

# Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

## Advance Consultation Report - Dec 2019



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is a public body set up under statute and established in December 2009. The role and functions of the NTA are set out in three Acts of the Oireachtas: the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008; the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009; and the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. In August 2015, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) published its policy document *Investing in our Transport Future – A Strategic Framework for Investment in Land Transport* (SFILT). Action 4 of SFILT states that “regional transport strategies will be prepared by the NTA and provide an input to regional spatial and economic strategies”. Having regard to its role in relation to transport, and the action placed upon it in SFILT, the NTA in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council and Clare County Council is developing a Transport Strategy for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area (L-SMA) for the period up to 2040.

DTTaS recently published an update to this policy document, *Planning Land Use and Transport – Outlook 2040* (PLUTO), which is underpinned by the projections and settlement patterns identified by the *National Planning Framework* (NPF). The *Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040* (L-SMATS or ‘the Strategy’) will align with the over-arching vision and objectives of the NPF and PLUTO and will provide a framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the L-SMA over the next two decades. It will also provide a planning policy framework with which other agencies can align their policies and investment.

## 1.2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the Advance Consultation Report is to outline the advance work undertaken with the Strategy Steering Group (SSG) members and stakeholders during the development of the draft Strategy. Targeted early engagement took the form of steering group meetings, technical workshops and a four-week advance consultation period with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the draft Strategy was developed in a collaborative and informed manner.

The NTA recognises that the Strategy must have people at its core and is committed to ensuring this throughout the lifecycle of the Strategy and its implementation.

## 1.3 Report Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** Identifies the participants in the making of the draft L-SMATS;
- **Section 3:** Summarises the engagement with the Steering Group;
- **Section 4:** Outlines the Advance Consultation process;
- **Section 5:** Summarises the feedback received during the Advance Consultation; and
- **Section 6:** Concludes the report.



## 2 Participants

### 2.1 Strategy Steering Group Members

Representatives from the planning and transportation teams from the following organisations have been collaboratively involved in the development of the draft Strategy as part of the Strategy Steering Group (SSG):

- Limerick City and County Council (LCCC);
- Clare County Council (CCC);
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII); and
- National Transport Authority (NTA).

### 2.2 Stakeholders

A wider group of 41 stakeholders were identified and invited to be involved in the advance consultation process for the draft Strategy. These included:

- Bus Éireann;
- Iarnród Éireann;
- An Garda Síochána;
- An Taisce;
- Southern Regional Assembly (SRA);
- City Link;
- Clare Public Participatory Network (CPPN);
- Dublin Coach;
- Enterprise Ireland;
- Fix Limerick Bus;
- Health Service Executive (HSE);
- IDA;
- Innovate Limerick;
- IRHA;
- Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA);
- JJ Kavanagh;
- Limerick 2030;
- Limerick Chamber;
- Limerick Cycle Bus;
- Limerick Cycle Campaign;
- Limerick Public Participatory Network (LPPN);
- Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT);
- Irish Georgian Society – Limerick Chapter;
- Limerick Taxi Association;
- Local Link;
- National Council for the Blind (NCBI);
- Shannon Chamber;
- Shannon Foynes Port Company;
- Shannon Group;
- Shannon College of Hotel Management;
- Tours Operators;
- Mid-West IBEC;
- University of Limerick (UL);
- Waterways Ireland;
- Caherdavin Residents Association;
- Clonmacken Residents Association;
- Farranshore Residents Association;
- Greystones and District Residents Association;
- Kileely Residents Association;
- Mayorstone Coolrairie Residents Association; and
- St. Munchin's Community Centre.



### 3 Steering Group Engagement

The NTA engaged extensively with the SSG members throughout the development of the draft Strategy. This engagement consisted of steering meetings, technical workshops and presentations to ensure that there was a collaborative and informed approach. The process allowed for stakeholders to contribute in a meaningful way.

#### 3.1 SSG Meeting 1 – Project Inception

The first SSG meeting, held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at Limerick City and County Council, was attended by representatives of the NTA, TII, LCCC and CCC. The meeting was chaired by Jacobs and Systra.

The three main areas of discussion during the first steering meeting were:

- Growth projections and key enablers as defined by the NPF;
- Approach to consultation and engagement; and
- Development of transport options.

It was agreed that the next key steps were:

- SSG to give feedback on transport challenges to inform Network Options workshop; and
- Summary of demand analysis to be prepared and presented to the SSG.

#### 3.2 SSG Meeting 2 – Progress and Demand Analysis

The second SSG meeting, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 at Limerick City and County Council, was attended by representatives of the NTA, TII, LCCC and CCC. It was chaired by Jacobs and Systra.

The main areas of discussion during the second steering meeting were:

- Growth projections as defined by the NPF and agreed by LCCC, CCC and NTA;
- Idealised network;
- Corridor demand analysis; and
- Wider network considerations such as the cycle and walking networks, public realm, Park and Ride facilities and freight and delivery.

It was agreed that the next key steps were:

- SSG to give feedback on supporting documents;
- SSG to submit a list of stakeholders to include in the advance consultation process;
- Full-day workshop to be organised; and
- Network options for all modes to be developed and modelled.

#### 3.3 SSG Meeting 3 – Network Options Workshop

The Network Options Workshop was a full-day workshop held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 at Absolute Hotel, Sir Harry's Mall, Limerick. It was attended by representatives of the NTA, TII, LCCC and CCC, and chaired by Jacobs and Systra.

The objectives of this workshop were to:

- Receive input from stakeholders to the network development;





- Critically review the network proposals at all levels and identify any gaps or opportunities;
- Understand local issues and context; and
- Provide direction on network options going forward.

The morning session took the form of a presentation providing an overview of the progress to date including the strategic transport network analysis. The afternoon session was an interactive workshop where attendees were divided into smaller groups to critically review network proposals. This enabled SSG members to input directly into the development of these networks and helped gain consensus on the network-wide transport options. The workshop resulted in the formulation of Emerging Preferred Options and provided direction on demand management measures.



Figure 3-1: SSG Meeting 3 - Network Options Workshop on 23rd October 2019. Source: Jacobs.





Figure 3-2: SSG Meeting 3 - Network Options Workshop on 23rd October 2019. Source: Jacobs.



Figure 3-3: SSG Meeting 3 - Network Options Workshop on 23rd October 2019. Source: Jacobs.





## 4 Advance Stakeholder Consultation

A number of stakeholders were invited to share their views to help shape the development of the draft Strategy to best serve the economic, environmental, social and cultural needs of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area as part of the advance consultation stage. These stakeholders consisted of those listed in Section 2.2 and ranged from business representative groups and major educational institutions to transport operators and relevant statutory bodies.

Stakeholders were invited to submit their views from the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019.

### 4.1 Feedback Received

A total of 18 submissions were received during the advance consultation period from the following stakeholders:

- Fix Limerick Bus;
- Green Schools Travel;
- HSE – DPHMW (2);
- HSE – Environmental Health Services;
- Iarnród Éireann;
- IDA;
- Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA);
- Limerick Chamber;
- 7 Residents Associations of Limerick City North;
- Limerick Cycle Bus Campaign;
- Limerick 2030 Designated Activity Company;
- Limerick Cycling Campaign;
- Irish Georgian Society – Limerick Chapter;
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI);
- Shannon Chamber;
- Shannon Group; and
- University of Limerick (UL).

### 4.2 Analysis of Feedback

Stakeholders were invited to comment on L-SMATS under the following ten headings:

- Public transport infrastructure and service proposals;
- Measures to facilitate and promote walking;
- Measures to facilitate and promote cycling;
- Policies aimed at closer integration between land-use development and sustainable transport;
- Traffic management measures;
- Demand management measures;
- Behavioural change and mobility management measures;
- Measures to promote integration between all modes;
- Policies related to the management of freight; and
- Road infrastructure proposals.

Section 5 presents a summary of all submissions received during the advance consultation period under the above headings. The views contained in these sections do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Transport Authority but represent the views of the stakeholders who made submissions.



## 5 Feedback from Advance Stakeholder Consultation

### 5.1 Public Transport Proposals

Several stakeholders observed that the existing public transport system operating throughout the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area is unreliable and inefficient with poor quality bus stops and a lack of Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI).

The following recommendations were made in relation to the draft Strategy's public transport services and infrastructure proposals by several submissions:

- Delivery of BusConnects Limerick to serve the L-SMA “with longer operational hours and increased frequencies to encourage the significant modal shift from the private car to sustainable transportation”;
- Delivery of integrated Quality Bus Corridors across the L-SMA;
- Development of a bus station at Arthur’s Quay;
- Provision of orbital bus routes;
- Provision of interchange opportunities in tandem with revised fare structures and wayfinding;
- Improved bus shelters and RTPI facilities;
- Promotion of the Leap Card and TaxSaver Commuter Scheme to help reduce the cost of public transport for the general public;
- Consideration of equitable transport accessibility to essential services such as hospitals and places of education and employment to help reduce deprivation and social inequalities;
- Provision for storing bicycles onboard buses and trains;
- Provision of an additional bus service route which traverses the Raheen Industrial Estate linking with University of Limerick (UL) and the National Technology Park (NTP);
- Delivery of higher frequency (10-minutes) bus services serving University of Limerick (including its new City Centre campus when operational);
- Provision of a more frequent and reliable bus service to Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT);
- A direct, high-frequency public transport service to enhance connectivity between Limerick City Centre, key employment nodes and Shannon Airport to coincide with flight times;
- Review of school transport services;
- Increased capacity and frequency of inter-regional bus services connecting Shannon Airport to Galway and Cork;
- Development of a metropolitan public transport system connecting key villages and towns within the L-SMA, as well as directly to Raheen and the NTP;
- Provision of a rail link from Shannon to Limerick via Sixmilebridge to cater for both commuters and visitors. The IDA requested that “in the absence of a rail link or as an interim measure, a Quality Bus Corridor should be facilitated”; and
- A light rail spur from the existing Limerick-Ennis line to link University of Limerick with Colbert Station.

IWA noted that all forms of public transport should be accessible for all ages and abilities, highlighting that “transport is key for people with physical disabilities realising their independence”. NCBI provided examples of elements of an accessible public transport system such as audible announcements; yellow handrails/ grips; recognisable and consistent bus livery and signage; and easily accessible travel information both online and offline.

IWA also raised concerns about any potential proposals for shared spaces, saying that “shared spaces in theory suggest that pedestrians which include people who are able-bodied, people with



mobility issues, wheelchair users, visually impaired, children, the elderly and cyclists can all navigate and share the same space in a safe way”, however this is not often the case in relation to the infrastructure that is involved with a transport system.

The Limerick Chapter of the Irish Georgian Society stated that “the historic fabric should not be lost due to planned bus corridors and/ or cycle lanes”, and that “consideration should be given to reducing measures designed to facilitate access to the City Centre by unsustainable modes of transport (i.e. private cars) before considering to undermine the integrity of the historic environment through the removal of parts of the historic fabric and street trees”. They also recommended that buses, along with general vehicular traffic, should not be routed through O’Connell Street so as to facilitate its development as Limerick’s historic core.

Iarnród Éireann outlined a number of planned schemes in their submission, and recommended a number of rail projects for consideration and validation in L-SMATS:

- Completion of the planned Colbert Rail and Bus Interchange Station;
- Upgrade of track and signalling systems as required pending wider policy decisions;
- Procurement of rolling stock to prepare for transition from diesel powered to electric/ hybrid train operation;
- Double-track from Limerick-Limerick Junction, which would improve journey times and enable an increase in frequency of services and connections;
- Provide a Park and Ride facility at Junction 29 on the M7 at Ballysimon and at Junction 5 on the N18 at Cratloe;
- Review of potential new stations along Ennis Line at Parkway and Moyross to serve University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology and Thomand Park;
- Plan for 30-minute peak and 60-minute off-peak services on the Ennis-Limerick route (subject to demand requirements);
- Construct a passing loop at Sixmilebridge to increase capacity on the Limerick-Ennis line; and
- Provide a turnback facility at either Cratloe or Sixmilebridge to improve fleet use efficiency.

Iarnród Éireann’s submission referenced the need for further economic appraisal and analysis to determine the future viability of a number of potential rail projects for the Foynes, Ballybrophy and Waterford lines. They also stated that a technical solution is being finalised for the flooding of the Ennis-Limerick railway line at Ballycar and that funding is needed to complete the project.

## 5.2 Measures to Prioritise Walking and Cycling

Several stakeholders noted that high-quality outdoor environments that provide a sense of place will encourage a modal shift toward active travel. Limerick Chamber stated that “improving the pedestrian environment within Limerick City is critical” in terms of design, safety and legibility. IDA recommended that “placemaking should be a core goal throughout all delivery aspects. The aesthetic, cultural and civic quality of places, underpinned by high-quality urban design and landscaping are at the core of what will make a city region safe, attractive and sustainable”.

A collective of Residents Associations representing the northern area of Limerick City noted the current “motor-centric” nature of travel “at the cost of sustainable forms of transit in our neighbourhoods: walking and cycling” and recommended that “the upcoming Strategy lay out large portions of investment to establish walking and cycling networks”.

The following recommendations were made for inclusion in the draft Strategy’s measures and policies for walking and cycling by a number of stakeholders:

- Expansion of the public bike share scheme to serve areas such as the Raheen Business Park, University of Limerick and the National Technology Park;



- Examine the feasibility of a public bike share scheme in Shannon;
- Delivery of segregated cycle lanes across the L-SMA, with priority on UL to City Centre;
- Formalisation of quiet ways where full segregation is not possible;
- Set ambitious mode share targets for active travel;
- Ensure public realm is attractive, legible and accessible for all ages and abilities and is designed following Universal Design principles;
- Any public realm improvements in the historic centre should incorporate high-quality materials and finishes such as Irish limestone, the traditional material of Newtown Pery;
- Establish pedestrian priority zones;
- Undertake a pole and signage/ street clutter audit across the L-SMA;
- Development of a Limerick Tourist Walking Strategy;
- Ensure implementation of measures proposed by the *Limerick Metropolitan District Movement Framework Study 2015*;
- Reopening of the Black Bridge to link the Errina Canal Greenway to the Limerick City Centre-UL Riverbank Walk to enhance permeability and extend this urban amenity route;
- Improvement and upgrade of Shannon's walkways and cycleways (Shannon Chamber suggested land acquisition to enable the development of these from Shannon to Bunratty and onwards to Limerick and Sixmilebridge);
- Designate a primary cycle route connecting the Shannon Free Zone (SFZ) East, SFZ West and Shannon town centre via the N18/R471;
- Promote and facilitate walking's role as part of linked trips with rail and bus journeys;
- Promote active travel for its physical and mental health benefits as well as positive and viable alternatives to the private car;
- Encourage School Streets and Safe Routes to School;
- Reduce traffic speeds;
- Promote Pedestrian Mobility Assessments for all transport nodes/hubs which clearly demonstrate the walk times and routes to key employment, education and service areas and include a walkability audit of the surrounding area; and
- Development of a supplementary detailed Cycling Strategy underpinned by the overarching principles of L-SMATS to inform the design and implementation of the proposed cycle network.

### 5.3 Integrated Land-Use and Transport Planning

Fix Limerick Bus stated that "all new developments should centre on high-quality public transport that provides rapid connections to the nearest major centre of employment and major urban facilities".

IDA suggested that "land-use policies should largely restrict one-off housing and unplanned greenfield development. Growth should be consolidated and intensified around suburban rail, light rail and high-frequency bus corridors". Iarnród Éireann stated that they "strongly support all policies to increase density of development along rail corridors, including development that supports Transport Orientated Development at major stations like Colbert Station".

### 5.4 Traffic Management Measures

Fix Limerick Bus highlighted that "Liveable Limerick proposed a 'super block' concept which would see heavy vehicular traffic removed from the City Centre, allowing the streets and public spaces to be used by people". They added that "the current system in operation of allowing cars to travel up



and down most streets is totally unnecessary and adding to chaos”. The Irish Georgian Society and the HSE echoed support for this concept and car-free/ pedestrianised areas within Limerick City Centre.

Limerick Cycling Campaign suggested that “the orbital route for motor traffic as proposed as part of the previous *Limerick Metropolitan Cycle Network Study* should be given strong consideration. Removing through-traffic from the City Centre would create a more people-friendly urban environment that would be much safer for pedestrians and cyclists”. The Irish Georgian Society also raised concerns about the through-traffic on O’Connell Street and suggested the removal of vehicular traffic, including public transport, to be rerouted along William Street, Parnell Street, Mallow Street and Henry Street to create an orbital route around the historic core.

Limerick Chamber, however, supported a dedicated bus lane along O’Connell St. and recommended that Henry St. should be reconfigured as a two-way system to limit traffic movements and create a more functional orbital loop about the City Centre.

Shannon Group suggested the development of an “integrated coach management scheme to support traffic management measures at key locations”, particularly along Nicholas St. where many tourist attractions are clustered.

## 5.5 Demand Management Measures

Several stakeholders expressed support for the removal of on-street parking to facilitate bus lanes, cycle lanes and public realm improvements.

NCBI suggested increased parking fees, clamping, fines and perhaps a congestion charge for entering the City Centre. However, NCBI also suggested a waiver for those who are car-dependent due to a disability or impairment.

## 5.6 Behavioural Change and Mobility Management Measures

A variety of supporting measures to be promoted by L-SMATS were recommended by stakeholders, including:

- School travel section within L-SMATS including School Streets and Safe Routes to School;
- Cycle training for children and adults;
- Enforcement of parking on footpaths, cycle lanes and bus lanes;
- Car sharing schemes such as GoCar;
- Lower speed limits;
- Promotion of the benefits of sustainable and active travel, e.g. health;
- Support the development of the Connected Autonomous Vehicle sector in the Shannon Area;
- Accessibility of the public realm including removal of street clutter and audio-tactile and visual signals; and
- Membership of the NTA’s Smarter Workplace Program.

IDA stated that “effective behavioural change programmes involve a highly personalised approach aimed at engaging a group of people, making them think about their travel choices, providing them with full information, and encouraging and incentivising the use of alternatives”. Limerick Cycling Campaign commented that they see “enablement rather than promotion as key” as regards behavioural change.





## 5.7 Measures to Promote Integration

Many submissions expressed support for measures to improve integration and interchange opportunities between all modes of transport.

Fix Limerick Bus suggested “several Park and Ride facilities on the outskirts of town for commuting traffic close to motorway junctions with a frequent bus service operating from the Park and Ride” to the City Centre and key interchange nodes. The IDA stated that “integrated ticketing should be a policy objective for the Strategy”.

Limerick Cycling Campaign suggested that “all Park and Rides should have sheltered, secure bike parking facilities”.

The following locations were recommended by several stakeholders for Park and Ride facilities:

- N69 Dock Road;
- R445 Dublin Road;
- R445 Ennis Road;
- Junction 29 on the M7 at Ballysimon/ N24/ R527 Tipperary Road;
- Coonagh (Limerick Chamber recommended that Limerick Institute of Technology’s new campus should be mandated to provide Park and Ride facilities); and
- Junction 5 on the N18 at Cratloe.

## 5.8 Freight Management Measures

A number of submissions recommended an HGV restriction in Limerick City Centre.

Limerick Cycle Campaign suggested that L-SMATS “supports the use of consignment centres and the use of electric cargo bikes to move goods within the City Centre. This ‘last-mile’ delivery by alternative mode should be a key element of package delivery within urban areas”.

## 5.9 Road Infrastructure Proposals

Several submissions recommended that L-SMATS should support the following road projects:

- N69 Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme;
- M20 motorway;
- N24;
- Upgrade of the N19 road access to Shannon Airport and the R471 to the Shannon Free Zone;
- Address capacity issue at the N18/N19 interchange;
- Upgrade of arterial roads from the motorway network to increase capacity including the provision of public transport infrastructure and Park and Ride, for example at R527 Dock Road, R445 Dublin Road, including Junction 28 and R527 Tipperary Road;
- Limerick Northern Distributor Road (LNDR);
- Improve junctions on Plassey Road;
- Introduce slip roads on Annacotty roundabout and Groody roundabout (left on R445 towards Parkway);
- L3126 and Low Road (linking Bunratty village to Bunratty castle); and
- Shannon Crossing at Shannon linking Clare and Limerick, and Foynes and Askeaton.

Limerick Chamber stated that “the development of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road (LNDR) is vital to the creation of a knowledge corridor, that will link the Shannon Free Zone, the Limerick



Institute of Technology Campus at Coonagh and the University of Limerick, in addition to improving accessibility to the National Technology Park”. However, Limerick Cycling Campaign stated that the Strategy should be completely independent of the LNDR project.

Some stakeholders reiterated the need to ensure all urban roads and streets are designed to standards set by *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*.

The Limerick Chapter of the Irish Georgian Society also noted that “the underground terrain of Newtown Pery, including its cellars, sewers and coal holes, should be subject to detailed survey prior to design works being carried out and should be protected during any proposed works of the historic street network”.

## 5.10 Other Matters

Several stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to comment on the emerging draft Strategy at this stage of its development.

A number of submissions requested the formation of a transport committee for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area. One stakeholder suggested that this committee include the relevant local authorities, transport planners, Bus Éireann, An Garda Síochána and the National Transport Authority. Another suggested that Green Schools Travel, cycling campaign groups and other relevant lobby groups should form a transport steering group, similar to Cork’s Transport and Mobility Forum.

Several stakeholders including the HSE, IWA and Green Schools Travel recommended that the NTA should consult with school children and those living with disabilities to gain a greater understanding of their needs. The IWA raised concerns regarding shared spaces and advised that the NTA should carry out a “meaningful consultation process with local groups and people with disabilities” regarding shared spaces and their design to ensure they are accessible for all. The Irish Georgian Society recommended that where shared space is proposed, lower speeds of 10-20kph are proposed in tandem.

A number of additional points were made by stakeholders in relation to policy, including:

- L-SMATS should be on a statutory footing;
- L-SMATS should consider existing health and socio-economic inequalities within the region and incorporate impacts on wider determinants of health into its policies and objectives; and
- L-SMATS should align with the following policy and research documents:
  - Climate Action Plan;
  - Consultation and Dialogue on a National Clean Air Strategy;
  - Get Ireland Active – National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland;
  - National Positive Ageing Strategy;
  - Research 195: Health Benefits from Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure; and
  - Our Sustainable Future – A Framework for Sustainable Development.



## 6 Conclusions

The purpose of the Advance Consultation and Strategy Steering Group process was to clearly communicate the intention to prepare a draft Transport Strategy for the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area, the intended scope and substance of the Strategy, and to seek views and opinions on national, regional and local issues that should be considered in the preparation of the draft Strategy.

Key organisations were actively engaged at critical stages of the Strategy's development. The NTA are extremely grateful for the time and effort of all those who have engaged in the process to date and look forward to further engagement in 2020. All comments will be taken into account and integrated into the draft Strategy where appropriate.

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