

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Enhancing Public Transport
Across Rural Ireland



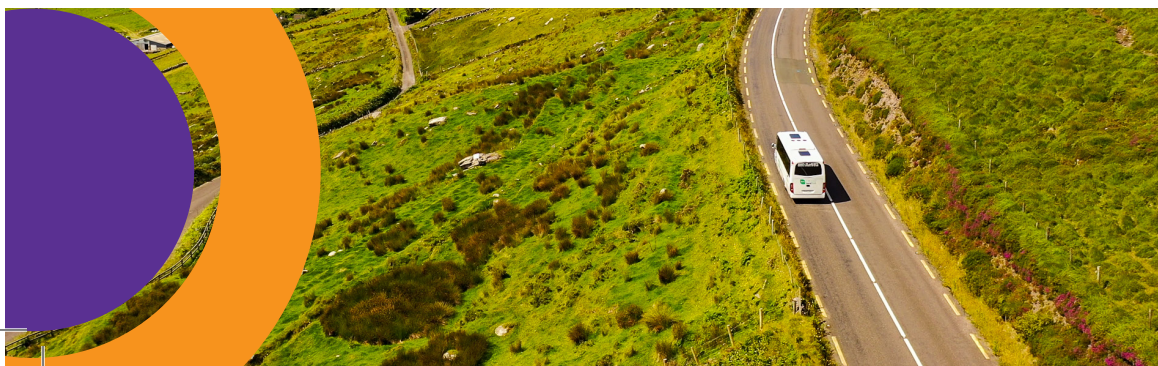
CONNECTING IRELAND - DELIVERING FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Connecting Ireland Plan is a major national public transport initiative developed by the National Transport Authority (NTA), with the aim of increasing connectivity, particularly for people living outside our major cities and towns. The plan aims to improve mobility in rural areas, and it will do this by providing better connections between villages and towns by linking these areas with an enhanced regional network connecting cities and regional centres nationwide.

These improvements will create a more effective and integrated system, which brings people in rural areas to where they want to go, when they want to get there.

WHO IS THE NTA?

The NTA operates under the aegis of the Department of Transport. Established in 2009, the NTA is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to provide high quality, accessible, sustainable transport across Ireland. When people think of the NTA, they often think of investment in public transport services and infrastructure in major urban areas but there's more to the NTA than urban projects. The NTA have a central role in providing public transport for people in towns, local villages, and rural areas as part of our Transport for Ireland (TFI) network.



TFI Local Link buses already operate in every county, providing vital connectivity and serving destinations across the country. Operations are funded and supported by the NTA and managed at local level by people in Local Link offices who are most familiar with their own communities. In 2019, our Local Link services carried a record 2.5 million passengers.

WHY IS CONNECTING IRELAND NEEDED?

The NTA has completed a comprehensive assessment of the existing network of regular public transport services operating across the country. This gives us a better understanding of where improvements are needed. Which include:

- ▶ Addressing gaps in the network, 2 in 5 villages are not connected to their nearby big town
- ▶ Uneven connectivity between places, some areas are well connected while others are not well served
- ▶ Ensuring public transport caters for a range of functions and not just focused on providing options for commuting to work or education
- ▶ Better integrating timetables to make public transport more useful and connections between different public transport options easier

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WHAT CONNECTING IRELAND WILL MEAN TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- ▶ Over 70% of those living outside the Cities will have access to a public transport service that provides at least three return trips each weekday to a nearby town
- ▶ improved mobility options for those in remote areas with the provision of Demand Responsive and other innovative transport services
- ▶ Over 100 new Local Centre connections from rural settlements in the hinterland
- ▶ Over 100 new County Town connections from all types of settlements around County Towns; and
- ▶ Over 60 new Regional Centre/City connections, from all types of settlements around these Centres/Cities.



DESIGNING OUR PROPOSALS

We will apply a range of principles to further develop our proposals into more detail following public consultation. These principles include:

- ▶ Increasing frequency on existing routes to attract more passengers
- ▶ Design useful and integrated timetables
- ▶ Schedule services to arrive at a centre before 09:00, particularly for work and education trips
- ▶ Allow for trips in the middle of the day for those shopping, attending health appointments, or visiting friends and family
- ▶ Schedule a return home at around 17:30 and potentially provide later services for socialising and evening retail where there is demand
- ▶ Provide services seven days a week

- ▶ Provide local routes that connect smaller settlements with the regional public transport network with integrated timetables that allow more interchange opportunities
- ▶ Serve key locations within towns, e.g. hospitals, train stations, educational institutes, etc.



These principles will help guide improvements to fixed route bus services. In sparsely populated areas, we propose to expand the Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) network. DRT is a door to door service that is booked in advance and provides mobility options for those living in remote rural areas, and is complementary to conventional, scheduled passenger transport. We will also look at other innovative approaches to improve public transport connectivity in remote areas.



OUR COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

We held a series of workshops with Local Authorities and National Agencies. These workshops provided the opportunity to better understand gaps in the public transport network at a local level and helped to shape our proposals. This early engagement has helped to ensure we have considered future plans for development and potential changes in travel demand. Collaborating with our partners has been key to the early consultation stages of Connecting Ireland, and will continue to be the case.

CONNECTING IRELAND ALIGNS WITH THE NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK



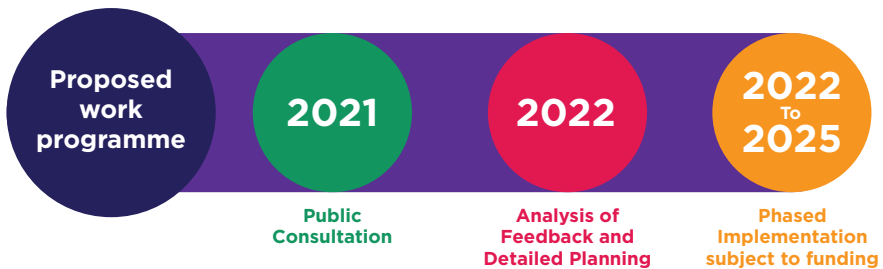
PUBLIC TRANSPORT'S ROLE IN IRELAND'S POST PANDEMIC RECOVERY

Covid-19 has presented one of the largest challenges faced by public transport in recent memory. As we look forward and the sector begins to recover we know it might ordinarily take some time before pre-pandemic levels of usage are regained.

However, the urgent requirement to reduce the transport sectors carbon emissions means we must speed up this recovery as quickly as possible. Connecting Ireland is our clear and ambitious plan to accelerate this recovery and indeed reach even higher levels of public transport use by extending the coverage of the network and improving its effectiveness in meeting new and changing demands for transport.

NOW WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Though we can't meet people face to face during the public consultation process, we will engage with people through online public meetings, engagement with public representatives, local media and most importantly encouraging members of the public to respond to our online survey which can be found on the Connecting Ireland website. We want to know that the principles of design that we propose to use are right for your local area and to hear what else we should consider taking into account as we design your services.



While the NTA has overall responsibility for Connecting Ireland, its success will be a collaborative effort with multiple agencies, the commercial bus sector, our PSO operators and Local Link.



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