



Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport submission

Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 – Issues Paper

Background

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is carrying out a review of sustainable mobility policy. The phrase ‘sustainable mobility’ includes both active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport. It is the first review in 10 years and the aim is to put in place a new policy that supports -

- comfortable and affordable journeys to and from work, home, school, college, shops and leisure;
- travel by cleaner and greener transport; and
- a shift away from the private car to greater use of active travel and public transport.

The new policy will replace the existing sectoral policy documents which were published in 2009 - *Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework*. A lot has changed in the 10 years since these policies were published and further changes are forecast over the next 20 years. Ireland has a growing population and an expanding workforce and this growth needs to be catered for in a sustainable manner.

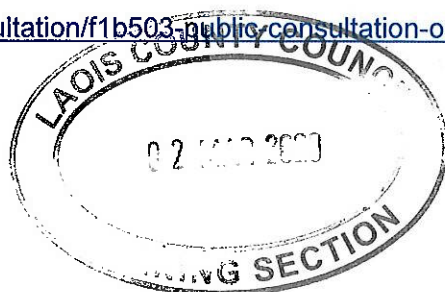
The Department held a public consultation on the policy review between November 2019 and end-February 2020. The call for views was supported by the publication of a wide range of information, analysis and discussion papers across different areas of sustainable mobility¹.

The submissions received through the public consultation process will feed into the development of a Sustainable Mobility Policy over the course of 2020.

It is important that the new sustainable mobility policy plays its part in supporting Ireland’s response to our climate action challenge and the actions in the *Climate Action Plan*.

The new sustainable mobility policy will be closely aligned with the national strategic outcomes of *Project Ireland 2040* particularly in relation to compact growth; enhanced regional accessibility; strengthened rural economies and communities; sustainable mobility;

¹www.gov.ie/en/consultation/f1b503-public-consultation-on-a-review-of-sustainable-mobility-policy/





and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. *Project Ireland 2040* recognises that planning and transport policies are highly interdependent and a number of its key objectives support better integration of land use planning and transport planning.

The Department will develop its new sustainable mobility policy over the coming months. The aim is to develop a new policy framework that better supports sustainable mobility – linking more people, to more places, for more of their journeys and promoting increased use of active travel and public transport. This is in line with the national strategic outcomes of *Project Ireland 2040*.

Comments on Issues Paper

The Department welcomes that sustainable development and climate mitigation and adaptation will be key drivers of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027. Many of the themes in the Issues Paper are also key themes of the Department's policy review and its published discussion papers such as integrating land use and transport planning; promoting use of active travel; and addressing climate change issues.

The Department supports the recognition in the Issues Paper of the importance of aligning land use and transport policies. It is vital that both land use and transport are planned in ways that are mutually supportive to bring better cohesion in the planning between where people live, and their places of work, of education, where they can shop, location of public services, entertainment and social interaction. This can influence the type of transport needs that will arise, and shape the ways that those needs can be effectively addressed. As outlined above, the links between land use and transport are recognised in *Project Ireland 2040* and the Department is working collaboratively with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to strengthen the policy links between these areas.

The Department's policy approach to achieving a greener transport sector is aligned with the Avoid-Shift-Improve principle, which is recognised internationally as a best practice approach in this area. One of the Department's published discussion papers outlined the current climate change challenges facing Ireland and the steps that are being taken in the transport sector to reduce emissions in line with climate action policies. The paper examined the suite of mitigation measures already in place and the potential role of new measures to avoid, shift or improve emissions through -

- reducing the frequency and distance of trips;
- shifting towards more environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as walking, cycling or using public transport; and
- promoting efficient fuel and vehicle technologies.



Since the previous Development Plan was published there have been important policy developments which are relevant to Movement and Transportation and which the Department considers should be reflected in the 2021-2027 Plan. These include -

- (i) The publication by the National Transport Authority (NTA) of its *Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022*. Its mission statement is “to provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs.” Its key priorities include the reduction of social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. In addition, one of its key objectives is greater interaction/co-ordination with Local Authorities regarding the assessment of strategic transport needs and in the development of proposed transport plans for local areas.
- (ii) The publication of the “whole of Government” *National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017-2021* and the ratification by Ireland in 2018 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The UNCRPD puts obligations on State Parties to ensure access to persons with disabilities to, inter alia, the physical environment and transportation in both urban and rural areas.
- (iii) To make public transport fully accessible to people with disabilities requires a ‘whole journey approach’ which refers to all elements that constitute a journey from the starting point to destination. Local Authorities are a key stakeholder in this regard in the context of ensuring a universal design approach to the built environment, including footpaths, roads, pedestrian crossing points and bus stops/shelters.

The Department can assist with appropriate text in the Development Plan regarding integrated, accessible public transport, in both rural and urban areas.



