport passenger numbers exceeded 300 million in 2023, a 24 per cent increase on 2024;
- 100 new and enhance rural bus services were implemented; and
- as of August 2024, 139,412 electric vehicles (EVs) were on the roads

Actions and updates

CAP25 outlines actions to be taken to address sectoral emissions. It references the *All-Island Strategic Rail Review*, which includes multiple actions to enable a modal shift to rail freight. This includes reducing track access charges, strengthening rail connectivity to the island’s busiest ports, and the development of a network of inland terminals close to cities on the rail network.

Ireland’s national transport demand management strategy *Moving Together* is awaiting government approval, while the Sustainable Mobility Action Plan – which sets out a strategic

framework for active travel and public transport – is due to be developed.

The NTA is in the process of developing mobility hub pilots in line with commitments outlined in CAP23 and the Sustainable Mobility Policy. CAP25 states: “These pilots will inform the development of a national operating model for mobility hubs. The Department of Transport is also developing a new, and first, National Policy Statement on Shared Mobility.”

In 2024, the Department undertook public and stakeholder consultation to update the National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuel Infrastructure in line with Regulation (EU) 2023/1804 (AFIR). The regulation stipulates the mandatory minimum levels of alternative fuels infrastructure to be deployed by EU member states on the Trans-European Transport Network.

CAP25 also contains updates on actions taken to address transport emissions. It states that the Department has signed a three-year Behavioural Research Framework with the Economic Social Research Unit to encourage individuals, communities, and organisations to transition to sustainable transport.

On EVs, CAP25 notes that the *National En-Route EV Charging Plan and the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan 2024-2030* were published in 2024. These documents set out aims to achieve a 300 per cent increase in charging capacity by 2025.

Upon publication of its 2024 Annual Review of transport, the Climate Change Advisory Council said: “The Council’s Annual Review of the transport sector, published today, highlights that emissions increased last year and that even with the full implementation of proposed policies and measures the sector will exceed its emissions ceiling. Reliance on expensive, imported fossil fuels needs to end if the sector is to reduce its emissions.”

BusConnects: From plan to progress

transport report



Pictured at the launch of Phase 6a of BusConnects are Hugh Creegan, Interim CEO, NTA, Gwen Morgan, Director of Service Operations, Dublin Bus, Dervla McKay, Managing Director, Go-Ahead Ireland, Florin Bozsa, bus driver, Dublin Bus and Sinead Byrne, bus driver, Go-Ahead Ireland.

Last month NTA was notified that the Kimmage to city centre Core Bus Corridor (CBC) Scheme was granted planning approval by An Bord Pleanála. Reaching this milestone on the BusConnects Dublin infrastructure programme is a very positive development, writes NTA interim CEO, Hugh Creegan.

The approval by An Bord Pleanála of the final CBC Scheme is good news for bus customers, good news for sustainable transport and good news for the city. It is also welcome from a cyclist's point of view, because in addition to 230kms of dedicated bus lanes there will also be over 200km of cycle tracks delivered across the 12 Schemes.

The scale and transformative potential of the BusConnects Programme reinforces its central role in influencing the future roadmap of Ireland's transport system. It delivers on commitments within the *National Development Plan 2021-2030*, the *Climate Action Plan 2025*, the *National Planning Framework 2040*, the

Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 and other metropolitan area transport strategies. The BusConnects Programme is intended to fundamentally transform cities' bus system so that journeys by bus will be fast, reliable, punctual, convenient and affordable. It will also transform cycling infrastructure by improving cycle facilities on key corridors, including providing segregated cycling routes and reducing the need to share limited road space directly with the improved bus services.

The programme encompasses a number of different projects including Core Bus Corridors (CBCs), the Network Redesign (NRD), Next Generation Ticketing (NGT) and fleet electrification.

The CBC project involves the development of continuous bus priority infrastructure and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities on key radial corridors across the Dublin region. Its vision is:

- to provide reliable and frequent bus services with improved cycling and pedestrian facilities;
- to connect people and places through expanded, integrated accessible sustainable transport system: and
- to enhance quality of life through a safer and greener transport system,

The granting of planning approval for the Kimmage CBC Scheme in May, really felt like the final hurdle had been overcome for BusConnects. It means that of the 12 Schemes that form the BusConnects Dublin infrastructure programme, all have now been given the planning green light.

While there are legal challenges against the approvals given by An Bord Pleanála for some Schemes, there is a significant number of Schemes which are clear from a planning and construction point of view.

Advertorial

We are excited to get moving on these:

- Ballymun/Finglas;
- Liffey Valley;
- Ringsend;
- Tallaght/Clondalkin; and
- Lucan.

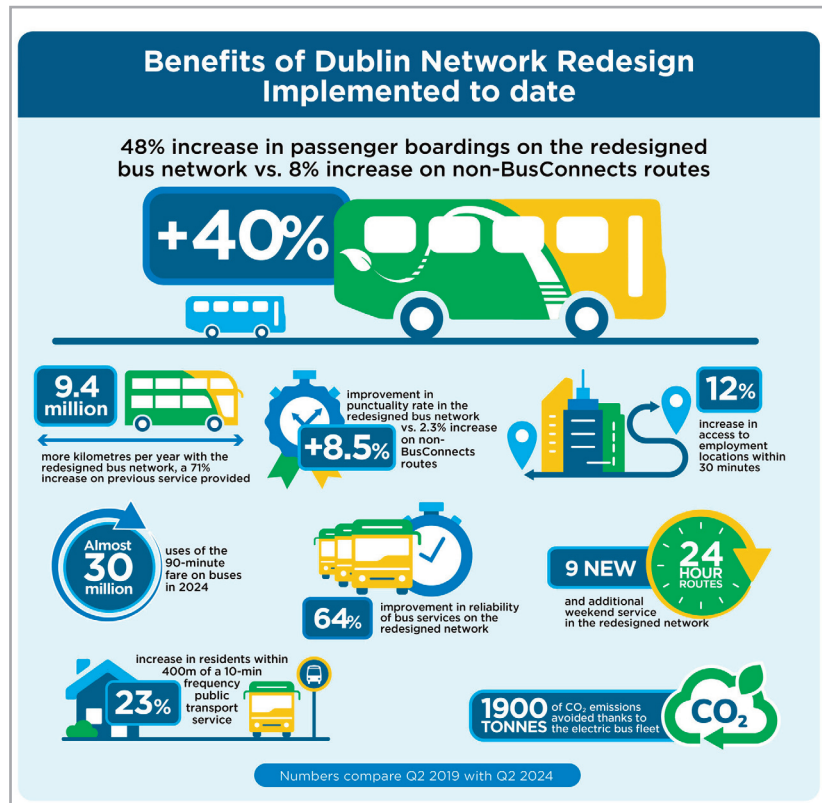
In the coming weeks, NTA will be announcing details of contracts for the construction of the first two Schemes, and by the end of the summer, there will be shovels in the ground as work gets under way in earnest. This key programme of investment in sustainable transport is finally moving from a design on a page to becoming a reality, and the benefits it confers on bus users and cyclists in communities across the city and beyond are about to become tangible rather than theoretical.

Benefits of core bus corridors:

- enhances the capacity and potential of the public transport system by improving bus speeds, reliability and punctuality through the provision of bus lanes and other measures to provide priority to bus movement over general traffic movements;
- supports the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, which supports the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets;
- improves accessibility to jobs, education and other social and economic opportunities through the provision of improved sustainable connectivity and integration with other public transport services;
- enhances the potential for cycling by providing safe infrastructure for cycling, segregated from general traffic wherever practicable;
- enables compact growth, regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in Dublin, for present and future generations, through the provision of safe and efficient sustainable transport networks; and
- ensures that the public realm is carefully considered in the design and development of the transport infrastructure and seek.

A new network of services

But other aspects of the BusConnects



Programme are already bearing fruit and making a real difference for customers.

In June 2021, the first of 12 phases of NRD became a reality with the roll out of the H-spine serving communities from Howth and Malahide to Dublin's city centre. In January 2025, new 24-hour services running between Bray, the city centre and Ballymun – the E1 and E2 – were introduced as part Phase 6a. Phase 7 will be rolled out later this year which includes the F-spine services running from Tallaght/Tempoegue through the city centre and on to Finglas/Charlestown.

Customer response to the revised network has been very positive. Thanks to the new connectivity, improved frequency, and the expansion of the round-the-clock services, passenger boardings in areas covered by the new network are up by 40 per cent when compared to legacy routes. This is probably better than we expected, and has reinforced our view that the sooner we implement the remaining phases the better.

The overall objective is to provide a network that better meets the needs of the overall region and takes account of the growing population and changing travel patterns. Key characteristics of the new network include a simpler network centred on eight main Spines labelled A to H. The new network was redesigned to better meet the Dublin region's needs by considering population growth and

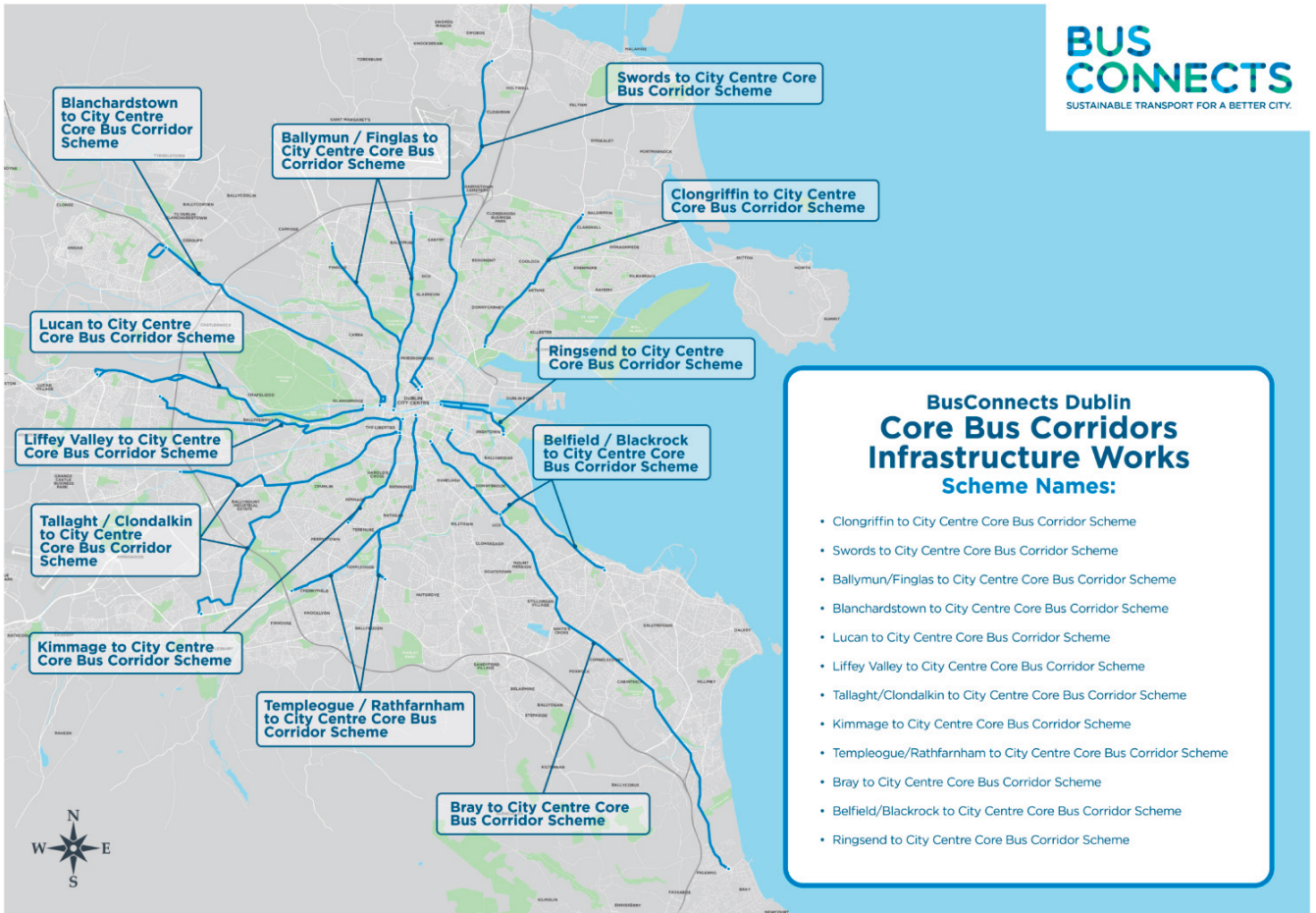
changing travel habits and offers more frequent services, particularly off-peak and at weekends, plus better coverage of the city, and for the first time, a proper network of orbital connections.

The redesigned network represents a major investment in enhanced bus services, delivering 71 per cent increase in scheduled service kilometres by the end of 2024. It also provides for a significant increase in overall capacity and better frequency for customers with more evening and weekend services. As well as this, nine new 24-hour routes have been launched so far as part of NRD.

Next generation ticketing

The ticketing systems on rail and bus are approaching the end of their useful life and require updating to a modern, faster and more efficient system. As part of the BusConnects Programme, a new ticketing system will be introduced which will incorporate the latest developments in account-based ticketing technology, including allowing use of credit / debit cards or mobile devices as a convenient means of payment. It will also enable more ticket choices, which cannot be currently provided in the existing system, as well as allowing faster introductions of fare alterations.

Following a highly competitive procurement process, in April 2024 the NTA awarded an overall framework



contract for the design, supply, installation and operation of a new multi-modal ticketing system to a Spanish information technology company, Indra Sistemas SA, which has designed, installed, and operated similar systems internationally.

This large and complex technology project is now in the analysis and design phase and will take approximately three years to deliver.

Simpler fare structure

The previous ‘stage’ payment system that operated for the Dublin urban bus system has now been simplified with a new fares structure. The new fares structure was introduced in November 2021 and comprises of a short-distance fare on single leg journeys (approximately three kilometres or less) and a 90-minute fare that allows customers to seamlessly switch between any combination of Bus, DART/Commuter Rail and Luas services at no extra cost subject to commencing the last leg within 90 minutes of first boarding.

This new system has made movement between different modes and different services of the same mode easy and convenient and has introduced new journey possibilities for many people. As these new fares have been implemented in the last few years, the impact of the project is being continually assessed to determine if the anticipated benefits have been realised, including increase in LEAP card usage and public transport passengers. In 2024, the 90-

minute fare was used 29.8 million times by bus passengers transferring from DART, Luas or another bus service within the preceding 90 minutes.

Transition to zero

BusConnects Dublin includes the transition to a zero-emission bus fleet to create a cleaner and more liveable city, contributing to the national priority to tackle climate change. The Transition to Zero Project also includes the electrification of existing bus depots and the construction of new depots to support operation of the fully electric fleet.

To date, the project has introduced 110 electric buses into service, with charging capacity in place in Summerhill and Phibsborough depots. In total, the electric bus fleet covered nearly 2 million kilometres in 2024. This led to approximately 1,900 tonnes of avoided CO₂ emissions, when compared to the emissions of diesel buses travelling the same distance. This is enough to fill 383 Olympic-sized swimming pools with CO₂.

Reducing CO₂ emissions will play a significant role in advancing the decarbonisation efforts of public transport, aligning with the goals of the *Climate Action Plan*. The NTA intends that 85 per cent of the Dublin metropolitan area urban bus network will be operated by low and zero emission buses by 2032, and solely by zero emission buses by 2035.



BusConnects Liffey Valley interchange, completed in 2023.

A national programme

BusConnects is a national programme and its principles are applicable across the country. That is why there are BusConnects programmes, not just in Dublin, but in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

In Cork, the new network was published in 2022, offering an overall 50 per cent increase in service levels; two 24-hour services, and seven all-day high-frequency routes. This is scheduled to be implemented from next year.

Another key component of BusConnects Cork is the implementation of bus priority measures through the development of Sustainable Transport Corridors along key routes into the city centre. This will remove buses from general traffic congestion and improve punctuality and reliability, which should also benefit other bus services operating across the Cork area. Three rounds of public consultation have been undertaken in relation to the proposed Sustainable Transport Corridors across Cork. Work is now ongoing to prepare the required statutory consent applications to An Bord Pleanála to be submitted on a phased basis from early 2026.

In Limerick, a new network was

published in 2023 after a process of public consultation. This network will enable more people to avail of public transport resulting in increased access to a greater number of schools and workplaces across Limerick city. Overall service levels are to increase by about 70 per cent in the plan that will be implemented from 2027.

In Galway, a new network is scheduled for delivery in 2027. On the infrastructure side, the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link is being progressed by Galway City Council. This provide improved walking, cycling and bus infrastructure on this key access corridor in Galway City, which will enable and deliver efficient, safe, and integrated sustainable transport movement along the corridor.

The new BusConnects network for Waterford promising greater coverage and more services, will be implemented from 2027.

In conclusion, it is now clear that BusConnects is working. Passenger numbers are up thanks to the new network. The TFI 90-minute fare is now well embedded as part of the public transport experience. The process of modernising our ticketing system is under way. Emissions are reduced thanks to electrification. Ground is about to be broken on the CBCs.

There now can be no doubt that this kind of investment in bus services plays a vital role in providing a public transport system that is more useful, more affordable and more reliable for more people in more communities.

The broad geographical spread of BusConnects including the cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford and the comprehensive approach of the Programme underscore its potential nationwide impact and demonstrate the concerted efforts of these regions in advancing sustainable urban mobility agendas.

NTA looks forward to the continued support at local and national level for the delivery of this crucial programme of investment.

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Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority



All-Island Strategic Rail Review: Progress to date

Almost one year on from the publication of the *All-Island Strategic Rail Review*, *eolas Magazine* analyses the progress made recommendations outlined in the document.

To date, the most significant progress made is the development of a projects prioritisation strategy which is now at an advanced stage and planned for publication later in 2025. The Department of Transport (DoT) asserts that this strategy will consider “how best to optimise the sequencing and implementation of the Review recommendations, including both short-term interventions and longer-term projects”. It will inform DoT’s engagement on the ongoing review of the National Development Plan.

DoT says: “It should be noted that individual programmes and projects

referred to within the Review will be advanced subject to funding and relevant approvals, as required under the Infrastructure Guidelines in Ireland.”

Due to be delivered by DoT in the South and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in the North, it includes 32 recommendations to enhance and expand Ireland’s rail system up to 2050. Recommendations included in the Review aim to achieve the following:

- **Additional capacity:** Upgrade of much of the single-track rail network to double-track and four-track in some areas;
- **Faster services:** Reduced journey times with speeds of up to 200 km/h on intercity lines;
- **Higher frequency:** Hourly services between cities and regional/rural services to operate at least every two hours;
- **Decarbonisation:** Net zero rail system through overhead electrification of intercity routes and the introduction of new electric trains;

- **Greater reach:** Increase rail network route length from c. 2,300km to c. 3,000km by reopening former lines and opening new lines
- **Wider access:** Install new routes in north midlands, west, and north west for 700,000 people to live within 5km of a railway station; and
- **More passengers:** Triple the number of people using the rail system annually from c. 65 million to c. 180 million by 2050.

Progress

One recommendation for decarbonisation is the procurement of hybrid and electric rolling stock in the medium term as fleets come to the end of their life. In line with this, Iarnród Éireann unveiled the first five-carriage train of the new DART+ Fleet in November 2024 under the DART+ Programme. The train was delivered as part of a framework agreement providing up to 750 electric/battery electric carriages to Iarnród Éireann over a 10-year period.

In November 2024, Translink launched the Better on Board Charter initiative which aims to achieve a “cleaner, greener and healthier Northern Ireland where public transport is the first choice for travel”. It encourages stakeholders from all sectors to endorse the use of public transport through two separate charters: one for Belfast, and the other for Derry. Translink is also currently undertaking a feasibility study for the electrification of Belfast to the border.

In line with the Review’s aim to improve intercity connection between the seven cities on the island of Ireland, an hourly service between Dublin and Belfast became operational in October 2024. DfI says that “procurement has also started on a new, faster, more sustainable Enterprise train fleet for the Dublin-Belfast route”.

Recommendations to improve regional and rural rail access include the extension of the railway into Tyrone, Derry and Donegal, increasing line speeds to at least 120 km/h (75mph), and the reinstatement of the Western Rail Corridor railway between Claremorris and Atherny.



The review also identifies the opportunity to restore the rail line between Derry city and Portadown, County Armagh. Preparatory works began on the line in November 2024 and its delivery would see the introduction of rail stations at Dungannon, Omagh, and Strabane (all in County Tyrone) to the network. Translink is also undertaking feasibility studies for the reopening of the Armagh to Portadown line and the Antrim to Lisburn line, with a link to Belfast international airport.

One of the recommendations for the promotion of sustainable cities is to connect Dublin Airport, Belfast International Airport, and Shannon Airport to the railway line. Iarnród Éireann CEO Jim Meade addressed the links to Shannon Airport in an interview with Limerick’s Live95 in February 2025.

“It is a priority for the region, for Shannon, and for Limerick. It has been talked about since my young days, even as a young manager here in Limerick. But what we have achieved is it is now in a plan. It is now actually in a plan, it is not being talked about anymore,” he said.

“There is a couple of years in getting through planning, identifying the

preferred route, getting it costed and getting a railway order to deliver it. But it is now part of that plan.”

The Review outlines four recommendations to improve freight across the island including the strengthening of rail connections to the island’s busiest ports, and development of a network of inland terminals close to major cities on the rail network.

Climate Action Plan 2025, published in April 2025, states that “work is already underway to implement these actions, including the Foynes rail freight line rehabilitation project”. In March 2025, Iarnród Éireann announced that it had completed the laying of 42km of new track on the line.

DfI says: “The recommendations in the *All-Island Strategic Rail Review* provide an evidence-based framework to inform future investment in the railways across the island of Ireland. However, more work is needed to test the feasibility and affordability of the Review’s recommendations and to secure the necessary funding to take projects forward.”

The vision for rail is clear



Through the existing investment programme, and the strategic vision under the *All-Island Strategic Rail Review* (AISRR), the way ahead is clear says Jim Meade, Chief Executive of Iarnród

The publication of the *All-Island Strategic Rail Review* in 2024 has provided a clear way forward for the development and expansion of the island of Ireland's rail network and services over the next quarter century.

However, the most exciting aspect about this framework is that the core focus of it is already underway.

Our vision of being the backbone of Ireland's sustainable transport network has rapidly moved, with the support of Government and the National Transport Authority, into delivery mode.

Right now, the five major cities in the country have projects underway which will deliver material benefit for customers and communities between now and 48 months hence, as well as key national programmes. Behind those, a firm pipeline of projects are in

development to enable us move from a record passenger total of 50.7 million journeys in 2024 to 80 million journeys in 2030.

DART+ Programme

Glimpses of the future are on track, with the first ten carriages – made up of two five-carriage trains – of 185 carriages of the new DART+ fleet delivered and in testing. The detailed testing and regulatory approval process is underway, to ensure our customers will travel on this new flagship fleet for the Dublin area from 2026.

The fleet order is an integral part of DART+, an investment which will see double the passenger capacity and treble the electrification across all Greater Dublin Area rail services.

National network

Our new National Train Control Centre at Heuston Station has been completed with train control systems being developed for commissioning from 2025 to deliver more efficient train management across the network and to cater for the expanded network and services.

Planning for a new Navan rail line, and procurement for a new Dublin/Belfast Enterprise fleet, has also begun.

Regional cities

Under the EU-funded Recovery and Resilience Plan, Iarnród Éireann is trebling the Cork commuter rail network's capacity through:

- developing a new through platform at Kent Station;

- double-tracking Glounthaune to Midleton; and
- resignalling the Cork commuter network.

The new platform is open, and all three elements will be complete by 2026.

The planning process for the next phase of the Cork Area Commuter Rail Network is underway, to support a Railway Order application for eight new commuter stations, a new fleet maintenance depot, and the electrification of the Cork network.

In Galway, funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) includes:

- investment for a 1km section of second track and a new platform at the existing Oranmore Train Station, allowing the busy commuter link between Athenry and Galway to grow; and
- regeneration of Ceannt Station as part of a major Galway City Council Transport Connectivity project, with works to be completed in 2026.

In Limerick, the city's new transportation hub centred on Colbert Station will boost services. Plans for new stations at Moyross and Ballysimon are currently progressing, and capacity studies are underway for Limerick Junction to Limerick to Ennis.

Waterford's Plunkett Station is being relocated to be part of an integrated transport hub under plans to develop the city's North Quays.

Rail Freight and Rosslare Euro-port

Iarnród Éireann's Rail Freight 2040 Strategy is on track.

Works to reinstate the Limerick to Foynes rail line for freight services are underway following funding from the Department of Transport, a clear commitment to the goals of *Rail Freight 2040*, with a 2026 completion date planned. Up to 400 new wagons will also be ordered, with a first order of 150 placed in recent weeks.

Iarnród Éireann is also Port Authority for Rosslare Europort, and its status as Ireland's Gateway to Europe has been confirmed with 36 services operating directly between the Port and Europe each week.

As well as investment in the Port Masterplan, the OPW's Project T7 for a permanent Border Control Post, and the new TII N25 Rosslare Europort Access Road, an ambitious €200 million plan to

Project	Serving	Update	Next steps
DART+ West	Maynooth/M3 Parkway to City	Railway Order granted	Procurement process underway for suppliers
DART+ South West	Hazelhatch to Heuston and Phoenix Park Tunnel	Railway Order Granted	
DART+ Coastal North	Connolly to Drogheda	Railway Order application	An Bord Pleanála decision awaited
DART+ Coastal South	Connolly to Greystones	Emerging preferred option being developed	Planning in 2025
DART+ Fleet	New trains for all DART+ routes above	185 DART+ carriages ordered	10 carriages in testing, entering service from 2026



become Ireland's Offshore Renewable Energy Hub, with the port uniquely placed to support the development of the industry in the Celtic and Irish Seas.

All-Island Strategic Rail Review

And that is just what is happening now. We are developing the priorities to deliver the ambition of the AISRR, an agenda that will see:

- the rail network route length increase from circa 2,300km to almost 3,000km with the reopening of former and new rail lines;
- new routes in the North Midlands and North West, 700,000 more

people would live within 5km of a railway station;

- more passengers, almost tripling the number of people using the rail system annually; and
- electrification and alternative fuels for a sustainable transport network

Our journey to our sustainable future is to a destination which will benefit our country, our environment, our communities, and our society as a whole, everyone is welcome on board.

W: www.irishrail.ie
X: @irishrail



Delivering the DART+ Programme

Iarnród Éireann launched advertisements for pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQ) notices for five works programmes enabling the delivery of the DART+ Programme in May 2025.

Two of the PQQs relate to design and build single supplier frameworks to be used across the entire DART+ Programme. One PQQ pertains to the electrification of the extended DART+ network, while the other relates to civil and structural works.

Two of the remaining PQQ notices pertain to design and build works for the new Spencer Dock Station in Dublin city centre, and Connolly station works, which includes the development of a new station entrance at Preston Street. The final PQQ pertains to rail systems for DART+ South West, including four-tracking between Park West and Heuston Station, and remodelling of the Heuston Station track layout.

Iarnród Éireann aims for contracts to be awarded for the work programmes by the end of 2026, subject to approval and funding. All PQQs have been advertised through the *Official Journal of the European Union*.



Iarnród Éireann is planning a further framework PQQ process for signalling works for the programme, along with a PQQ for the DART+ depot which is being progressed under a railway order.

Railway orders

Railway orders have been approved by An Bord Pleanála for DART+ West and DART+ South West which will facilitate the commencement of enabling works of DART+ infrastructure in 2026. The DART+ West railway order provides for the following infrastructure improvements:

- 40km of electrification and re-signalling of the Maynooth and M3 Parkway lines to the city centre;
- construction of a second station entrance on Preston Street and rail capacity enhancements at Connolly Station;
- construction of a new station at Spencer Dock with direct interchange with the Luas Red Line;
- construction of a new DART depot facility west of Maynooth Station, to maintain the new DART+ fleet; and
- deployment of new electric DART carriages on the Maynooth and M3 Parkway services.

The DART+ South West railway order provides for the following infrastructure improvements:

- 20km of electrification and re-signalling of the Hazelhatch and Celbridge line to Heuston and the south city via Phoenix Park tunnel;
- construction of a new station at Heuston West serving the Clancy Quay and Island Bridge community;
- four-tracking of the Parkwest and Cherry Orchard Station to Heuston line to enhance capacity;
- upgrade of the Phoenix Park tunnel; and
- deployment of new electric DART carriages on Hazelhatch and Celbridge services.

A railway order application for the DART+ Coastal North was lodged with An Bord Pleanála in July 2024. The application seeks permission to extend the electrified DART network from Malahide to Drogheda MacBride Station. It would increase the number of passengers per hour per direction from 4,800 to 8,800.

Jim Meade, Chief Executive of Iarnród Éireann, says: “With two railway order approvals from An Bord Pleanála, and a decision awaited on a third, we have reached another milestone in the transformative DART+ Programme as we advertise to the market to help deliver these major works.”

A total of 185 carriages have also been ordered for the DART+ fleet, and a framework contract with French fleet manufacturer Alstom enables a fleet of up to 750 carriages. The first 10 carriages – comprising two five-carriage trains – have already been delivered. They have commenced the testing, commissioning, and regulatory processing of these trains and they are expected to begin entering service during 2026.

Aims and benefits

The DART+ Programme aims to expand the DART network from 50km to over 150km across the Greater Dublin Area. Iarnród Éireann is collaborating with the National Transport Authority to deliver the programme to meet the aims outlined in the *National Development Plan* which lays out a transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

It has been designed to double the passenger capacity for rail services from 26,000 passenger journeys per direction per hour to 52,000. Meade says: “Doubling the passenger capacity and trebling the electrification of the Greater Dublin Area network will allow so many more commuters choose rail, as the backbone of our sustainable transport network.”

The DART+ programme was designed to “promote multi modal transit, active transport, boost regional connectivity and make public transport the preferred option for more and more people” and “deliver frequent, modern, electrified services within the Greater Dublin Area”. Five areas for development are included in the Programme:

- 1. DART+ West:** Maynooth and M3 Parkway to city centre;
- 2. DART+ South West:** Hazelhatch and Celbridge to city centre;
- 3. DART+ Coastal North:** Drogheda to city centre;
- 4. DART+ Coastal South:** Greystones to city centre; and
- 5. DART+ FLEET:** Purchase of new train fleet to increase train services.

Minister for Transport Darragh O’Brien TD says: “The DART+ Programme is central to our commitments under the Programme for Government to develop a strategic public transport network, specifically to provide the capacity and electrification to serve new and existing communities for generations to come.

“With DART+ trains already in testing, and infrastructure enabling works beginning in 2026, we are firmly into the delivery phase of an investment that will make a real difference to the lives of tens of thousands of commuters daily.”

Transdev and the future of public transport



As Dublin's population continues to grow and the cityscape evolves, the pressure on its transport systems is intensifying. Congestion, environmental challenges, and changing commuter habits are reshaping how the capital moves.

The answer is more public transport infrastructure: smarter operations, better integration, and a commitment by operators to reliability at every level.

At the heart of this evolving landscape is Transdev, operator of the Luas light rail network. While trams are a visible part of Dublin's streets, the real story of success lies beneath the surface: in maintenance, collaboration, day-to-day excellence – and in how those elements build public trust in Luas and public transport.

Delivering reliability every day

Major infrastructure announcements tend to steal the spotlight, but for most people, the daily experience of public transport defines their perception. Is the tram on time? Is it clean? Do services run reliably during disruptions or large-scale events?

Transdev, through its 21 years of operating and maintaining the Luas network, plays a central role in ensuring the answers to these questions are consistently positive. Every on-time

departure, every safe journey, and every resolved issue contributes to a broader public shift – one that moves people away from cars and toward sustainable mobility.

It is here that Transdev demonstrates its value – not just as a service provider, but as a critical enabler of modal shift in Dublin. Over 54 million journeys were made on Luas last year.

Customer-centred service and seamless integration

Transdev does not operate in isolation. For example, Luas Customer Care is integrating with other public service operators into the TFI Help Centre, and there is extensive coordination with Dublin Bus, Go-Ahead, DART, Iarnród Éireann, and Bus Éireann at various levels.

This integration is vital. As BusConnects reshapes the city's bus corridors with more frequent services, redesigned routes, and priority lanes, the challenge is not just building infrastructure – it is

ensuring all modes of transport work together. Luas and BusConnects do not compete; they complement each other, enabling a smoother, more flexible public transport experience.

For passengers, that means confidence: in journey times, in real-time information, and in the knowledge that transport providers are working together behind the scenes.

TII and NTA

Infrastructure development in Ireland is led by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the National Transport Authority (NTA). These agencies set the strategic direction – planning investments, designing systems, and overseeing project delivery.

Their work is essential in turning policy into progress. But even the best infrastructure design must be matched by effective operations. That is where a trusted operator like Transdev comes in, turning strategic visions into everyday realities for passengers.

Together, TII, NTA, and Transdev form a public-private ecosystem that is reshaping how Dublin moves.

Operational excellence

Shifting commuter behaviour in a car-centric city requires more than infrastructure; it requires trust, and trust is built through performance. Transdev's success in Dublin is grounded in operational excellence measured not just through KPIs like punctuality, safety, and customer satisfaction, but in the lived experience of passengers.

Behind each tram is a network of teams – customer support, operations, maintenance, safety, security, and human resources – working cohesively to ensure a safe, clean, and efficient system. Whether responding to events, managing service disruptions, or proactively maintaining assets, Transdev's ability to deliver consistency is a model for public transport operations worldwide.

The company's blend of global experience and local knowledge allows it to adapt quickly, innovate thoughtfully, and maintain the high standards needed to keep the system running, even during complex network challenges.

The hidden key to expansion

Ambitions for network growth – new Luas lines, larger fleets, and integration with existing systems – are meaningless without a stable foundation.



Transdev Ireland excels in both proactive and corrective maintenance. By leveraging predictive tools, digital asset management, and rigorous inspection regimes, the team ensures that today's network remains safe, efficient, and ready for tomorrow.

This is more than technical diligence. A system that works flawlessly every day builds positive public support for expansion. It assures stakeholders that existing investments are protected – and that new ones will be well-managed.

Supporting a low-carbon, intermodal future

As Ireland moves toward a low-carbon future, transport must lead the way by reducing car dependency and making public transport the preferred choice for most journeys.

Transdev supports this goal not just through Luas operations but by helping to build a truly intermodal transport ecosystem. Working with partners across rail, bus, and active travel, Luas is positioned as a key part of how Dublin connects.

Stability is progress

It is easy to equate success with expansion. But in a growing city, stability is just as important. A well-maintained, resilient system enables sustainable growth and gives new investments a strong foundation.

Stability means trust, consistent delivery, and the operational strength that allows innovation to flourish, giving the public confidence in a system that works today and tomorrow.

The road ahead

Dublin's transport future is ambitious and achievable. With leadership from TII and NTA, and trusted operators like Transdev keeping the system running strong, the city is poised for a transport transformation. Progress starts with performance. And performance starts with people and partners who deliver. Transdev's track record makes it a cornerstone of Dublin's future.

We will stay the course, meet challenges head-on, and continue to drive Dublin forward.

W: www.transdev.com/en/transdev-dublin-light-rail



Rolling out alternative fuels

The development and deployment of alternative fuels in Ireland is occurring within the context of several overlapping regulatory obligations, policy frameworks, and working group outputs.

Ireland is legally required to meet targets set out under the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR), in effect since 13 April 2024. Article 14 of this regulation obliges EU member states to prepare and submit a national policy framework (NPF) outlining measures for the development of the alternative fuels market and related infrastructure. The updated Irish NPF is required to be submitted to the European Commission by 31 December 2025.

The Alternative Fuels for Transport Working Group was established in 2023 to assist in coordinating cross-departmental and inter-agency work related to transport decarbonisation via alternative fuels. The Working Group delivered its first report to the Minister for Transport in

March 2025, fulfilling Action TR/24/3 under *Climate Action Plan 2024*.

Regulatory context and policy alignment

The AFIR sets binding targets for infrastructure development in EU member states. These targets include deployment of electric recharging infrastructure for light- and heavy-duty vehicles, hydrogen refuelling infrastructure, onshore electricity supply (OPS) in ports, and electricity supply to stationary aircraft. The Irish response to this regulation includes a revised NPF that builds on and replaces the existing 2017-2030 framework.

The Working Group has engaged in public consultations and submitted a draft of the updated NPF to the European Commission in December 2024, in line with Article 14. The NPF draft prioritises electrification and hydrogen infrastructure but notes the potential for inclusion of biomethane, advanced biofuels, and renewable synthetic fuels in the final version, pending further assessment and consultation.

Electric vehicle charging

AFIR requires Ireland to deploy sufficient charging infrastructure corresponding to the national electric vehicle (EV) fleet size. To meet *Climate Action Plan* targets for EVs by 2030, it is estimated that 712,395 kW of public charging capacity will be required. The *National EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025* provides the baseline planning document for delivering this capacity.

For heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs), a separate public charging network on the TEN-T core network is planned, with spacing every 3km. This will be implemented via a dedicated HDV charging scheme administered by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), to be developed in 2025.

Hydrogen refuelling

AFIR requires a minimum of five hydrogen refuelling stations in Ireland by 2030. These are planned to be located in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, with one additional TEN-T corridor site. Progress toward this requirement must be demonstrable by 2027. The Department of Transport has indicated that inclusion of hydrogen is necessary to meet both light and heavy-duty transport decarbonisation requirements.

Renewable transport fuels

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), implemented under Part 5A of the National Oil Reserves Agency Act 2007, mandates a rising share of renewable transport fuels in the road fuel mix. The RTFO rate is scheduled to reach 25 per cent in 2025, with a sub-target of 1.5 per cent for advanced biofuels. Consultations are underway for the 2025-2027 revision of the Renewable Transport Fuel Policy.

Two working groups support RTFO implementation:

- 1. Biofuels Sustainability Working Group:** Conducted vulnerability assessments regarding fraud risks, including analysis of feedstock traceability, union database

functionality, and EU regulatory compliance. Outputs aim to inform legal and administrative adjustments.

- 2. RES-T Working Group:** Supports modelling and research aligned with RED II targets for 2030. Ongoing work includes assessment of supply-demand dynamics for advanced biofuels and RFNBOs, including phases of modelling by Byrne Ó Cléirigh Ltd.

Future work will assess B30 blending feasibility, potential extension of RTFO to Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM), and alignment of RTFO with the Renewable Heating Obligation (RHO) due in 2026.

Road freight decarbonisation

Road freight is predominantly diesel-fuelled and presents significant decarbonisation challenges. EU emission standards for HDVs require 45 per cent reduction by 2030, 65 per cent by 2035, and 90 per cent by 2040.

ZEVI has initiated fleet audit schemes and infrastructure support programmes. The DRIFT-HDV study, submitted in 2024, highlights cost-related adoption barriers and recommends operational expenditure-based incentives.

Next steps

The Alternative Fuels Working Group recommends continuation of its current remit through 2025, with updates to its terms of reference. Key priorities include:

- finalising the NPF in consultation with stakeholders and the European Commission;
- completing sector-specific studies in maritime and road freight;
- developing a hierarchy for renewable fuel use across sectors; and
- supporting integration of CAP26 corrective actions.

A year-end report to the Minister is expected to be sent at the beginning of 2026, along with monitoring of aligned actions.

Speaking in the Dáil in February 2025, Minister for Transport Darragh O'Brien TD said: "Regarding alternative fuels and biomethane in particular, and alternative energy sources, I see [biomethane] as having a particular fit in that regard." However, O'Brien said he would "not commit to a figure" on capital expenditure on biomethane as an alternative fuel "because further discussions need to take place".



Bus Éireann's journey towards greener, smarter public transport

2024 was another landmark year for Bus Éireann, defined by continued passenger growth, service expansion, and major strides toward our vision for a more sustainable transport future.

We recorded 111.6 million passenger journeys, a 4.3 per cent increase on the previous year, reflecting the ever-growing demand for public transport in Ireland and the incredible efforts of our 3,100+ strong team who deliver vital services across every corner of the country.

All areas of our business saw growth. Public Service Obligation (PSO) services rose by 7 per cent, Expressway grew by 4 per cent, and School Transport saw a 2 per cent increase, delivering 58 million school

journeys, a service that plays a critical role in rural and local communities. This growth reaffirms our position as Ireland's national bus company, a trusted, national operator and an essential part of the public transport fabric of Ireland.

Despite this success, we are acutely aware that challenges persist, particularly in areas such as further improved punctuality and real-time updates for our customers. These remain key priorities for 2025 and beyond, especially as we work to adapt

to a growing population, increased urban congestion, and evolving customer expectations. As part of our corporate strategy, *Horizon 28: Our Vision for Green Growth*, we are focused on operational excellence, service innovation, and digital transformation.

The operating landscape is shifting rapidly. New competitive tenders, a heightened focus on sustainability, and rising customer expectations demand agility. In 2024, we began operating a new Direct Award Contract for PSO

services and were also awarded competitive contracts for Waterford City, Carlow Town, and the Eastern Commuter Corridor.

Technological transformation is, of course, key to our future success. In that regard, we have begun digitalising our school transport services and laid the procurement groundwork for a national smart ticketing rollout to 7,500 vehicles. Our investment in innovation will ensure that we remain competitive, efficient, and responsive to our customers' evolving needs.

Sustainability is central to both our business strategy and our values as an organisation. For instance, we have committed to a 51 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030 and achieving net-zero by 2050. In 2024, we introduced Ireland's first fully electric regional city bus network in Limerick, with 34 battery-electric double-deckers covering 2.1 million zero-emission kilometres annually. We also trialled hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel in Ballina, with further rollout planned this year.

Bus Éireann continues to also demonstrate its commitment to sustainability through the ongoing rollout of electric buses nationally. To further support this transition, we are currently undertaking depot electrification projects in Galway, Cork, and Sligo in partnership with the NTA, ensuring the necessary infrastructure is in place for a sustainable future in public transportation nationwide.

Moreover, Ireland's 2030 decarbonisation goals are to the forefront of our strategic priorities. As bus transport offers the most cost-effective way to meeting these goals which can be implemented with pace within a public transport context, Bus Éireann urges a more rapid investment in EV roll-out in the context of the 2026 budgetary dialogue.

Operationally, we also achieved significant milestones. We now operate 216 PSO routes across Ireland and launched a major expansion of services between Limerick, Shannon, and Ennis, integrating School Transport and public services to improve efficiency and connectivity. We also extended the Independent Travel Support service to Limerick, Galway, and Waterford,

“Our enhanced safety culture, informed by data and collaboration with the RSA and HSA, has helped minimise incidents and maintain high standards across all operations.”

providing critical support for customers with special needs. Our 99 per cent success rate for wheelchair bookings underlines our commitment to inclusivity.

Workforce development and growth has been a major focus. In 2024, we hired over 500 new employees, bringing our total workforce above 3,000 for the first time. This growth was essential to meeting service demand and was supported by targeted recruitment and training expansion.

We also continued to strengthen our Expressway brand, developing the business case for further investment in fleet and technology. On the school transport front, we collaborated closely with the Department of Education to pilot new eligibility criteria and support future growth, towards an ambition of serving an additional 100,000 children by 2030.

Safety remains our most paramount value. Our enhanced safety culture, informed by data and collaboration with the RSA and HSA, has helped minimise incidents and maintain high standards across all operations. We continue to champion ways in which public transport can be made safer and, in that regard, we are active members in the Department of Transport's new safety taskforce and participate in the delivery of the Government's *Road Safety Strategy: Vision Zero*.

Looking ahead, Bus Éireann's *Horizon 28* strategic plan charts our strategic direction and aligns us with national policy goals including climate action, connectivity, and rural development. We

continue to benchmark against global best practices and collaborate with government, the NTA, and CIÉ to deliver world-class public transport services.

On a personal note, my tenure as CEO of Bus Éireann will conclude later this year. Over these past years, I have witnessed incredible dedication, resilience, and innovation across Bus Éireann. Our public service ethos is alive and well and for that I am deeply grateful to our employees, our leadership team, chairperson Miriam Hughes, our board, and all our stakeholders, most especially our customers. Together, we have not only met immense challenges over these past seven years but also delivered real progress for our communities across Ireland. With confidence, I will pass on the baton knowing that Bus Éireann is in a strong position to grow, to innovate, and to lead in creating a more sustainable, inclusive transport future for Ireland. The journey continues – with purpose, with pride, and commitment to providing the highest quality public transport service for our country.

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Transport in Ireland snapshot 2025



Road traffic

Average total vehicle kilometres travelled

2022: **16,261**

2023: **15,854**

↓2.5%

Road deaths

Total road traffic fatalities

2023: 180

2024: 172

↓4%



Road freight

Total tonnage of goods transport by road

2022: **164.3 million** tonnes

2023: **165.2 million** tonnes

↑0.5%



Port traffic

Total tonnage of goods handled by main ports

2022: **53 million** tonnes

2023: **48 million** tonnes

↓9%

Airport traffic

Total number of passengers handled by main airports

2023: **39.2 million**

2024: **41 million**

↑4.6%



Licensed vehicles

Total number of licensed vehicles on the road

2023: **3 million**

2024: 3.1 million

↑3%



Licensed EVs

Total number of new EVs licensed

2023: **22,493**

2024: **17,191**

↓24%

Luas passengers

Total number of passenger journeys carried on the Luas

2023: **48 million**

2024: **54 million**

↑12.5



DART passengers

Total number of passenger journeys carried on the DART

2022: **15.9 million**

2023: **19.9 million**

↑25%



Dublin bicycle journeys

Total number of Dublin bicycle sharing scheme journeys

2022: **2,001,810**

2023: **2,034,075**

↑1.6%

Driving forward: Tackling Ireland's driving test backlog



Brendan Walsh, Chief Operations Officer with the RSA with a number of newly qualified RSA driver testers following the successful completion of their training in Cork.

Delays in public services rarely occur in a vacuum. They are often the result of overlapping structural, social, and demographic pressures – and their resolution demands clarity, leadership, and sustained investment, writes Brendan Walsh, Chief Operations Officer, Road Safety Authority.

That is precisely the challenge the Road Safety Authority (RSA) faced and continues to navigate as we work to reduce the waiting time for driving tests, which stood at an average of 27 weeks at the end of April.

This is not a situation any of us consider acceptable, and I want to acknowledge the real-life impact this is having. For many people, driving is not a luxury – it is a requirement for employment, education, and caring responsibilities. At a national level, mobility is an economic enabler, a public service, and a vital component of rural and urban cohesion.

That is why we launched a comprehensive, time-bound action plan

to reduce the average waiting time to 10 weeks by early September 2025, as directed by Government. This is not just a target. It is a national imperative – and one the RSA is fully committed to delivering.

Context: How we got here

To understand the current pressures, we need to examine the demand curve. The volume of driving tests has risen steadily and steeply over the past four years – from 157,183 in 2021 to 253,850 in 2024. That represents a 61 per cent increase in testing volume, driven by factors such as a growing population, delayed demand from the Covid-19 period, and greater reliance

on personal transport in areas where public infrastructure is less accessible.

Scaling services in response to this level of growth requires government recruitment sanctions. It requires investment and takes time – and resources.

The RSA's large-scale recruitment campaign to hire and train additional driver testers was not a light-touch process. It required almost 1,000 interviews, 200 practical driving assessments, Garda vetting, and seven weeks of structured training and on-the-road evaluation for successful candidates.

It is worth noting that diverting experienced staff to support this process had a knock-on effect on existing capacity. However, this was a strategic investment – not only to resolve the immediate backlog but to futureproof our service against volatility in demand.

What is being done now?

Our plan to restore test waiting times is already in motion and is underpinned by four core pillars:

- **Expanded testing hours:** We are now offering tests from 7:25am to 7pm, including evenings, Saturdays, and bank holidays, with overtime agreements in place to support this expanded schedule.
- **Accelerated tester deployment:** Revised training approaches and enhanced facilities mean that new testers are entering the system faster and in larger numbers.
- **Targeted booking interventions:** Manual oversight of our invitation process ensures priority is given to test centres experiencing the highest demand – allowing us to more efficiently match capacity with need.
- **Infrastructure expansion:** We are opening new driving test centres in strategic locations, bringing the total to 60 nationwide, which will increase accessibility and alleviate regional pressure.

To ensure transparency and public accountability, the RSA is publishing fortnightly progress updates, tracking key metrics as we implement this plan.

Maintaining a resilient, long-term system

While our immediate priority is recovery, we are equally focused on building resilience. This includes developing contingency planning to deal with future surges in demand, whether driven by demography, policy change, or unforeseen global events.

We are actively assessing external and internal capacity-building measures to ensure we can scale our services rapidly, should the need arise. We have also committed to close monitoring of external factors and will provide early warning to our parent Department if future headcount or resource adjustments become necessary.

It would be disingenuous to suggest we can completely eliminate risk. No public service can guarantee immunity from



the impacts of pandemics, international conflict, or economic shocks. But what we can do – and are doing – is building agility into our planning, our systems, and our people.

A shared effort

We are also calling on the public to help us make best use of existing capacity. Over 4,000 tests this year alone could not proceed due to issues such as vehicles lacking a valid NCT, insurance, or tax. Others were no-shows. Each missed appointment represents a lost opportunity for someone else – and compounds the backlog.

We ask customers to cancel well in advance if they cannot attend and to ensure that they and their vehicle are fully ready. This is a simple but powerful way to support national recovery efforts.

Driven by our people

It is important to recognise that the delivery of this action plan is only possible because of the shared determination and professionalism of our people. From driver testers on the front line working with learners in cars, to our call centre and administrative teams managing scheduling, queries, and logistics – each individual plays a vital role. These are not just roles within a system; they are public servants who have continued to deliver under sustained pressure, scrutiny, and at times, criticism. Their resilience, adaptability, and commitment to maintaining a safe, fair, and accessible service deserve our full recognition. Without their daily efforts, this recovery plan would not be possible – and I want to personally acknowledge and thank

every member of the RSA team for their contribution to this national challenge.

Our commitment

Let me be absolutely clear: reducing waiting times is our top operational priority at the RSA. This is not a temporary campaign – it is a strategic transformation of our service to meet the mobility needs of a modern Ireland.

We understand the significance of a driving test in people's lives. We see the stress, the delays, the impact. But we also see progress. We are increasing weekly test volumes. We are onboarding new testers. We are adding centres, extending hours, and re-engineering the way we operate. This is a coordinated, evidence-led response, and we are confident it will deliver real results – sustainably.

The RSA will continue to engage with stakeholders across Government, our teams and the public to ensure we maintain momentum. I welcome ongoing dialogue with decision-makers and sector leaders as we move forward.

Driving is essential infrastructure – and the licence that enables it is not just a permit. It is an opportunity. One we are determined to restore, at pace and with purpose.

W: www.rsa.ie



Innovation in commercial aviation in 2025



Climate change, sanctions on Russia, and trade disruption with the United States are all geopolitical events which are fostering an innovation race in aviation arguably not seen since the introduction of the jet engine.

Credit Boom Technologies

Among the developments are new commercial competitors emerging from Russia and China to the A320 and 737, produced by Airbus Industrie and Boeing respectively.

While supersonic travel has not been a feature in commercial aviation since the retirement of the Concorde in 2003, Boom Technologies in the United States has outlined its ambition to produce a new supersonic commercial passenger jet by 2030.

Furthermore, in light of the desire to decarbonise the aviation sector, there is a race underway to produce the first commercial electric aircraft. While there is no question of electric-powered aircraft being able to sustain high-demand medium-to-long-range commercial routes, they are highly feasible for the future of short-haul commuter traffic.

Innovation in the east

Geopolitical change amid the rising power of China, in alongside the western world's shunning of the Russian Federation as a consequence of its invasion of Ukraine, have led to increased domestic demand for indigenously manufactured aircraft for both the domestic markets in China and Russia respectively.

China, the world's second most populous country and third largest by land area, has an intricate aviation network, with Shanghai Pudong, Guangzhou Baiyun, Beijing Capital, and Shenzhen Bao'an airports all among the 20 busiest in the world. Furthermore, three of the world's 10 largest airlines – China Southern Airlines, China Eastern Airlines, and Air China – are based in China, with these three airlines comprising a total combined fleet size

of 1,830 aircraft. Despite this vast scale in fleet size and air traffic, only 114 of this total are Chinese-manufactured aircraft.

To meet the demand from the Chinese Government to move away from western manufactured aircraft, Comac, the Chinese state-owned aerospace manufacturers, has produced two jetliners: the C909, a regional-sized jet; and the C919; a mid-sized jet comparable with the Boeing 737 and Airbus A320. Over 1,000 orders have been placed for the C919. While all these orders have been made by Chinese airlines, western orders remain a possibility (see below).

In Russia, the sanctions placed on President Vladimir Putin's regime have meant that the Russian flag carrier Aeroflot and other Russian airlines are unable to order western aircraft or procure authentic components for the



Credit: Alex Belyukov

The Yakovlev MC-21 is the most technologically advanced commercial aircraft to have been produced in Russia, and has relatively high market demand due to western sanctions on Russia.

maintenance of these aircraft. Under the orders of Putin, the United Aircraft Corporation – comprising Tupolev, Ilyushin, and Yakovlev and three other manufacturers – has developed the Yakovlev MC-21.

As of May 2025, there are 175 orders placed by airlines based in Russia and Azerbaijan, with potential for another 140. If these orders go ahead, this would be the greatest number of orders for a Russian commercial jetliner since the Tupolev 154, which was introduced in 1968, and the most since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Electrifying aviation

Electrification of aviation is not a viable solution for international commercial traffic. However, for short commuter routes, electric aircraft have the potential to provide a commercial option for airlines seeking to replace turboprop aircraft, which are commonly used for routes between, for example, Britain and Ireland.

While there have been projects ongoing in Italy and Israel, these have been sidetracked due to technological development challenges. Furthermore, the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza means that trade ties between the State of Israel and western states may undergo significant transformation. In

this context, it is likely that there will not be a reliable supply pipeline to attract investment from commercial airlines in the western world.

Supersonic travel

Not since the retirement of the Concorde in 2003 has any commercial ticket been available to travel at supersonic speed. Viewed in the 1960s and 70s as the future of commercial air travel, the 1970s oil crisis and the rise of environmentalism meant that the only commercially viable path for Concorde was for tickets to be sold at ‘sky high’ prices.

23 years on from the retirement of Concorde, Boom Technologies – an American manufacturer established in 2014 – is targeting the introduction of a new supersonic jet, the Boom Overture, by 2030.

With a market projection claiming that there will be demand for 1,000 supersonic aircraft, the Boom Overture, has 35 firm orders in the United States. One potential bottleneck for the project is the manufacturer’s stipulation that operators “must use sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and/or purchase high-quality carbon removal credits” due to the considerably higher fuel burn of supersonic engines than subsonic jet engines. Therefore, the delivery – and

commercial viability – of this project depends on the availability of SAF; a product which is not widely used to date and is expensive.

Aviation in Ireland

Headwinds facing US-European trade have led Michael O’Leary, the CEO of Ryanair, to threaten to end its lucrative partnership with Boeing.

Ryanair has a fleet of 587 aircraft, all of which are Boeing 737 aircraft. This means that Ryanair is the second largest operator in the world of the Boeing 737.

However, O’Leary, in response to US President Donald Trump’s initial imposition of tariffs on EU exports to the US, announced that Ryanair would explore the viability of changing its outstanding orders to the Chinese-built Comac C919.

Speaking in early May 2025, O’Leary, in a letter to American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, said Ryanair would “reassess” its Boeing order if US tariffs increase the cost of the company’s planes. The airline currently has 330 planes on order with Boeing; the order is estimated to be worth about \$30 billion.

eolas Magazine has approached Ryanair for comment.

Ardent

Accelerating Ireland's transport future



With Ireland's population continuing to grow, urban expansion and a national drive toward decarbonisation, the challenge in delivering efficient and sustainable transport infrastructure has never been more pressing.

With major upgrades to heavy rail and light rail networks, the delivery of active travel, and improving bus corridors, the pipeline of planned investment is encouraging. However, turning strategic ambition into tangible progress often stalls due to a consenting process that is widely seen as unpredictable and slow.

The current challenge

Over the past few years, there has been welcome policy momentum through the likes of the *National Development Plan* and the *Climate Action Plan*, both of

which place transport and decarbonisation at the centre of our infrastructure strategy, "critical to... future development, underpinning social cohesion and economic growth". However, stakeholders, including project promoters, local authorities, and consultants, are continuing to raise long-standing concerns that the current legislative and procedural frameworks for gaining development consent are probably not fit for purpose when applied to complex, nationally significant projects.

Major projects are often delayed due to overlapping environmental requirements, the risk of judicial review, and a planning system that continues to frustrate. The Planning and Development Act 2024 is a welcome step toward reform, but it is recognised that the transition to the new Act will take considerable time.

What solutions are available now?

There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but at Ardent we have found value in looking to the UK for lessons that might be adapted to the Irish context. The

planning reforms already in place must be accompanied by cultural change within consenting bodies, and greater collaboration between public and private stakeholders.

Graeme Black, a Senior Associate Director in Ardent's Ireland team, notes: "I speak to colleagues in England and Wales regularly, and I am firmly of the opinion that the DCO (Development Consent Order) model is hugely beneficial in providing structure and predictability to the consenting process for major infrastructure projects, particularly in transport and energy."

Although here in Ireland we do not have a like-for-like fast-track regime for major transport schemes, there are elements of the DCO scheme which can be applied in an Irish context. Its strength lies in the unifying of multiple consents and acquisition powers into a single application, with clear statutory timeframes and a defined role for stakeholder engagement. Early, transparent engagement with affected landowners and communities, backed by evidence-based consultation, significantly improves the quality of applications and reduces the risk of objections and delay.

At Ardent, we also look to leverage digital solutions to significantly enhance collaboration and efficiency in project teams. Atlas is our cloud-based application that acts as a single source of truth in centralising project data, ensuring team co-ordination, providing robust reporting capabilities, and de-risking the consenting process. This enables us to move away from disparate spreadsheets to a real-time web-based GIS solution, which is tailored to bespoke project needs. In addition, Atlas Engage is our stakeholder relationship management platform designed with engagement on complex infrastructure in mind. It is used throughout project development and delivery lifecycle, capturing communications and insights to manage all stakeholder data and activities, with a focus on preparing for and securing consent approvals.

A smarter approach to engagement and land strategy

From our experience across hundreds of major infrastructure projects, we believe that land strategy, stakeholder

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engagement and consenting should not be viewed in isolation. Too often, the land and engagement aspects are only considered after technical design has been finalised, by which point avoidable risks have already become embedded. Our innovative approach to stakeholder engagement includes the use of big data, local influencers and creative content (to reach younger demographics who are often more supportive), chat-bots, and interactive project mapping. When integrated early in project development alongside land referencing, geospatial analysis, landowner engagement and planning advisory services, acquiring authorities can better understand constraint risks, shape routes to reduce impact, and build trust with communities long before groundwork commences.

Jon Stott, Group Managing Director at Ardent, adds: "As the first UK consultancy to achieve the milestone of acting in over 100 DCOs, our integrated approach to land referencing, stakeholder engagement, and consent management has been pivotal in reducing delays, reducing risk as projects move from consenting to delivery, and ensuring successful outcomes. We are excited to now have a team in Ireland to help unlock continued growth in the transport sector."

Our team at Ardent has seen first-hand how this approach pays dividends. For over 30 years we have seen the benefits of collaborating and working with strategic partners to strengthen project teams and streamline the consenting process. Working with promoters, contractors and public bodies, we have delivered land and consent support for

complex schemes including East West Rail, Docklands Light Railway, West Yorkshire Mass Transit, National Grid upgrades, and offshore wind farms.

Delivering on ambition

Given the scale of the *Project 2040* pipeline, we have a once in a generation opportunity to transform Ireland's transport system, and to deliver infrastructure that connects communities, supports economic growth, and contributes to climate goals. There is no doubting the benefits to be derived from a metro rail link between Dublin Airport and the city, or from the expansion and electrification of DART, the extension of the Luas, as well as the growth of active travel and bus corridors nationwide.

Transport is a key component in Ireland's infrastructure, which alongside planned enhancements to grid and water networks, will be crucial in meeting the minimum requirements for new housing and decarbonisation.

At Ardent, we are passionate about helping infrastructure promoters navigate that path. By combining expertise in land, consent and engagement, we are excited to play a part in the delivery of transport projects essential to enhancing connectivity, improving quality of life, and maximising Ireland's economic growth.

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In profile:

Established in mid-May 2025, the Committee on Transport is tasked with shadowing the work of the Department of Transport.

Comprising nine teachtaí dála and five seanadóirí, the Joint Committee on Transport of the 34th Dáil and 27th Seanad met for the first time on 21 May 2025.

Upon being appointed Cathaoirleach Fine Gael’s Michael Murphy TD addressed the committee: “I... look forward to working with them all in a spirit of real partnership and co-operation to address the many issues and challenges we face under the remit of this committee.”

Taking place a week later, Fianna Fáil’s Shane Moynihan TD – as the only nominee – was unanimously elected Leas-Chathaoirleach of the joint committee. In responses, Moynihan outlined: “I look forward to working collaboratively with every member of the committee to advance what I hope is a national transport policy for both urban and rural.”

At this second meeting, the committee received an overview of the work being undertaken by the National Transport Authority and

was addressed by interim Chief Executive Hugh Creegan, Assistant Director of Transport Investment, Eoin Gillard, and Head of Public Transport Services Planning, John Nott.

Key figures:

Cathaoirleach: Michael Murphy TD

Leas-Chathaoirleach: Shane Moynihan TD

Clerk to the Committee: Regina Boyle

Press officer: Stephen Higgins



Michael Murphy TD



Shane Moynihan TD





Grace Boland TD



Michael Collins TD



Cathal Crowe TD



Emer Currie TD



Pa Daly TD



Roderic O'Gorman TD



Louis O'Hara TD



Seanadóir Lorraine
Clifford-Lee



Seanadóir Joanne
Collins



Seanadóir Neasa
Cosgrove



Seanadóir Mark Duffy



Seanadóir Imeda
Goldsboro





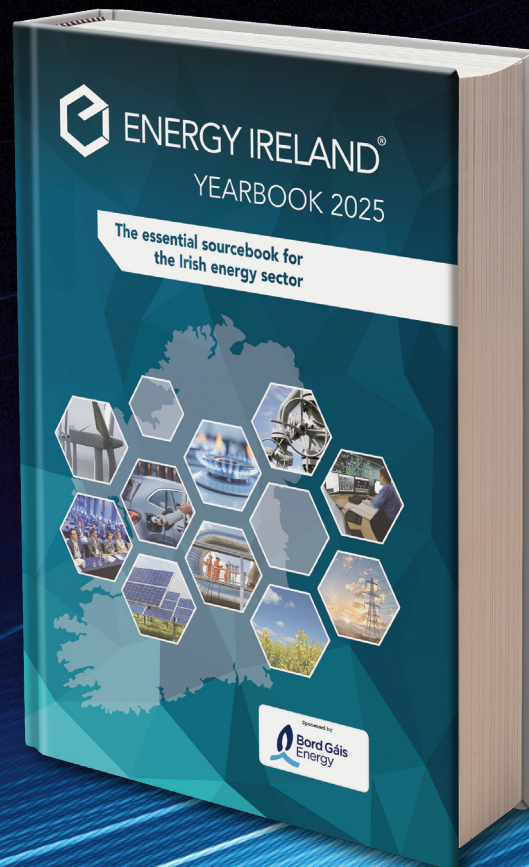
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