

***Iarnrod Eireann / Irish Rail***  
*Timetabling Consultation*  
*1 Horgan's Quay*  
*Kent Station*  
*Cork*

Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork  
[www.transportandmobilityforum.com](http://www.transportandmobilityforum.com)  
[tmfcork@gmail.com](mailto:tmfcork@gmail.com)

c/o Cork Environmental Forum  
Bernadette Connolly  
Mount Carmel, Kilcolman  
Enniskeane, Co. Cork  
P47 C578

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**Public Consultation – Response**

**Irish Rail –**

**Proposed Timetable Changes from 25th August 2024**

<https://www.irishrail.ie/en-ie/news/Timetable-Consultation-2024#CORK>

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for giving the general public and stakeholders the opportunity to feed into the proposed train timetable changes from August 2024, particularly for the Cork Area.

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork (TMF) is a cross-sectoral representative group of 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) helps to reduce congestion on roads, improve air quality, supports a low carbon economy, reduces noise pollution and improves public health.

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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).

### Overview

We are strongly in favour of and welcome the proposed additional services on the Cork to Cobh and Middleton commuter services. The extension of the 30min frequency on the Cobh line to Saturdays will clearly improve the offer and attractiveness of public transport in the Cork Metropolitan Area.

People require public transport to be frequent, reliable, and comprehensive before they will switch from the private car to relying on public transport for daily travel. The most frequent reason residents of Midleton, Cobh, Carrigtwohill, & Mallow give for why they feel they require a car is the lack of frequency and services later in the evening. People often feel they may not know in advance if they might have to work late or socialise after work or be otherwise delayed. The extension to 30min frequency and service to the later evening will make relying on the train without requiring car ownership viable for more people.

Only with even higher frequencies (e.g. 10-15min, as planned in CMATS) and late-night service, the majority of people will feel confident that the service is just simply 'always there when needed' rather than requiring them to check the timetable in advance to decide if they can take the train or drive. Hence the now proposed changes are a first important step in this direction.

### Observations:

We, however, note that **connections in Cork Kent Station** from trains arriving from Dublin Heuston / Mallow to the Cobh/Midleton trains are often missed by only a few minutes, like e.g.

from Mallow arr 7:15, 8:15, 9:15 – to Midleton >> 0mins

from D Heuston / Mallow arr 8:32 or 17:32 – to Cobh >> -2mins

Even more striking is the missing connection from Cobh to Mallow/Heuston throughout the day, with Cobh trains arriving the very minute (x:25) the Dublin trains are leaving.

This leads to unnecessarily longer journey times by e.g. 25mins (Cobh to Mallow/Dublin) on a regular basis.

While we appreciate the value for passengers of easily recognisable departure times (00, 15, 30), it compromises any travel that involves a connection between trains in Cork Kent Stn. The train offer in Cork apparently is built around passengers that either have their travel origin or destination in Cork City.

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We understand that train timetabling is also the result of many operational interdependencies and constraints (e.g. short turn-around times in Mallow or Cobh), however, we would appreciate if better connectivity between the Mallow/Dublin and the East Cork lines could be achieved in future. We are sure that the forthcoming new through platform in Kent Station will help in this regard (to/from Mallow), and solutions for the Dublin trains will be found.

As a **general comment** on train offers, we would like to express our concern about timetabling arrangements for **Christmas**:

While traditionally Christmas Day is a day of rest and celebration, it strikes us that there is no public transport offer in the entire country for Christmas Day (25<sup>th</sup> Dec). On top, even on St Stephen's Day (26<sup>th</sup>), Iarnród Éireann are not running any trains.

While Christmas is a day for families and friends to come together, there seems to be no other way than car driving to make visits to loved ones on the day. People without a car will easily get excluded.

We are wondering if this is still appropriate in the 2020s, in this day and age where a transition to sustainable travel and tackling of car dependency is on top of all national programmes and strategies to address the climate crisis.

In this context, public transport (like in most other countries) must be considered as part of essential public infrastructure. We must expect public mobility to be available the same as water from the tap, electricity in the power mains and working emergency services, also over Christmas.

In our view, a national debate on this is due.

We trust that our observations are being considered and would be obliged to further feed into planning processes around train services and public transport in general, as we feel that TMF can provide valuable input into the process. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time at [tmfcork@gmail.com](mailto:tmfcork@gmail.com).

Kind regards

*Stephan Koch*

Transport and Mobility Forum – Acting Chair

*Darren McAdam-O'Connell*

Transport and Mobility Forum – Coordinator

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**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/>*