



Transport & Mobility Forum

West Cork Greenways – Sections
Cork National Roads Office
Richmond, Glanmire
Cork
T45 WA44

Via email westcorkgreenways@aecom.com

Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork
www.transportandmobilityforum.com
tmfcork@gmail.com

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

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Public Consultation – Response

West Cork Greenways – Skibbereen route options

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork (TMF) is a representative group of organisations who have a common interest in sustainable travel *. The TMF fully supports sustainable modes of travel measures and policies. Sustainable and Active Travel (walking and cycling) helps reduce congestion on roads, improve air quality, supports a low carbon economy, reduces noise pollution and improves public health.

SDGs, ...

General Considerations

The Transport and Mobility forum strongly supports the provision of interurban and rural greenways. A particular priority for us is the connection of West Cork to Cork City and the national Greenway network via the alignment of the Old West Cork railway. We note that the recent report of the VOICE project (SECAD sustainable communities' project Inter-communities linkages Sustainable Transport Audit) strongly recommends the prioritization of the development of this route for a Greenway serving the West Cork communities for health, social, environmental, and economic reasons. A copy of this report is attached below.

Greenways are often considered primarily leisure and tourism focused projects and we support this aspect of Greenway use, however, the utility use of greenways by local residents and

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workers/students should be of critical importance. The leisure aspect of greenways requires that they are pleasant inviting places free from traffic noise, pollution, and risk, these are also a key consideration for local residents and workers using the Greenway. The utility use of a Greenway to allow local residents employees and students use the route as a daily or weekly alternative having to reach the destinations they require reaching in their daily routine also requires that the Greenway has frequent access points connecting directly to residential areas, places of employment/education, services, and amenities. That it is direct and flat and allows cyclists to make fair progress without being impinged upon by pedestrians or impinging upon the pedestrians who also need to be considered as core Greenway users. Sufficient with and clear way marking is key to avoiding Cyclist Pedestrian conflict.

Our general priorities influencing our assessment of route options

In general, we are **strongly in favour of the Routes along old railway alignments** where they exist, while adding new branches off these routes to reach current population centres, points of interest and other trip generators. As already stated in our previous submissions other routings particularly on to existing roads usually inflict a detour, a significant change in grade, and the quality of service for pedestrians and cyclists would be compromised by its routing along a main traffic artery.

The advantages of route along the existing Railway Line

- A flat direct route.
- Following the desire line, as cyclists and particularly pedestrians are sensitive to unnecessary long detours.
- Direct town to town link allowing assesses to services amenities and public transport as well as the largest population concentration.
- Creating a protected environment, largely away from (through) motor traffic

In the immediate surroundings of the towns (up to ca. 3-5km from the centre), however, it is of high importance that local services, workplaces and amenities are best served, so that the new active travel infrastructure can unlock the potential for a modal shift for local everyday travel within the towns and their immediate environs. It will be especially here where the utility use purpose is at least equally if not more important as is the leisure aspect.

Such an environment would encourage and attract a broad demographic of residents in the area to walk or cycle in their daily routine, and first and foremost would put even younger children in a position to access the schools independently by means of active travel. The positive side effects of this must not be under-estimated in relation to

- Gaining independence and self confidence
- Acquiring travel habits and skills beyond the private (family) car
- Raising levels of physical activity and hence promoting public health and
- Contributing to a substantial reduction in school run related short-distance motor traffic.

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Detailed comment on the proposed route options

We strongly support the Pink route option Corridor A, as it

- Provides a continuous off-road route.
- Changes in grade are minimised
- Use of the existing rail alignment minimises the impact on farmers, nature, and local traffic.

Lighting

Light pollution is a serious issue affecting human health, nature and the visibility of the night sky. Street lighting and the lights on motor vehicles are a major contributor to light pollution. We recognise that the provision of Greenways by reducing the volume of motor traffic is an important contributor to reducing light pollution. However, to mitigate the impact of Greenway lighting itself on light pollution we would like the following measures to be considered.

- That lighting only be used when and where it is required.
- That timers and sensors be used to ensure illumination is activated only when necessary.
- That appropriate cowlings are used to direct light only where needed.
- That the use of non-reflective or directionally reflective surfaces are considered to minimize the escape of light from where it is most needed.
- that the wavelength or colour temperature of the light is as red or of as long a wavelength as is practical as these frequencies both have less of a physiological impact on humans and the natural world and also are more rapidly attenuated within the atmosphere

While not central to route selection we suggest that these factors are borne in mind at the route selection stage with a view to avoiding future issues.

Impact of Greenways on nature, biodiversity, and landscape.

We recognise that the provision of Greenways by reducing the volume of motor traffic is an important contributor to reducing the need for road widening and new road development. As a result, Greenways are a key strategy to reduce our impact on nature, biodiversity, and landscape.

However, to further mitigate the impact on nature, biodiversity, and landscape we would ask that care and consideration be given to minimizing the impact of the construction on the Greenway on nature. In particular, that the removal of scrub, hedgerows and trees should be kept to a minimum. We would ask that care and consideration be given to minimizing the impact of the construction of the Greenway. That minimising the removal of scrub, hedgerows and trees be a key part of the proper planning of the construction phase. While a certain amount of removal of vegetation may be required particularly where scrub, hedges, or trees cross the proposed alignment, our experience is that the vast majority of removal of vegetation occurs not on the permanent alignment but rather to facilitate the access of construction vehicles and the parking associated with construction.

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We would particularly ask that steps and guidelines are provided to minimize this impact. Where removal of some vegetation is unavoidable that remediation is carried out with planting as near as possible to the site of removal.

While not central to route selection we suggest that these factors are borne in mind at the route selection stage with a view to avoiding future issues.

Conclusion

The Cork TMF strongly supports this project and the use of the Pink route Corridor A in its entirety.

We look forward to commenting on more detailed plans in due course.

Should you require any clarifications, please email me at tmfcork@gmail.com.

Kind regards

Dr Darren McAdam-O'Connell, 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/>