



Transport & Mobility Forum

Minister Michael McGrath

Dept. of Finance
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Via Email

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Pre-Budget – Submission

Cork Transport & Mobility Forum Pre-Budget Submission

Dear Minister McGrath,

Cork Transport and Mobility Forum would suggest the following budget measures to facilitate and assist the reduction in the financial, social, environmental, and health costs of the transport sector in Ireland.

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork (TMF) is a cross-sectoral representative group of 25+ organisations who have a common interest in sustainable travel *. The TMF fully supports measures and policies promoting sustainable and active travel. Sustainable and Active Travel (cycling and walking) help to reduce congestion on roads, improve air quality, support a low carbon economy, reduce noise pollution, save energy and improve public health.

As such it is the TMF's aim to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Active Travel

Active travel has significant health, social, and financial benefits for those who regularly walk or cycle to work, to shop and for social or other journeys. The evidence clearly shows those who regularly cycle have half the annual death rate of those who usually drive, workers arriving on foot or by bike have higher productivity and dramatically lower absentee rates compared to drivers, while children who walk or cycle to school concentrate better and perform better in assessments than those who were driven. Switching to active travel from driving also significantly reduces congestion for public transport and those who continue to drive.

To facilitate the continued transition towards active travel we would suggest.

1. That the funding to support a modal shift to active travel is continued
2. That funding is made on a multi-annual basis to better enable local authorities and other service providers to more efficiently plan and utilise their resources to allow for better outcomes.
3. Rebalance funding from capital funding of infrastructure to behaviour change and maintenance to ease delivery bottlenecks in the delivery of capital projects.

There needs to be a significant rebalancing of funding away from engineering and infrastructure to measures to support, facilitate, and enable behaviour change such as foreseen in the Department of Transport proposal for Pathfinder S-sustainable Travel Projects. With funding directed to supporting communities of place and interests in transitioning to active travel, those new to active travel, walkability audits, permeability audits, events, and programmes to make walking and cycling more aspirational, desirable, and fashionable.

This should also include an expansion and broadening the Bike Week model with a calendar of active and sustainable travel events covering walking and cycling with broad and narrow demographic and spatial focus. And funding to expand best current practice nationally.

4. That multi-annual funding be provided for an interagency transport forum, such as TMF, in each county/region to coordinate the accelerated transition to sustainable transportation¹

¹ [TMF has recently met with Kildare CoCo & other counties interested in progressing the setting up of such Fora](#)

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5. Continuation or increase for the Bike to Work scheme, with higher ceiling for cargo bikes and other bikes capable of carrying multiple people as well as trikes, recumbents, hand cycles and other adapted and accessible bikes.
6. That a flat public sector mileage rate be introduced (see below)
7. Funding for public and private bike and micro mobility share as well as multimodal mobility hubs be increased.

2 Public Transport

To facilitate the continued transition towards public transport we would suggest:

1. That the present programme of investment in public transport continues.

We would like to highlight, in particular, a number of projects which we feel are vital to ensuring the effective provision of public transport in the Cork region.

- 1a. The rapid delivery of Bus Connects
- 1b. The enabling works to allow the recently purchased Irish Rail battery electric rolling stock to serve the Cork commuter routes of Mallow, Midleton & Cobh
- 1c. Funding for light rail in Cork including a connection with Kent Station
2. That funds be provided in order to further lower public transport fares, including the use of promotional fares which have been so successful in Germany and Spain and the trialling of free public transport services both on particular routes and for particular demographics such as young people.
3. That funding be provided to extend services to un and underserved communities to ensure no one is subject to forced car use and ownership.
4. That funding is provided to allow public transport service providers better attract drivers to alleviate the effect on services of the driver shortage.

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5. Capital funding be provided for new Public transport hubs and the expansion of existing hubs to better facilitate the easier connection between modes as well as between public and private services.

Fleet Transition.

In order to achieve our climate applications and to improve the health of the nation, it is vital that private vehicles transition away from large heavy internal combustion vehicles to smaller lighter electric vehicles. Transitioning to electric vehicles dramatically reduces, but does not eliminate, emissions from motor vehicles, dramatically improving the health of the Nation.

Smaller lighter vehicles use less energy, are less resource-intensive to manufacture, take up less road space and less parking space hence reducing the amount of embedded carbon required for transport infrastructure, and most importantly are less threatening and intimidating to other road users having less of a chilling effect on active travel.

To facilitate the optimal transition of the national motor vehicle fleet we would suggest the following fiscal instruments be applied:

1. Refocus subsidies and tax breaks on the least energy intensive options, large less efficient vehicles should receive lower subsidies than smaller lower power vehicles.

The lowest power vehicles should receive the greatest subsidies with e-bikes, the oversized/high powered electric personal (as distinct to freight, PSV, etc.) vehicles should not receive subsidies, while e-cargo bikes, and e-cars should be seen as a continuum rather than completely separate categories. At present high-powered e-cars receive a far higher subsidy than e-bikes this should be reversed while continuing to ensure that e-cars remain more attractive than ICE (Internal combustion engine powered vehicles such as petrol and deasil powered) cars.

2. Motor tax bands should be calibrated to ensure there are several bands covering e-cars from the smallest and lowest power to the oversized and overpowered to incentivise smaller lower powered EVs

3. As the national fleet transitions to EVs the fuel tax revenue will decline, and road pricing should be used to replace this revenue.

This would have the advantage of allowing those who require motor vehicles in isolated areas not to have to bear as heavy a tax burden by discriminating between those whose driving is unavoidable

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and those driving in areas that are walkable and well served by public transport. While also discouraging driving specifically where roads are most congested as well as where they cause the most health, social, and productivity losses.

4. That a flat public sector mileage rate be introduced in order to not incentivize less sustainable modes and/or larger vehicles. At present many non-governmental organisations feel constrained by the public sector mileage rates and are held back from moving to a more sustainable system of mileage. A flat mileage rate would incentivise the use of more sustainable modes whereas the present system incentivises the use of the largest least sustainable vehicles.

5. That free parking be discontinued or at minimum free employee parking taxed as full economic cost as a benefit in kind. The provision free parking not only strongly incentivises the use of private cars it also places the cost on those who don't drive and surrounds trip generators with a mote of parking making active travel and public transport less viable.

Distance Reduction

The best way to reduce the health, social, environmental, and financial cost of transport is to reduce the average distance people need to travel to access work, education services and social opportunities they need to visit every day. This is committed to in the national planning framework and the national spatial strategy however certain financial and regulatory issues act in opposition to this goal.

To facilitate the average journey distances, we would suggest:

1. That there be an audit of all regulations, taxes, and subsidies to ensure no unintended consequences which act to increase average journey distances.
2. That the central bank lending rules include the amortization cost of transport in calculating the real net cost of a mortgage to ensure people are not incentivized or forced to commit to a lifetime of long-distance commuting rather than spending slightly more on a home closer to where they live their lives and work with very significantly lower transports costs

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3. That the rates system be reformed in order not to perpetuate the market distortions which incentivise out-of-town development with lower rateable values than city centre properties and is rebalanced to reward the location of high volume trip generators and large employment hubs close to the centre of settlements and disincentivize the location of same in an isolated out-of-town locations which are only accessible by car leading to first car ownership.

Kind regards

Stephan Koch

Transport and Mobility Forum – Acting Chair

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Transport and Mobility Forum – Coordinator

Note: *The comments within this submission are solely the view of the Transport and Mobility Forum (TMF) as a whole and not the opinion or view of any individual partner of the TMF.*

**) A full list of partners in the Transport and Mobility Forum can be found at*

<https://transportandmobilityforum.com/partners/>