



Transport & Mobility Forum

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

Via email
corkkinsalegreenway@corkrdo.ie

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 – Kinsale 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 main points in this submission

1. Strong support for the route via the old railway alignment from the City to Halfway and Crossbarry.
2. Regret that the old railway alignment from Crossbarry to Kinsale will not be used.
3. Very serious concern at the extreme change in grade in a short distance south of Goggins Hill
4. The importance of balancing the different needs of those using the Greenway for local access and those using it for longer distances.
5. Concern that the section from Riverstick to Belgooly may be built as a roadside cycle lane rather than an off-road Greenway
6. Support for Sub-option 1 Brown route from Belgooly to Kinsale
7. Maximizing the quality, utility, and accessibility of the route while minimising the impact on farmers, nature, and local traffic.

Our general priorities influencing our assessment of route options

In general, we are **strongly in favour of the Routes along old railway alignments**, 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. While a greenfield route may be able to offer a direct route and high quality of service for pedestrians and cyclists it's has a far higher construction cost and impact on farmers and nature.

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

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- Significantly less earthworks and consequent costs, time, and disruption of natural habitat during construction, than purely greenfield routes

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.

Detailed comment on the proposed route options

We strongly support the Yellow route option, Cork City, Chetwynd Viaduct, Waterfall, Goggins Hill Tunnel, Halfway, Crossbarry 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.
- It will provide both a high quality direct and efficient route for utility cycling and an extremely pleasant, scenic and attractive route for leisure walker and cyclists.

For the section Ballinhassig to Riverstick we have serious concerns due to the

- to the extreme difference in grade between the old railway route and the N71 crossing which will require extensive earthworks and both a significant extra distance and an unacceptably long climb northbound
- significant impact on farmers, nature, and local traffic of building a completely green field route from the N71 crossing to Riverstick.

We consider that the interchange at may be impractical due to extreme difference in grade between the old railway route and the N71 crossing.

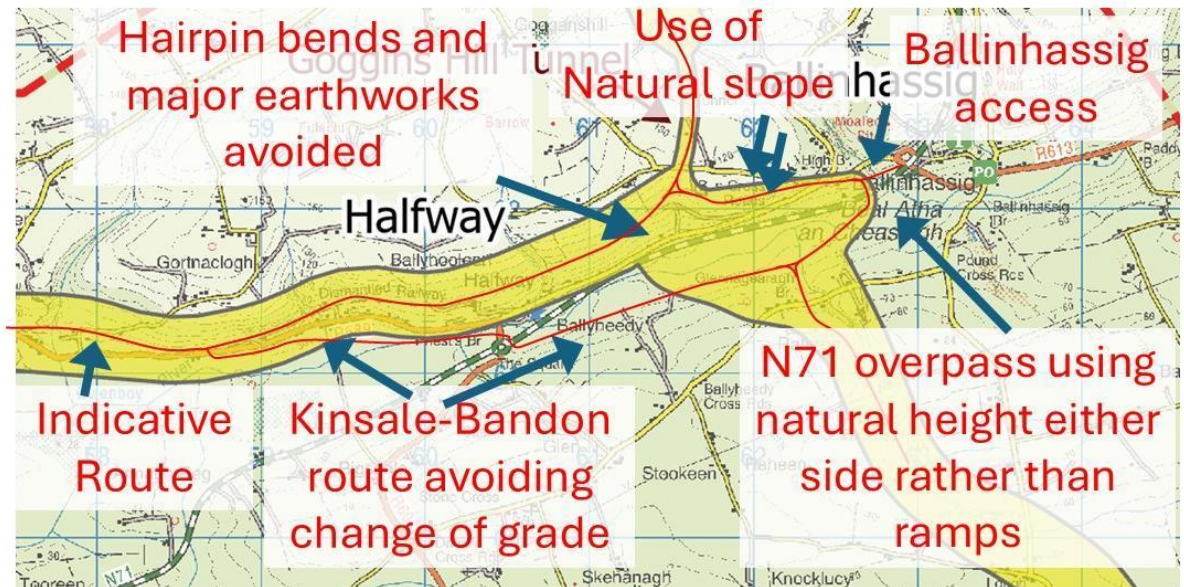
In order to achieve a direct and accessible route while minimizing earthworks and the consequent cost, impact on farmers, nature, and local traffic the design should attempt to

- Make the maximum use of natural slopes of acceptable grade
- Cross the N71 on an over pass directly from the higher natural elevation rather than dropping close to road level before resending via approach ramps

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- Provide both a direct but steep route (Kinsale-Cork) and less direct route avoiding g the change of grade (Kinsale-Bandon)
- Provide a connection to Ballinhassig

Suggested N71 crossing and change of grade routing



The greenfield route from the N71 to Riverstick route will, if designed well and avoids significant on road sections, be able to offer a direct route and high quality of service for pedestrians and cyclists. It will likely have a far high construction costs and will require careful planning at the detailed design stage to avoid serious negative impact on farmers and nature, to achieve this route selection at this stage will need to carefully avoid

- The removal of hedgerows.
- Changes in grade which may require earthworks.
- Crossing areas of high biodiversity value such as woodlands and wetlands.

For the section Riverstick to Belgooly we have serious concerns that either

- A roadside routing will result in poor separation from road traffic and excessive noise levels as indicated in Figure 4-22 of Phase 1 Constraints and opportunities report, which in combination over such an extended distance will undermine the viability of the whole greenway route.
- An off-road greenway type routing risks a negative impact on the roadside woodland.
- The ideal route would be off road, while avoiding both disrupting existing woodlands and any significant change in grade, it will be extremely difficulty to achieve all three of these objectives.

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For the section Belgooly to Kinsale the Brown route is strongly preferred, due to

- Far superior separation from road traffic.
- Changes in grade are minimised with the green route having significantly greater changes in grade.
- It allows the use of the existing old railway alignment from Farranamoy to Kinsale with all the advantages outlined above.

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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Key factors which can reduce the impact on nature, biodiversity, and landscape are,

- Maximising the use of existing old railways lines, towpaths, close roads etc.
- Minimizing the construction of “Green field” routes
- The removal of hedgerows and crossing hedges at as close to 90 degrees rather than at smaller angles to reduce the width of the gap.
- Changes in grade which may require earthworks.
- Crossing areas of high biodiversity value such as woodlands and wetlands.

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 old railway routing in its entirety. Where the route must depart from the railway routing the new route should

- Offer a flat direct route avoiding unnecessary long detours.
- Direct town to town link allowing access to services amenities and public transport as well as the largest population concentration.
- Creating a protected environment, largely away from (through) motor traffic
- Avoid earthworks and consequent costs, time, and disruption of natural habitat during construction.
- Minimises the impact on farmers, nature, and local traffic.

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/>