

Consultation on Investing in our Transport Future - A Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport

15th October 2014

An Taisce wishes to comment on this consultation period *on Investing in our Transport Future- A Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport*.

Section 1 of our submission, **Critique of the Draft Strategic Framework**, examines the **scientific and economic basis of the draft strategy**. Section 2, **Principles for a Climate Proofed Land Transport Strategy**, sets out of the considerations and actions needed for a scientifically and economically credible strategy. Section 3 summarises consideration of the SEA report.

1.0 Critique of the Draft Strategic Framework

1.1 The 'Principles' defined in the Draft Strategy

In formulating any strategy, appropriate overarching objectives and conclusions need to be defined. The conclusions are set out as '*Principles for Land Transport Investment*' in Section 6.3 of the draft. These in turn form the entire basis of the SEA and NIA carried out by the consultants RPS.

The foremost priority identified is '*the maintenance and renewal of identified strategically important elements of the existing land transport system*'. This needs further definition of what those elements are, in view of the very negative consideration of the rail network which permeates the document.

The second key priority identified is '*to address current and future urban congestion including improved public transport and additional public transport capacity, better and additional walking and cycling infrastructure improving efficiency and better use of ITS*'. This is to be welcomed.

However four considerations are then set out for '*any further investment in road capacity*' including '*improving strategic access to major seaports and airports*'. Given that the major port companies are all proposing to double tonnage through-put over the next 20-25 years, this is a recipe for accommodating more road based investment and consequent sprawl. There no parallel reference to rail capacity including rail freight transport which is entirely disregarded. Reference to land use policy and the National Spatial Strategy successor is vague.

Most startlingly the draft strategy is marked by an irredeemable overriding failure to address climate.

1.2 The Climate policy failure

On 23rd April 2014, before the draft land transport strategic framework document was published, the Government agreed on national climate policy and legislation in the form of the General Scheme of the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Bill 2014. On the same day the Government also agreed its National Policy Position on Climate and Low-Carbon Development¹.

At page 2 the National Policy Position commits to *'an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors'*.

The policy position states: *'The series of national plans will be adopted and reviewed on a structured basis ... to ensure a coherent and comprehensive policy across all key sectors, and to provide maximum clarity and policy certainty for business and stakeholders generally. The structural basis for national plans on mitigation and adaptation will reflect Government commitment to transparency and inclusiveness. Accountability on national policy will include annual reporting to Dáil Éireann'*.

The only way to reconcile the Draft Strategic Framework with the National Policy Position is to rewrite the framework bringing the former into line with the latter.

This requires an overarching objective to achieve the objective of the Copenhagen Accord and the September 2014 UN Climate Summit objectives, and to meet the imperative of climate science in the cumulative carbon budget which is available to Ireland.

The entire document reflects either ignorance or indifference to the global scientific consensus on climate, the Copenhagen Accord and Irish Government commitment to a low carbon future by 2050 in proposed new climate legislation. References to climate are tacked on and not integrated with the evaluative process and concluding principles.

The document does not assess the fuel source and emission impact of existing and future transport infrastructure. It does not address the fact that climate change is already occurring and adaptation is required to protect coastal road and rail infrastructure from increased exposure to storm conditions.

The absence of integration of the Principles of the Draft Strategy with climate mitigation and adaptation is startling. This undermines the scientific and economic credibility of the entire process on which the framework's concluding principles were based

1.3. Assessment of the considerations on which Strategy conclusions are based

This flaw in scientific and economic consideration of climate clearly arises in the inputs which the steering group considered to reach its conclusions. This is demonstrated by the content of the *'Key Issues'* identified in page VIII and IX of the draft document. The seventeen bullet points are devoid of any reference let alone consideration of climate mitigation and adaptation.

Key Issue No 15 also makes what is pre-emptive judgement that the current level of capital and operational funding to the railway network *'is not financially sustainable'*. This judgment is then carried into the body of the report.

At the same time there is no consideration of the financial sustainability of:

¹ <http://www.merrionstreet.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/National-Policy-Position.pdf>

- ‘*Ghost Motorways*’ and continued investment value and maintenance burden of the construction of over scaled now roads relative to traffic levels. This includes the Galway Tuam M17 currently under construction, the overcapacity of the M9, and other sections of the road network, including compensation liability to the M3 operators for under shooting of projected toll income level.
- The significant overshoot projected of Irelands EU 2020 climate emission targets for the transport sector.
- The cost and global environmental transboundary impact of fossil and bio fuel import levels.
- The downstream costs in emissions, congestion generation and sprawl caused by failed spatial and land use planning during the boom and still continuing.

1.4 Consideration of Content of Draft Document

Chapter 1 forming the Introduction to the document sets out ‘*Key Features of the Framework Policy*’ with two headings:

1. ‘*Focus on Economic Growth*’ concluding that ‘*the primary objective for prioritising investment in transport should be the role of transport in supporting renewed economic growth, improved competitiveness and sustainable job creation*’
2. ‘*Principles to frame future investment*’. This refers to the principles set out in Chapter 6 of the draft framework already commented on.

References to climate in the overall document are cursory and not integrated with the key objectives and principles.

Chapter 2 ‘*Contribution of Transport Investment to Economic Growth*’ reflects an overriding concern for ‘*competitiveness*’ combined with lack of any consideration of climate impact.

Chapter 3 ‘*Assessing transport Investment need in Ireland*’ is highly negative in its evaluation of the rail network treating it as a maintenance burden rather than strategic asset to achieve modal shift from car use. There is no consideration of the potential of the rail network to increase passenger capacity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, car congestion and road freight.

Chapter 4 ‘*Network Use and Travel demand*’ inexplicably fails even to mention the Department of Transport’s policy, *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* which has two key targets of increasing non single car based modal share for workplace travel to 65% and capping the total kilometres travelled by the national car fleet, or the national Cycling Framework Strategy 10% target for all journeys.

Chapter 5 under ‘*Supporting other policy objectives*’ includes just three paragraphs in section 5.2 under ‘*Climate Policy*’. It concludes in referring to the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport Low Carbon Roadmap currently in preparation . However it does not address the fact that a framework for land transport investment is being advanced without any reference to climate in its guiding and overriding principles, and in advance of the targets that an effective roadmap will require.

Chapter 6 has the heading ‘*Identifying Priorities and Principles*’. Section 6.1 ‘*Discussion*’ has a number of sub headings. Under ‘*Meeting increased demand - An Ongoing Challenge*’ it acknowledges the failure of existing policies to promote modal shift ‘*as trends show an ever increasing dependency on car based travel*’. The introduction of more effective measures including ‘*road user pricing*’ are considered on page 50 but not incorporated into the strategic principles set out in Section 6.3. The impact and need to curtail of free workplace and out of town retail parking availability is simply not addressed.

On page 51 under '*integration with other policy objectives*' there is a single paragraph on '*carbon emissions*'. It refers to the reductions '*through reduced economic activity, improved road vehicle engine technology and biofuels*' in relation to the latter the real transboundary carbon impact of imported bio fuel has not been properly quantified.

Traffic levels and climate emission are again rising and EPA data shows that the 2020 EU targets will be exceeded for transport. Furthermore the required planning for the accelerated decarbonisation of transport post 2020 is not remotely in place

Chapter 7 on '*Implementation*' makes only vague reference to '*climate change mitigation*' under 7.5. '*Transport Policy Development*'. Section 7.4 on '*Key Role of Appraisal*' makes no reference to climate mitigation in the evaluation of expenditure of public funds on transport.

The strategy was informed by over 21 background papers. '*Climate Change and Transport Policy*' is No 19. The remaining papers show a systemic ignorance or indifference of climate impact and issues. Paper 8 on '*Impacts of previous transport investment in Ireland*' fails entirely to mention climate. Paper 20 on '*Spatial Transport and Planning*' is anodyne in content, lacks critical analysis of existing spatial policy, fails to make recommendations and only raises questions for '*discussion*'. However it is obvious from the content of the strategy that climate was only treated as a poorly integrated add on which did not influence the key inputs and conclusions.

1.5 Evaluation of Existing Policies on Transport and Land Use Planning

Department of Transport's policy, *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* adopted key targets for 2020 from 2009

1. *500,000 more people will take alternative means to commute to work to the extent that the total share of car commuting will drop from 65% to 45%;*
2. *The total kilometres travelled by the car fleet in 2020 will not increase significantly from current levels;*

'*Key actions*' including spatial planning, public transport and cycling investment and '*institutional arrangements to deliver the targets*' were set out. The Department of Transport *National Cycling Framework 2009* provided that 10% of trips be by bicycle by 2020.

The overriding planning objective of the *National Spatial Strategy 2002* set out under planning in Section 1.1. (iv) '*Ireland needs to renew consolidate and develop its existing cities, towns and villages i.e. keeping them as physically compact and public transport friendly as possible and minimising urban sprawl... where Greenfield development is necessary it should take place through the logical extension of existing cities towns and villages*'

While there has been significant progress in cycling enhancement in the Dublin City Council area, and the development of cycle ways nationally, and some level of appropriate development meeting the NSS overarching policy around Dublin, on a National basis and the Greater Dublin and surrounding area there has been a massive policy failure. The National Transport Authority is ineffective in pursuing its statutory remit for sustainable transport including use of its prescribed consultee function on planning applications.

The following planning consents and projects demonstrate this:

- The National Roads Authority is funding schemes generating more traffic into urban areas e.g. The M7 lane additions from Newbridge to Naas interchanges;

- The building of over scaled new roads with the current M17 Galway to Tuam project, is continuing
- Local Councils and An Bord Pleanála are continuing to permit car based development like the extension to the Kildare Retail Village, the Liffey Valley Shopping centre in South Dublin, the TK Maxx unit outside Navan ,the Kerry Group Campus outside Naas on the M7, and the expansion of National Technology Park outside Limerick, all based on free surface car parking
- In counties such as Mayo and Roscommon almost the only housing being granted is exacerbation of ribbon development;
- Fáilte Ireland has designated and is promoting the 2,500 km Wild Atlantic Way as a car driving route
- A State Body, the Galway Port Company is wasting significant resources in pursuing an application for a major port expansion in clear breach of National port policy

The Department of Education in not properly integrating the funding of new and extended schools with Smarter Travel measures as shown by the recent An Bord Pleanála refusal for a 1000 pupil school outside Croom, Co. Limerick

1.6. Conclusions

Even as a draft policy text, is difficult to avoid struggling to understand the strategy framework in terms of the narrow economic assumptions and inputs underpinning its compilation. While seeking to promote the role of transport in economic growth, the draft fails to recognise that a stable economy is dependent on:

- a stable climate;
- providing adaptation to adverse climate impacts already accelerating;
- achieving energy efficiency and escaping the cost and future supply volatility of transport fuel import;
- effective management to promote public health, achieving efficient land use and reducing congestion;

The draft published is not fit for purpose and should be withdrawn. It is not integrated with the overriding strategic framework required.

2.0 Principles for a Climate Proofed Land Transport Strategy

2.1 Defining Overarching principles

An effective land transport investment strategy can only be measured in targets in reducing greenhouse gases and car dependence and other indicators. These principles have already been established in Department of Transport's policy, *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020* which has two key targets of increasing non single car based modal share for workplace travel to 65% and capping the total kilometres travelled by the national car fleet.

A strategic framework to maintain the transport network and provide for new investment in land transport and '*address current and future urban congestion*' can only be considered as part of an overarching and integrated climate, energy and resource use, mobility management , and land use strategy with effective targets , fiscal implementation measures to achieve:

- climate mitigation;

- reducing emissions to meet EU 2020 targets and much higher post 2020 targets needed to meet the cumulative carbon budget of per capita emissions that can be generated up to 2050;
- climate adaptation;
- focusing investment in protecting climate vulnerable coastal infrastructure;
- enhancing air quality and the physical environment;
- reducing polluting particle emissions and noise;
- promoting healthy lifestyles;
- creating walkable communities and developing cycling routes;
- effective spatial planning and efficient land use;
- focus future development on public transport access and curtailment of sprawl;
- energy independence;
- significant reduction in the contribution of transport to the 6.5 annual million fossil fuel import bill and uncertainty over future cost, supply and carbon tax level of transport fuel.

A strategic framework also needs to consider transport mobility as a system to be managed as much as health or education. This not only means capital investment in maintenance of existing infrastructure but also demand management pricing and public awareness measures.

It requires fiscal measures in taxation and incentives new institutional structures to achieve the carbon budget cap, ensure the most use of existing infrastructure and resources, and direct limited future investment capacity to the optimum achievement of the aims stated.

2.2 Integrating climate mitigation as overarching consideration

EPA data records a 3.5% transport emission decline in 2012 on 2011 levels, resulting from the '*Biofuels Obligation*' and lower emission vehicles. However transport accounts for nearly 20% of national emissions and Ireland has one of the highest per capita levels in the EU.

The EU Effort Sharing Directive requires Ireland to meet binding emission targets of 20% on 2005 levels by 2020 in the non Emissions Trading Sector, including Transport. EPA projections establish that transport growth will result in significant overshoot of the 2020 target.

Much higher annual targets will be required post 2020. Future emissions agreements will also require major reduction in transboundary shipping and aviation, if the scale action required by climate science is to be achieved.

Ireland needs to take leadership in reducing transport emissions with.

- binding emission reduction targets, including aviation and shipping;
- significant modal shift from private motor vehicles;
- enhanced emission efficiency for all transport vehicles;
- taxing of all transport fuel including biofuels according to carbon impact including land use change and production impact;
- linking of all future economic development and trade agreements to carbon reduction.

2.3 Capping and reducing fossil fuel consumption

In 2012 if the Grantham Institute for Climate Change (based in Imperial College London) and the Carbon Tracker Initiative (An International NGO monitoring carbon emissions) published '*Unburnable Carbon 2013: Wasted Capital and Stranded Assets*'. This reveals that total fossil fuel reserves already far exceed the global atmosphere capacity to absorb the emissions generated if temperatures are not to exceed 2 degrees above preindustrial levels.

Between 60-80% of coal oil and gas reserves of publically listed companies are unburnable if the world is to have chance of not exceeding global warming of 2 degrees Celsius. The issue is now to achieve an effective global climate agreement and carbon tax regime which will secure this.

Former President Mary Robinson appointed special UN Climate Envoy, is now taking leadership stating in September 2013:

'There is a global limit on a safe level of emissions. That means major fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground. That has huge implications for economic and social development.'

There is thus a cumulative carbon budget which places a cap on the per capita emission capacity of any country between now and 2050. In addition to this is the adverse environmental impact and risk of extending fossil fuel extraction into new areas This has resulted in new exploration ranging from the Arctic wilderness to Central Africa. Russia is promoting drilling in the Arctic with the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill showing the risks involved. The increased level of extraction from Canadian Tar Sands and the Niger Delta is devastating in environmental impact and generates a much higher level of emissions that conventional wells.

2.4 Considering biofuels and electric vehicle use

Biofuels and electric vehicle use must factor full transboundary emission resource and land use impact. Displacement of food producing land and the real emission cycle puts the continued role of biofuels in question, whether produced within the EU or imported from sources such as palm oil.

Electric vehicles require full evaluation of the resource extraction impact of all material input from batteries and end of life redundancy. Electric vehicles require full evaluation of the resource extraction impact of all material input from batteries and end of life redundancy. Even if electric vehicles can be demonstrated to be more carbon efficient than other fuel source, the use of private motorised vehicles need to be curtailed for reasons of reducing congestion, obesity and inefficient land use as well as climate and resource consumption.

2.5 Addressing climate adaptation

Even if effective global action is taken on mitigating climate impact , storm impacts will continue to increase from the cumulative level of carbon already emitted into the atmosphere, and which will continue to be emitted even under the most optimistic achievable global emission reduction agreement.

This means that coastal infrastructure including road and rail face increate threat. Accordingly investment resources will be needed to maintain existing coastal road and rail infrastructure. The number of days generating code red storm conditions in January February 2014 reflects future trends. There is now a growing body of academic peer reviewed literature on the potential impacts of climate change on the Irish coasts².

2.6 Integration of Climate Action with Sustainable Transport Policies

Direct investment in land transport infrastructure maintenance and efficiency enhancement is only part of a strategic framework for land transport. To ensure that the maintenance and investment in transport infrastructure achieves climate reduction targets. air particle pollution reduction, targets for non car based modal share , and reduces congestion , inefficient land use and sprawl, evaluation standards, targets, institutional reform and fiscal measures are required

² <http://icarus.nuim.ie/publications-1>

All transport investment requires climate proofing. All investment options require cost benefit evaluation to maximise return in securing modal shift from car to public transport, cycling and walking with reduction of car use for:

- access to urban centres;
- main employment locations;
- school travel routes;
- short journeys in both urban and rural areas;
- inter urban journeys;
- tourism

A range of fiscal as well as legal and policy measures are required to implement the measures set out in Department of Transport's Smarter Travel (2009) policy. This adopted two key targets for 2020 from 2009 levels:

1. *500,000 more people will take alternative means to commute to work to the extent that the total share of car commuting will drop from 65% to 45%;*
2. *The total kilometres travelled by the car fleet in 2020 will not increase significantly from current levels;*

Smarter travel set out '*Key Actions*' including spatial planning, public transport and cycling investment and '*institutional arrangements to deliver the targets*'. The Department of Transport National Cycling Framework 2009 target providing that 10% of trips be by bicycle by 2020 needs to be met.

2.7 Special Initiative on Waling/Cycling

The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) was published in 2009, and a review process has been ongoing within the Department and through the Local Authority structure. The results of this review need to be made public and a second stage of consultation with NGOs and stakeholders, and finalisation of the review of the NCPF needs to be completed by end- 2014 leaving just five years to completion with new emphasis to ensure that the 10% trip target by bicycle will be met by 2020. We stress the need for appropriate human and financial resources to be made available to coordinate and steadily implement the wide package of measures which the NCPF outlines. As per p. 7 of the NCPF:

The most important factors in ensuring that an NCPF is successful are as follows:

- The participation of many stakeholders across several government departments, many agencies, all local authorities and other non-governmental organisations and institutions.
- Appropriate levels of, and timely, funding for the initiatives.
- The knowledge and human resources available to implement the policies.
- Legislation and enforcement.

The Department should make a commitment to appointing a National Cycling/Walking Officer with full-time team and budget to advertise and promote by no later than early 2015. Such a position/team can then link with the equivalent positions/teams in all other European countries so as to continually exchange best practices and experiences – see <http://www.ecf.com/projects/national-cycling-officers-network/>.

Furthermore, the appointment of local authority (or regional) cycling/walking officers by mid-2015 and the creation of a network of such officers will allow for the continual exchange best practices and experiences.

There is a need to target greater integration of cycling with public transport to enable and encourage inter-modal travel. This is especially important in the outer suburbs of cities and towns and around satellite towns outside of cities where distances are too great for easy cycle commuting for most people (i.e. distances of over 10-15 km);

As a matter of urgency the department should end the public scandal where there is under-recording/re-ported of serious injuries happening to cyclists involved in road traffic collisions (RTCs). The Garda, RSA and HSE will need to be directed to sort out this unacceptable mess with urgency and the necessary funding, data recording/GPS systems and personnel put in place if that is required

Advantage should also be taken from the momentum generated by the development of public bike schemes to advance further interventions to make towns and cities cycle friendly. Such priority interventions would be 30km/hr zones properly designed and enforced.

2.8 Institutional Reform

The legal remit of NRA, NTA, CIE and Fáilte Ireland and other State Bodies Under the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, needs amendment to require enforcement of legally binding climate emission targets and sustainable transport with effective oversight role by Department and EPA;

Institutional reform measures are also required to achieve cross compliance on transport policy with DoECLG to:

- Integrate new National Spatial Strategy with provisions curtailing car based development whether employment location, residential , retail or leisure;
- Introduce Ministerial Direction under section 29 Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended requiring compliance by Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála with climate mitigation and new spatial strategy principles;
- amend Local Authority Development Plan parking standards to remove mandatory provision of specified levels of car parking places based on the square metre accommodation of different categories of development;

2.9 Fiscal Measures

The *Smarter Travel* actions need integration with land transport investment and require a range of fiscal measures including charging for out of town parking and road user pricing, and reducing free parking availability in workplaces. Free urban fringe car parking is promoting unsustainable travel patterns and undermining the functional status and critical mass of urban centres in sustaining or developing public transport accessibility s well as undermine the strategic purpose of national road investment s in facilitating strategic access to ports and airports and movement of goods and services.

The application of an effective carbon tax is needed to reflect the real environmental impact of carbon emissions with revenue used to fund sustainable transport. The impact of Road tolling in encouraging circuitous toll evasion e.g. from M3 to N2 via Slane needs to be assessed with alternative road pricing measures put in place.

Parallel to this is the requirement to provide support for effective mobility strategies for major employment centres, schools and other locations and sporting and other events generating transport demand. The bike to work tax incentive is the type of model which requires further application.

3.0 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by RPS

3.1 Legal Compliance with SEA Directive

The SEA accompanying the draft document does not meet the legal requirements of the SEA Directive. The environmental considerations set out in the Directive did not inform the evaluative process of the formulation of the draft strategy by the Steering Group. The Principles for Land transport investment in section 6.3 of the draft strategic framework were formulated in advance of the SEA process and then simply given to the consultants RPS to form the basis of a post ante SEA.

Section 1.3 of the SEA document quotes the '*Principles for Land transport investment*' in section 6.3 of the draft strategic framework as the uncritically accepted defining brief of the SEA. No consideration is given to the adequacy of the principles set out. This means that the required consideration of climate mitigation and adaptation which should be an essential part of the SEA process is undermined.

The SEA consultants have further undermined the integrity of the SEA process in defining the remit of the draft strategy in a highly constrained way in stating:

'The Framework does not deal with current expenditure which is expenditure that covers the day-to-day running of organisations and programmes (including salaries, maintenance, operational costs etc.). In the context of the Framework this would not include programmes related to behavioural change and public awareness programmes.'

This ignores a number of key measures for the management and use of existing transport infrastructure including those identified in the Departments own Background Paper 19 on Climate including 4 on '*modal shift to walking cycling and public transport*' and 7 on '*traffic management, demand management, road pricing*'. Furthermore while Section 5.2. 3 of the SEA report makes cursory reference to Department of Transport's *Smarter Travel*, the modal share and capping of total car kilometres travelled by the car fleet to 2009 levels.

3.2 Failure of Draft framework to address the climate consideration in the SEA report.

Section 6. 7 of the SEA report cover climatic factors. It states:

'According to Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2012 – 2030 (EPA, 2013), Transport emissions are also projected to show strong growth over the period to 2020 with a 12- 22% increase on current levels depending on the level of policy implementation. This is attributed to forecasted increases in petrol and diesel use for road transport.'

'Based on the latest data, it can be concluded that investments in future land transport projects will have a significant contribution to make to meeting Ireland's Kyoto commitment to limit the growth of greenhouse gas emissions. The development of any land transport projects should therefore take into account emissions of CO2 to ensure that annual emissions targets are not exceeded'

No proper consideration of climate was given by the Steering Group in the preparation for the draft strategy and principles. This confirms a serious disregard of the SEA process by the Steering Group and by the Department in allowing such a legally deficient draft strategy to be advanced for public consultation.