



Transport & Mobility Forum

RSES Submissions
Southern Regional Assembly
Assembly House, O'Connell Street
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Via online consultation portal

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c/o The Environmental Forum
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Public Consultation – Response

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

&

Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Waterford,

[RSES – Review | Southern Regional Assembly](#)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for giving the general public and stakeholders the opportunity to feed into the public consultation on the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region & Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Waterford.

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Waterford (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, as well as the general quality of life in the city and county.



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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

Transport and Mobility Forum, Waterford (TMF) strongly supports the continued investment in **Public Transport and Active Travel Infrastructure**, as well as supporting the move away from road infrastructure designed primarily for private motor vehicles. We also support the provision of the necessary infrastructure to provide housing, services, employment, education, and other facilities within the urban core of our metropolitan region, as infill in the inner suburban areas, and at Public Transport & Active Travel hubs.

The key to an effective, efficient, and sustainable transport system that best enables all our people to achieve their full potential is to develop housing and transport policy in unison.

This requires that where green or brown field development rather than small scale infill, takes place outside the urban core, that there are strong links **by both Public Transport and Active Travel** to the urban core and to surrounding communities. As well as ensuring that the development is of sufficient scale and density with appropriate permeability to allow **all everyday services and facilities to be within easy walking distance** of the entire population and for that population to be of a sufficient scale and density to support those services.

Investment in these **Public Transport routes, Active Travel links and Permeability**, as well as ensuring these higher densities can be supported is what is important to enable these developments to take place. The era of providing development land for residential or commercial purposes in large land banks off motorway junctions or in "out of town" locations has passed. There is a substantial existing under investment in the maintenance of our minor rural roads and city streets, which need to transition from spaces which feel like being spaces exclusively for motor vehicles to places where neighbours can stop to chat as they pass and children play.

Sustainable travel and universal access to transport options is not a luxury just for major urban areas rather it is the right of residents of small town and rural areas to be able to move about their community and further afield with requiring a car. This requires a more equal distribution of funding between areas such as Waterford city and Tramore, Dungarvan, and more rural areas to deliver on active travel targets. As well as developing infrastructure for Park & Ride and Car pooling.

The role of Waterford in rebalancing growth away from Dublin and the required investment to allow this

It is widely acknowledged that at present Ireland is over dependent on the Dublin metropolitan region with population, investment and economic output, and the transport system all over concentrated on the Dublin region. There is an urgent requirement to develop the other metropolitan regions at a rate that can act as a counterbalance to Dublin. Dublin also faces the issue that now existing low-density developments cover the vast majority of area within easy reach of the metropolitan core. While the other Irish metropolitan regions also suffer from the urban core being surrounded by a ring of existing low-density development their scale is such that it is possible to develop large areas at higher density within easy reach of their urban core in a manner that would not be possible at scale in Dublin.

Achieving this rebalance requires that infrastructure spending in the other metropolitan regions is greater on a per capita basis if not in absolute terms. This has not happened, the Project Ireland 2040 Capital Investment Tracker shows that Dublin received 79.3% of all investment in metropolitan regions.

According to the Housing Commission there was a housing deficit of approximately 250,000 homes in Ireland in 2022. The EU average is one home for every 1.85 people in Ireland the figure is one home for every 2.43 people, by far the highest in the EU. An addition 715,000 homes would be required to bring the Irish figure down to the EU average. The additional 250,000 homes proposed by the housing commission would reduce the Irish figure from 2.43 to 2.19 people per home to match the figure in the Netherlands, the second highest in the EU which is widely regarded in the Netherlands as constituting a serious housing crisis.

As there are a very substantial number of people who have been forced out of the metropolitan areas where their work, family, and personal ties are to commute long distances in to work, the housing deficit within the metropolitan areas is greater than the total in Ireland as a whole. While the vast majority of this deficit is in the Greater Dublin Area reflecting the concentration of population and economic opportunities there, the majority of the rest of the deficit exists within the other four metropolitan areas including Waterford particularly in the central city area, where the number of people wishing to live within walking distance of employment, and services in the urban core vastly exceeds the capacity of existing housing stock. This existing deficit of at least 5,000 housing units and the very significant additional annual housing production required to reach the growth targets which national plans require to achieve to rebalance growth away from Dublin requires a significant investment in infrastructure in Waterford.

Delivery of key Public Transport routes, Active Travel infrastructure as well as the water, power, etc to allow this development to happen is key to the future of Waterford and to the continued economic prosperity of the country as well as being required to mitigating the existing human tragedy that is homelessness.

To achieve all of this we need to see 5% of National investment spent in Waterford and adjacent South Eastern areas.

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Main points in bullets:

- Funding for Active travel & Public Transport ahead of roads
- Total funding for both Active travel & Public Transport should each be greater than that for road building.
- Develop housing and transport policy in unison
 - Public money should be focused on providing housing, services, employment, education, and other facilities as close to each other as possible and existing urban cores rather than building roads or providing public transportation for long commutes.
- A more equal distribution of funding between areas such as Waterford city and Tramore, Dungarvan, and more rural areas to deliver on active travel targets
- Develop infrastructure for Park & Ride and Car pooling
- Coherent routes
 - Public transport
 - Metro area
 - Rural
 - Inter Nodal
 - “High frequency, high speed, affordable public transport links between all Irish metropolitan centres and regions not simply to and from Dublin.”
- Active travel
 - Metro area
 - National/Regional Greenways Network
 - “As part of a coherent, connected national greenway network”
- High quality, direct and car free active travel links to parallel public transport corridors particularly linking major developments to metro centres and public transport nodes.

Key Towns

- Must not include dormitory towns
- Should aim to ensure key towns become self-contained rather than source or destination for long distance commuters
- Multimodal hubs
 - Must not be dominated by parking

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- Should aim to ensure the smooth transition between active travel and public transport
- Encouraging growth in sustainable places
 - Ensuring housing and employment are built in close proximity to each other and where people want to live to reduce the number of people commuting long distances and by car.
- Using Growth to make places more sustainable
 - Providing housing in places with high demand being met by high levels of commuter inflow,
 - providing jobs in places with high levels of commuter outflow, and a coherent centre, increasing density & scale in places lacking critical mass to support local services
- Discouraging growth in the least sustainable, most car-dependent places.
- 15 min town, All services accessible by all car free, but not walkable by all
- 10 min communities, most services within walking distance of most
- 5 min neighbourhoods, Key services within walking distance of all
- Relevance for rural areas, Ensuring that key services, public a public transport node, and a number of other services are available within every rural community. All within an area that is walkable by some, cyclable by most, and accessible by all.
- Protection of truly rural communities from car dependency and long-distance commuting
- Infill, the use of infill development to increase the density of existing residential suburban and urban areas to achieve 5 min neighbourhoods where community services can be supported within walking distance must be the highest priority to be achieved by,
 - Brown field/ Group Infill
 - Small-scale infill
 - Back garden Infill
 - Accessory Residential Units
 - Single residential unit -> Multiple residential units on a single plot
 - Road narrowing
 - Repurposing street Parking into Additional residential units
 - Right-sizing inappropriate Green space to provide additional residential units

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- Commitment to funding for
 - Waterford BusConnects, including bus lanes on all routes and 24h routes.
 - Increased Local Link services
 - Commuter Rail service between Waterford and Kilkenny city
 - Funding to the Southern Regional Assembly to support Transport & Mobility Forum in each Metropolitan area and for the Southern region.
 - To allow all stakeholders in transport, including providers, planners, regulators, and users better work together to achieve better synergies. .
 - Greenways including;
 - Waterford City to Clonmel via the Suir Blueway,
 - New Ross to Kilkenny and Athy, to connect with the Barrow Blueway
 - New Ross to Wexford & Rosslare,
 - Killarney to Dungarvan Via Mallow & Fermoy,
 - Youghal to Dungarvan via Cappoquin

Detailed Observations:

Coherent routes

Investment in public transports and active travel must prioritise providing a coherent network of interconnected routes rather than discontinuous sections or services.

Public transport services should be envisaged as a connected network enabling people to reach any destination from any origin rather than simply services moving people from residential areas to and from the nearest major employment centre.

Likewise local active travel infrastructure should be a coherent network focused on allowing movement both from outlying areas into public transport nodes and urban centers and also radially between different neighbourhoods. Greenways and interurban active travel routes need to be part of a coherent regional and national network, rather than discontinuous routes. Greenways need to be considered primarily as strategic active infrastructure rather than just places people drive to to exercise. Parking at Greenway access points should not be considered active travel infrastructure and should not be funded by active travel budgets. Short discontinuous greenway sections may offer recreational benefits but do not serve any significant function in terms of active travel. Priority should be given for greenways linking the existing greenways into a coherent regional and national network connecting all metropolitan areas with each other and the rural hinterland.

At present inter urban Public transport is dominated by services to and from Dublin there needs to be high frequency, high speed, affordable public transport links between all Irish metropolitan centres and regions not simply to and from Dublin

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Including services

Cork<->Limerick<->Galway<->Sligo

Cork<->Waterford<->Rosslare

Waterford <->Limerick<->Galway<->Sligo

Cork<->Limerick<->Athlone

Key Towns

Care should be taken in selecting key towns in order to ensure that dormitory style commuter towns are not created or designated as key towns.

When selecting key towns the criteria of selection must ensure that the towns already possess a sufficient quality and quantity of retail activity, recreational opportunities, and general services provision as well as employment within their urban core. Such that it is lightly that a modest increase in population will allow these services and employment opportunities to hit a critical mass allowing people to live their lives within the town without long distance commuting from that town to a nearby metropolitan area. Likewise, settlements where there is a low level of resident working within the town and very high level of out commuting should not be designated key towns. This is particularly critical where towns exist in the existing commuter belt of metropolitan areas. While it is not a significant risk for towns which are remote from any metropolitan area and here the criteria for designating key towns should be significantly laxer.

Multimodal hubs

Multimodal hubs should be primarily aimed facilitating the transfer between sustainable transport modes and secondarily about the transfer from private cars to sustainable transport modes. As such bike parking, bike sharing, micro mobility, and public transport provision are all higher priorities than car parking. Multimodal hubs must never be dominated by car parking including electrical car charging. Charging infrastructure must also include provision for e bikes as well as electric car charging.

Where significant amounts of car parking are required, it should be separated from the multimodal hub as the traffic generated will discourage its use by active travel. Bike parking e bike charging bike share stations and micromobility hubs should surround the public transport stop and be separated from any significant amount of car parking including e car charging.

Sustainable places

Not every place is equally sustainable, but every person has a right to live within a sustainable community and the right to use sustainable transport meaning safe routes for active travel, frequent public transport services, and employment, recreation, and basic services within reach by active travel and the available public transport services.

But the reality is this is very far from the reality for many people. Some places are already highly sustainable with all of the necessary infrastructure and services in place. It makes sense that we

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concentrate on ensuring that in these already sustainable places the maximum efficient use of all space for high density housing is achieved. While providing infrastructure at their edges to grow their area. Other places may easily or with some work become sustainable. In general, this will require a significant amount of infill housing to ensure that these communities on the edge of sustainability achieve a critical mass of population employment and services within walking distance. While also providing the necessary active travel and public transport infrastructure. Other places are dominated by long distance commuting, and it is unfeasible unreasonable to imagine that infill will create the critical mass of population to support services within the community these areas should not allow commercial residential development, while still allowing one off housing for farm families and other who can demonstrate they will not be commuting.

Protect strategic lands: In addition to a growing housing need, national strategies identify further economic development in Cork as a core priority and it is vital that we protect lands that will be needed to deliver this industry on a large scale. This includes a potential Next Generation Strategic Land Bank for future manufacturing and cutting edge industries, but also needs to take heed of future transport corridors, such as expansions on the Luas Cork route to new population centres or Cork Airport, and potential new roads or lands needed to widen existing corridors. A holistic approach to the growth of the region must be at the heart of all planning.

Lands within and close to the existing urban cores and transport nodes are of strategic importance. These lands need to be prioritized for mixed-use high density development. It is important that these lands are not compromised by low density development before planned infrastructure is put in place that would allow higher density residential commercial or industrial use.

BusConnects Delays

The Transport and Mobility Forum is concerned by the continued delays to the implementation of BusConnects. The redesigned network has the potential to significantly improve sustainable mobility across the metropolitan area through increased service frequency, improved coverage, orbital connectivity, and enhanced integration between residential areas, employment centres, healthcare, and education. However, recent indications delays risk undermining confidence in sustainable transport delivery in the region.

The delays also highlight the need for the RSES and MASP to place much greater emphasis on implementation mechanisms rather than high-level policy aspiration alone. Delivering BusConnects successfully will require:

- continuous bus priority infrastructure,
- allocation of road space to sustainable transport,
- depot and electrification investment,
- operational planning,
- driver recruitment and retention,

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- and integration with active travel infrastructure and land-use planning.

The TMF believes BusConnects should be recognised within the RSES and MASP as critical regional infrastructure essential to achieving compact growth, reducing car dependency, improving accessibility, and meeting climate obligations. Interim measures should also be supported where possible, including phased implementation of bus priority, tactical interventions to improve reliability, and accelerated delivery of supporting walking and cycling infrastructure. Delays to sustainable transport investment should not result in increased reliance on private car travel or additional road expansion.

Conclusion

We need to see substantially greater investment in Active Travel, Public Transport, and housing provision in Waterford and the South East Region to allow the region and nation to achieve it's potential. Growth needs to happen within urban centres, and easily accessible following the paradigm of the 15-minute city/town. This is essential to drastically reduce commuting distances and car dependency in order to achieve carbon emissions reduction targets in the transport sector.

We would be obliged to further participate in the discourse and planning processes around this and other plans, schemes, and frameworks as we feel that TMF can provide valuable input into the process. Please do not hesitate to contact us at any time at tmfwaterford@gmail.com.

Kind regards

Dr. Darren McAdam-O'Connell

On behalf of the Transport and Mobility Forum, Waterford

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.*

