



2020 VISION – SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL & TRANSPORT
SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
SLIGO CHAMBER SUBMISSION

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2020 VISION – SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

SLIGO CHAMBER SUBMISSION

Sligo Chamber welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Transport on the Public Consultation Document, 2020 Vision – Sustainable Travel & Transport.

In taking the key findings from this consultation document, Sligo Chamber feels it is imperative that the Department looks at the development of sustainable travel for the whole of Ireland. Improved sustainable policies for transport in certain areas only, will do little to redress the imbalance that currently exists between the South & East region and the area zoned as the BMW region. If adequate focus and sufficient funds are not invested in the BMW regions to enable sustainable travel now and into the future, not only will this region be further disadvantaged in the short and medium term, but it will have serious consequences for the livelihoods and way-of-life in these areas in the long term.

The following highlights some stark facts regarding the lack of investment in the North and North West:

- Out of the €16 billion that was provided in the Transport 21 plan for public transport projects and regional airports, only 5.5% was allocated to projects in the West.
- Over the 10 year period of Transport 21, the public transport capacity in the Greater Dublin Area will be doubled.
- Between 2000 and 2004, €5 billion was spent on roads under the NDP 2000-2006
 - Only 20% of this was spent in the BMW Region – 70% of what was forecasted.
 - 80% was spent in the S&E Regions – 150% of forecasted expenditure.
- Between 2000 and 2004, €2.5 billion was spent on public transport under NDP 2000-2006
 - A mere 9% was spent in the BMW Region – 55% of forecast
 - €2.3 billion, or 91% was spent in the S&E Regions – 112% of forecast.

In an effort to counter balance this trend, Sligo Chamber's submission presents some general viable possibilities for further discussion, but focuses primarily on potential opportunities to develop more specific sustainable transport in the North and North West and policies that are applicable to more rural areas.

1. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

To avoid the complete dereliction of rural Ireland as we know it, more money must be invested in public transport for **all** areas of the country.

Train Network & Services

- Increase commuter services on existing rail network. The population of Sligo Borough almost doubles every day with the influx of workers from the surrounding towns and villages. The recent improvements on the Dublin-Sligo route must now be supported by frequent and reliable early morning and late evening commuter rail services from Longford to Sligo. This will help reduce the number of cars on this route on a daily basis.
- Ensure commuter services nationally are affordable. Discrepancies exist in the pricing policies for the Greater Dublin Area and other areas nationally. A Maynooth commuter currently pays less than €4 for a return trip to Dublin (17 miles). A Ballymote commuter currently pays €9.40 for a return trip to Sligo (16 miles), this increases to €12.90 from Friday to Sunday.
- Develop national railway network. The current network is understandably more developed in the South and East of the country. Going forward however investment and focus must be placed on the network in the North and North West. Commitment and funding for the development of the Western Rail Corridor from Claremorris to Sligo must be forthcoming. This will greatly extend and enhance the rail network and allow for a looped network from Dublin – Sligo – Waterford.

Bus

- The development of regional bus services should be investigated to cater for commuters without access to the train network.
- Increased bus schedules in existing areas, as the timing of the current schedules do not cater for the changing demographics in certain areas due to recent housing developments. This is particularly the case in many rural towns and villages in County Sligo where many of the new residents need to drive to work and may opt for public buses if the timings were suitable.
- Increased collaboration between the bus and train companies to provide shuttle services from train stations to larger work clusters.
- Continued support for community initiatives such as the Evening Transport Service that was introduced by the Sligo LEADER Partnership in 2007. This not only supports local communities but helps positively position public transport in rural communities.

2. GREEN MODES OF TRANSPORT

Walking

- Develop suitable paths and walkways.
- Improvements in lighting public areas will not only entice people to walk but will make it safer.
- Increase security in public areas/walkways through extra Gardaí resources, CCTV and community projects to reduce the incidences of anti-social behaviour.

Bicycles

- Introduce facilities to hire bicycles in the larger urban cities.
- Incorporate bicycle stands and bicycle lanes into planning guidelines for future development.
- Investigate “best practices” and key learnings from other cities, such as Amsterdam where the bicycle is ingrained in the way of life.

3. EDUCATION & INFORMATION

Sustainable Energy Ireland’s “Power of One” campaign proves that educating and informing the general public can make a difference when it comes to changing perceptions and habits. Some simple initiatives to improve public perception and knowledge in the following areas could greatly assist in developing the usage of sustainable transport:

- Increased focus on the benefits of public transport to the environment and general community.
- Positively link the benefits of walking and cycling to health and financial savings.
- Launch car pooling campaigns to encourage many to reduce individual mileage per person. Introduction of car pool lanes in cities like in California would support those who do car pool.
- Continued backing for road campaigns that focus on speed and dangerous driving as safe roads will encourage more walkers and cyclists.
- Educate the public on better car usage and car maintenance that equip car owners with useful information on how to reduce their carbon emissions.

4. BUSINESS BUY-IN

- Grant aid/support for business to introduce facilities in-house to cater for those walking/cycling to work.
- Grant aid/support for business to make “working from home” viable and attractive.
- Increased relocation/decentralization of businesses to rural areas to alleviate demands on public transport in greater Dublin area and justify increased expenditure in other cities.
- Completion of broadband schemes nationally.

5. GENERAL

- National savings on any reduction in carbon levels Ireland should be invested back into policies or infrastructure that encourages sustainable transport.
- Make it financially viable to park at train stations and get the train to work by offering weekly packages.
- Subsidies should be considered at least on trial basis when trying to encourage a change in travel patterns and habits.
- Planning developments need to be aligned with current and proposed infrastructure and visa versa.
- Legislation needs to be aligned with sustainable travel so as not to hinder private enterprise such as bus operating licenses and made more stringent in other areas to enable efficient enforcement.