

# Submission to the Cork Metropolitan Area Draft Transport Strategy 2040

For the attention of the National Transport Authority

25<sup>th</sup> June 2019

## Highlights

- The National Transport Authority (NTA) should open a dedicated project office in Cork
- Prioritise Light Rail service route selection and protection
- Set more ambitious cycling targets, supported with appropriate funding
- BusConnects radial and orbital routes should connect at high-quality Mobility Hubs
- Accelerate the M28 and the Northern Ring Road development
- Prioritise projects based on interdependencies and socio-economic benefits

## 1. Introduction

Engineers Ireland's Cork Region committee have reviewed the draft Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040 (CMATS) and welcome the objectives and measures outlined. This Transport Strategy is needed to support the projected rapid growth of the Cork Metropolitan Area in the next two decades and we encourage the NTA to be ambitious in both development of the Transport Strategy and its implementation.

Our comments below follow the order of the Strategy document.

## 2. Cycling

We would like to see a more ambitious target for the cycle mode share (4% proposed) and an associated increase in funding. It is noted that parts of the city centre have very restricted cross-sections and the layout of the road will have to reflect a shared space between cyclists and motorists.

## 3. BusConnects

The proposed orbital bus routes are a vital component of the BusConnects proposal and should not be deprioritised in favour of upgrading the existing radial routes. The intersection of radial and orbital bus routes should coincide with Mobility Hubs for several modes of transport, preferably at facilities that generate trips such as hospitals, colleges, large work campuses etc. These Hubs should be of a high quality (i.e. not just a bus shelter) to attract users.

The Southern Orbital Inner BusConnects route runs through the Jack Lynch Tunnel and even with the imminent upgrade to the Dunkettle Interchange, this route will suffer from the bottleneck at the tunnel. While noting that it would be a very significant infrastructural project, consideration should be given to constructing a second crossing of the River Lee to connect with the existing road network in the area and giving priority to sustainable transport modes.

#### **4. Suburban Rail**

We support the measures for upgrading and promoting the suburban rail service and note that integrated ticketing and mobility hubs at stations are a vital part of encouraging commuters to use the service. For example, many people are not aware that it is possible bring a bicycle on the suburban rail service for free, thus giving easier access to and from the station.

#### **5. Light Rail**

As noted in the Strategy, a Light Rail service is a key enabler of CMATS and the selection and subsequent protection of the route(s) should be of the highest priority. In addition to protecting the route, this process will also facilitate developers and the city planners to make informed decisions about new developments. Construction of the Light Rail service should also be accelerated on the basis that having the service in place will, in and of itself, generate demand.

Consideration should also be given to whether sections of the light rail network should be constructed underground. While recognising the significant costs involved, it would be less expensive to do so now before the expected growth of the city in the coming decades.

#### **6. Parking**

The current Park & Ride site at Blackash is too close to the city centre and does not provide enough incentive for commuters, whereas the proposed sites should be much more beneficial, especially having the Dunkettle site co-located with a train station.

#### **7. Integration**

See comments above.

#### **8. Roads**

We suggest that a Southern Orbital route (with segregated cycle and bus lanes) passing near the airport should be included for appraisal within the medium term.

The M28 is listed as a priority, but the timeframe is given as medium-term (2026-2031) and should be accelerated. Much of the proposed re-development of the city depends on the container port moving to Ringaskiddy which is in turn dependent on the M28 being built. Similarly, the upgrade of the R624 to Marino Point in Cobh will be a key facilitator for the redevelopment of the docklands and should be prioritised.

The Northern Ring Road appraisal needs to be short-term and implemented as soon as possible for variety of socio-economic reasons.

Given that the River Lee is being considered as a transport route, any new bridges should be appraised for whether they can open to allow ships/barges to pass. Consideration should also be given to additional cross river ferries and to water taxis.

## **9. Freight**

The proposal to ban HGVs in the city centre is welcome, however, alternatives need to be in place. Also, the scale of projected development in the city means that a HGV's destination could be in the city centre (as opposed to just transiting through) and road layouts should not entirely preclude HGVs.

Similarly, to maintain a vibrant city centre, businesses will need to receive deliveries which should be facilitated when designing bus/cycle/rail routes.

## **10. Supporting Measures**

Among the other supporting measures, we note that Behavioural Change will be the most challenging, but also has the potential to be key to successfully implementing the Strategy. This being the case, targeted Behavioural Change programmes should be a key element of facilitating the Strategy and should be appropriately funded.

We note the comments on Autonomous Vehicles in this section, but we would like to see more measures in this area. While the Strategy rightly seeks to move commuters away from the single-occupancy car, given the scale of investment by car manufacturers, autonomous vehicles (cars, trucks & buses) are likely to be a significant element in transport over the next 20 years.

## **11. Implementation**

To address the challenges of implementing the 20-year Transport Strategy, and given the substantial budget involved, we believe the NTA should open a dedicated project office in Cork. This will serve both as a statement of intent and have significant functional value.

Schemes such as BusConnects and cycle routes need to be implemented in bundles (not on a piecemeal basis) so that they have impact. A schedule of prioritised projects should be developed based on the interdependency of projects and the socio-economic benefits of the project. For transparency, the criteria for this prioritisation should be published.

This schedule can be then used to rate the implementation of CMATS when it is being reviewed. We suggest that the 5-year review period should be reduced to ensure that delivery of the Strategy is kept on track. We welcome the intention to have built-in flexibility in the Strategy to meet demand and future growth areas.

ENDS

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