# Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Public Consultation Report

Public Consultation Feedback

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan is an ambitious programme of enhancements to create a more integrated, accessible, and sustainable public transport network for rural Ireland.

Last year, over 3,000 people participated in a public consultation process where the NTA asked for your views on the Connecting Ireland proposals. Responses came from a diverse, nationwide audience and findings from the survey tell us that:
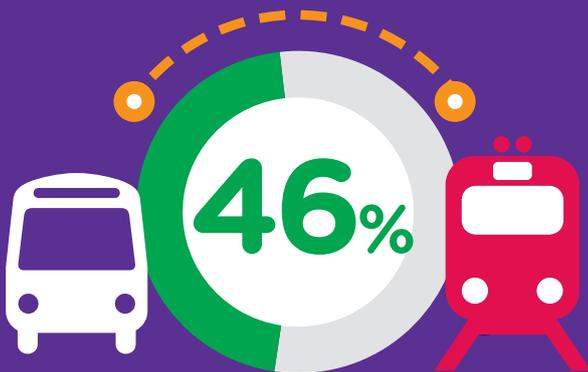
46% of respondents said they want better connections to other services

44% of respondents would like to access a wider range of destinations via public transport

70% of respondents would like more frequent services on their current public transport routes

41% of respondents would like bus stops closer to where they live

65% of respondents said that they feel that Connecting Ireland will lead to a reduction in car dependency and transport emissions

77% of respondents said that they believed Connecting Ireland will provide greater access to services, work & educational opportunities

54% of respondents said that they would use public transport more when Connecting Ireland is delivered

51% of respondents told us that the proposed enhancements for their area under the Connecting Ireland plan is an improvement on what's already there

76%

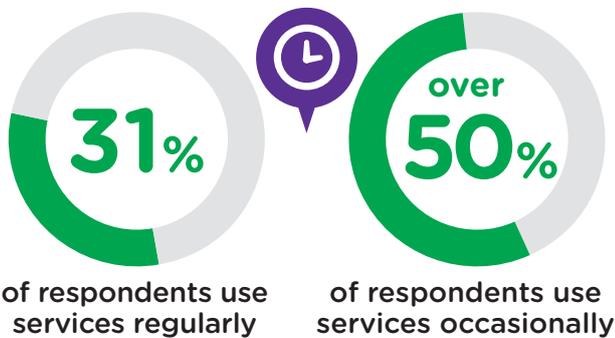of respondents told us that Connecting Ireland will help tackle rural isolation

Response Overview

We heard from all places

Rural Areas	Villages	Towns	Cities
46%	28%	22%	4%

We heard from all ages

< **18** Years

65 + Years

We heard from respondents who use public transport at different frequencies

31%

of respondents use services regularly

over **50%**

of respondents use services occasionally

We heard from respondents who use different types of public transport

Bus Éireann & other bus services — 79%

TFI Local Link — 22%

Irish Rail — 53%

Taxi/Hackney — 21%

Community Car — 1%

Contents Page

1

Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

This Post-Consultation Report sets out how the Connecting Ireland public consultation process was managed, how many people interacted with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and summarises the issues and concerns raised throughout the process.

1.1   Process

The public consultation ran for a period of six weeks, from Friday 29 October 2021 until 10 December 2021. A total of 3,491 submissions were received via both an online feedback form and by email.

6 Weeks Formal Consultation

3491 Submissions Received

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated Government restriction on travel were in effect during this period, so the public consultation format was adapted to ensure compliance with guidelines at the time. An online public consultation was provided to allow stakeholders and the general public to view maps and project information and to submit their feedback in a safe and accessible environment. The public was informed of the consultation via traditional media articles, newspaper, radio advertisements and by online methods such as social media posts.

780 Radio Adverts

52 Newspaper Adverts

Number of Posts	Social Media Platform
23	Twitter
21	Facebook
2	LinkedIn
9	Instagram

The Connecting Ireland Project Team also held project briefings with Elected Representatives and the general public during the six-week consultation period.

5 Elected Representative Webinars

45 Attendees

3 Public Webinars

137 Attendees

Following the close of the consultation period all submissions were collated and analysed to develop this consultation report.

1.2   Submission Analysis

Following the close of the consultation period 3,491 submissions were received via email and the online feedback form with the majority of submissions via the online feedback form. There were no submissions received by post or by phone.

Consultation Response Method	Number
Online Feedback Form	3189
Written Submissions	302
Total	3491

A coding framework was developed to analyse the written submissions. This was used to provide a balanced analysis of the views expressed in these more detailed responses. This output was joined with the quantitative analysis of closed questions in the online feedback form. In combination, this analysis provides a picture of the views expressed by respondents. A summary of the feedback received via the online feedback form is outlined in detail in Section 6.2 of this report. A summary of the written submissions received is detailed in Section 6.3.

1.3   Key Consultation Findings:

The finding illustrates the breakdown of submissions received by stakeholder type.

3343
Individuals

12 Members of the
Oireachtas

192 Organisations/
Groups

21 Councillors
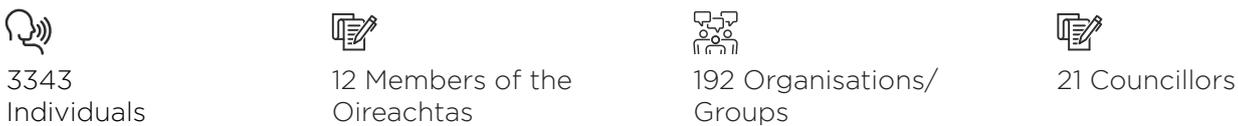
1.3.1   Overview of the Online Feedback Form Findings

• 45% of respondents strongly agreed that Connecting Ireland will provide a better rural transport network and reduce rural isolation.

• 47% of respondents strongly agreed that Connecting Ireland will provide greater access to services and work and educational opportunities and will improve the economic competitiveness of rural Ireland.

Connecting Ireland will provide a better
rural transport network and reduce rural isolation
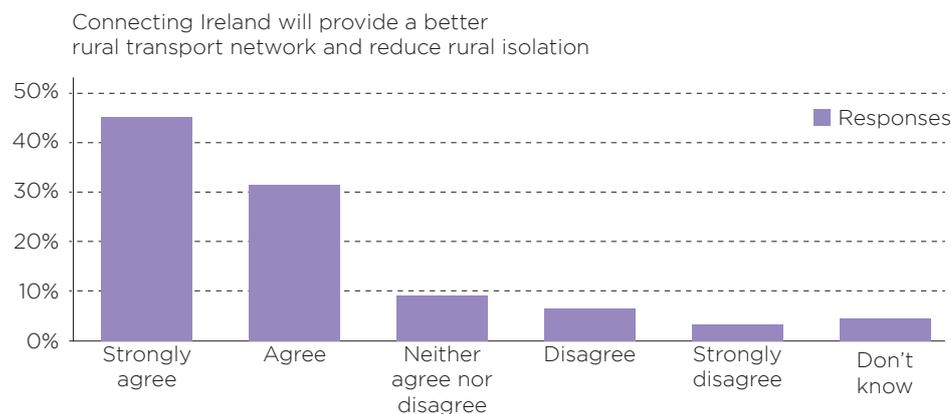
• 38% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that Connecting Ireland will lead to a reduction in car dependency and transport emissions in rural Ireland.

• 27% of respondents rated their current public transport services as Very Poor, and visiting a friend or relative, socialising and shopping were the most popular reasons for using public transport. 70% of respondents highlighted that more frequent services would improve their current transport services and 46% asked for better connections between services.

- When choosing between the way Public Transport Services are structured in the future, users generally would like to see more direct services. 52% said they would prefer directness to increased frequency involving an interchange when making a journey, whereas 48% would prefer the opposite.

- Bus services were the predominant choice of public transport for respondents with Bus Éireann or other private operators the highest at 79%. This was followed by Rail services at 53% and TFI Local Link Services at 22%.

When thinking about using public transport, which option would you prefer?

48%

52%

■ Less frequent but more direct services from my home to my destination

■ More frequent but indirect services from my home to my destination, where I have to change services once on the way
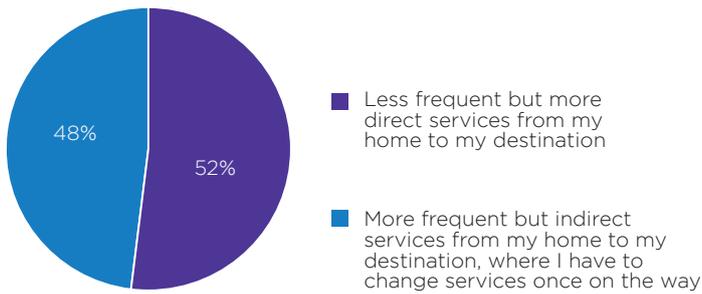
Feedback Form Respondents Profile

- Over half of the respondents to the online feedback form identified as women and the majority of respondents were between the ages of 35-44.

58% Women

38% Men

10% identified as having a disability

The top five counties that respondents lived in were:

- Cork at 14%
- Galway at 9%
- Cavan at 7%
- Meath at 7%
- Kildare at 6%.

46% described where they lived as a rural area and 28% said they live in a village, while 22% said a town and 4% a city. Working remotely did not appear to be an option for 46% of respondents.

74% Rural

26% Urban

1.4   Overview of Written Submissions

In total 302 written submissions were received by the Project Team via the project email address. The quantity and type of information in the written submissions varied greatly. Some respondents provided detailed assessments and included documents such as maps and timetables as attachments.

Key Themes

All written submissions were analysed and summarised under 11 key themes. These key themes were broken down into further sub-themes which are presented and discussed throughout in Section 6.3 of this report. The following table outlines the key themes.

Key Themes
Environmental Issues
Alternatives
Infrastructure
Need for the Project
Public Consultation Process
Socio-Economic
Active Travel
Plan Design
Implementation
Integration
Local Issues

Overview of the key themes

- ■ Environment
- ■ Need for project
- ■ Active Travel
- ■ Integration
- ■ Alternatives
- ■ Local issues
- ■ Plan design
- ■ Public Consultation process
- ■ Infrastructure
- ■ Socio- Economic
- ■ Implementation
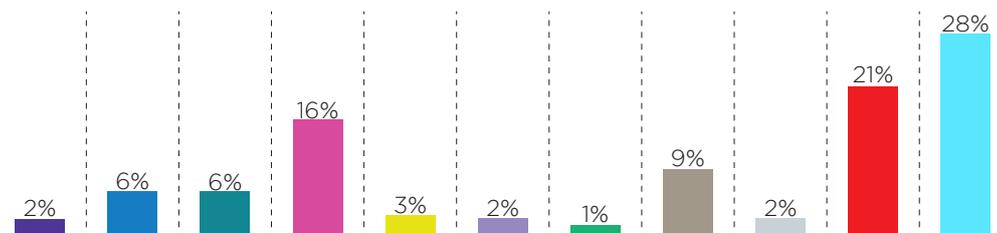
The three key themes that received the most most references were;

1. Local Issues 28%
2. Lack of Integration 21%
3. Strategic Need for Connecting Ireland16%

1.5   Next Steps

This consultation report sets out how the public consultation was managed, how many people interacted with the Connecting Ireland Project Team on its proposals, some characteristics of those people and summarises the issues and concerns raised in the public consultation process.

The transparency of the public consultation process is supported by the production of this consultation report to demonstrate that the points raised through the submissions received are being recorded and considered. The feedback received in the submissions as part of this consultation are now being considered by the project team and will feed into the development of the transport strategy for Connecting Ireland.

2

Introduction

2. Introduction

2.1   Project Background

Connecting Ireland has been developed by the NTA to increase transport connectivity, specifically for individuals that live outside major cities and towns. The Connecting Ireland plan aims to improve mobility in rural areas of Ireland and will do this by providing improved connections between rural areas and towns and villages, and by connecting towns and villages into an enhanced regional network connecting cities and regional centres across the country. Connecting Ireland aims to improve public transport for rural communities making it more beneficial for users and will do this by:

• Adding new services

• Enhancing the current Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) network which will meet the needs of people living in very remote locations

• Improving the services that currently serve communities and towns nationwide.

2.1.1   Issues in the Current Network

The NTA completed a comprehensive nationwide assessment of the existing networks of regular public transport services on a county-by-county basis. This provided the NTA with a clear understanding of how well the public transport system serves our towns and villages in terms of service levels at certain times of the day and week. The assessment has also assisted the NTA in identifying transport deficits in temporal and spatial terms where the option to use public transport is simply not available.

2.1.2   An Innovative Approach

As Ireland's settlement pattern is highly dispersed it is difficult to secure provision of cost-effective public transport suiting all needs. In areas that are quite isolated, there may be little or no demand for public transport which means that providing a conventional bus service may not be the best use of public funds. Other options may better match the cost of supply to demand. Other factors that complicate the delivery of cost-effective public transport in rural Ireland include an ageing population with mobility issues and the younger population migrating to urban areas of Ireland for education and employment.

2.1.3   Connections can be better

The current deficit in weekend, evening and off-peak levels of service reduces the usefulness of the service and results in poor levels of patronage. Timetables that do not meet the needs of the public result in wasted provision. The new service enhancements that are proposed by Connecting Ireland aim to tackle these issues.

2.1.4   Car Reliance

The transport sector is one of the largest contributions to Ireland's carbon emissions. People relying too much on their cars is the key reason for this. 7 out of every 10 trips nationally are taken by car, to make matters worse, half of the short trips under 2km in length are made by car. As a society, we need to change our travel behaviour radically and use alternative options to travel more often rather than always taking the car. If we do not do this, we will continue to experience high volumes of traffic congestion when travelling to and from our towns and cities, and also continue to damage our already rapidly changing climate.

2.1.5   The Value of Timely Information Sharing and Collaboration

A key principle of Connecting Ireland is to have a collaborative and partnership approach when planning the public transport network. In addition to the requirement to react to the demand generative effect of planning residential, employment, education, retail and leisure development throughout the country, the country is moving on from the impacts of COVID-19 and new transport behaviour patterns and trends are emerging. Examples of the latter include the permanence of the shift from working in the office to working from home, increasing indigenous tourism and leisure travel and the objective of Local Authorities to manage traffic in favour of creating new public and pedestrian spaces at the centres of towns and villages. Sharing information on these developments early will be important to ensure that public transport improvements will be in place when needed to meet new and increased travel demand.

2.2   Public consultation

The public consultation on the first draft of the Connecting Ireland set of planned service improvements ran for 6 weeks from Friday the 29th of October 2021 until the 10th of December 2021. A total of 3,491 submissions were received, by email and via the online feedback form.

A Public Consultation Document entitled Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Report detailing the proposed future for public transport in rural communities was published. A dedicated webpage on the NTA website (https://www.nationaltransport.ie/connecting-ireland/) was created to allow stakeholders and the general public to view the proposals, the information regarding the project itself and to submit their feedback on any aspect.

To raise awareness of and promote participation in the consultation, a wide range of communication tools were used. These are described in Section 3 of this report. The public were encouraged to make submissions by phone, post, email or online via feedback form available on the website.

The Project Team is committed to continuing to engage with stakeholders and members of the public. Feedback will be welcome at all stages of the development of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan. We would like to thank everyone who submitted to this public consultation or has engaged with us on the project to date.

2.3   Consultation objectives

The objectives for this consultation were:

- To gauge acceptance by the public of both the principles and the specific service proposals set out in the first draft of the Connecting Ireland plan;
- To collate information on local transport needs, any missed opportunities, etc. To inform the development of second and subsequent iterations of the plan;
- To provide information about the project and to explain the assumptions, methodology, timelines and constraints shaping it;
- To develop relationships with communities and key stakeholders and to facilitate information sharing for this and future iterations of the plan;
- To encourage members of the public and stakeholders to engage directly with the plan via the public consultation, the project website, and the project phone line to ensure that the NTA can build on its reputation as an Authority which is approachable and listens to the views of consultees;
- To ensure consultation and engagement is carried out in a transparent and meaningful way despite the restrictions posed by Covid-19.

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated Government restrictions/ guidelines were in force during the consultation period, and so the format was adapted to ensure compliance with the guidelines and restrictions on travel and social interaction.
The methods used to achieve these objectives are outlined in Section 3 'Approach to Public Consultation'.

3

Approach to Public Consultation

3. Approach to Public Consultation

This section describes the communication tools used by the project team to ensure the consultation was both meaningful and transparent, with ease of access to information for all stakeholders to participate in the consultation process.

3.1 Project Timeline

In 2020 and 2021 numerous workshops were held by the NTA with Local Authorities and National Agencies in order to gain a better understanding of the issues of the public transport system at local levels across the country. This comprehensive analysis helped to inform the development of the draft Connecting Ireland plan which was prepared for public consultation.

In Autumn 2021, the public consultation phase was held online due to Covid-19 and Government guidelines. The NTA engaged with members of the public through webinars, held briefings with elected representatives, and published details of the consultation through local media and online via social media channels to encourage people to view proposals and submit a response. All feedback received from this public consultation will be analysed and considered by the Project Team. The NTA envisage new and improved public transport services will be implemented on a phased basis from 2022 to 2026.

3.2 Accessibility and Inclusivity

A number of additional steps were taken by the project team to maximise engagement among stakeholders against a backdrop of Covid-19 restrictions. The public consultation itself and all stakeholder engagement was held online. Stakeholders and members of the public could access all project information online as well as submit their feedback via the feedback form or by email or phone. All project information, maps and the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan Report was available in hard copy if requested.

The NTA is committed to ensuring that the NTA website is fully accessible. All consultation materials were available in both English and Irish versions. Accessible and easy-to-read versions were also available to download. A recorded Connecting Ireland webinar with a live sign language interpreter was also available for download from the website. An Irish Sign Language interpreter was employed to share information of the public consultations via social media (see appendix H).

3.3 Pre-Consultation Briefings

Throughout 2020 and 2021 the project team held a series of workshops with Local Authorities, Interested Bodies and National Agencies that helped to shape the Connecting Ireland proposals. These workshops provided the opportunity to better understand gaps in the public transport network at a local level, future plans for development and potential changes in travel demand. Collaborating with these key partners has been key for the early consultation stages of Connecting Ireland and will continue to be the case.

35 Pre-Consultation
Briefings

3.3.1 Local Authorities Webinars

28 briefings took place pre consultation for 26 Local Authorities from November 2020 to March 2021 with a total of 333 attendees. For a full list of Local Authorities see Appendix L.

28 Local
Authority Briefings

333 Attendees

3.3.2   Interested Bodies Webinars

16 Stakeholder briefings were facilitated pre consultation for Interested Bodies from March 2021 to September 2021 with a total of 192 attendees. These webinars allowed the Interested Bodies to listen to a presentation on the Connecting Ireland proposals, meet the project team and to ask any questions. Interested Bodies included organisations such as Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Chambers Ireland and Bus Éireann. For a detailed list see Appendix L.

15 Interested
Bodies Briefings

192 Attendees

4

Informing the Public

4. Informing the Public

To generate awareness of the project and to facilitate public participation, a range of communications tools were used to publicise the public consultation, including:

- Press release issued to national and local press marking the launch of the Connecting Ireland plan and initiative by the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan, T.D.;

- Engagement through print media;

- Social media updates on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter;

- Notification of consultation on the homepage NTA and TFI website;

- Publication of Public Consultation Document;

- Stakeholder engagement with various groups and organisations; and

- Targeted webinar events, including one specific accessibility webinar. These channels are discussed in more detail in this section.

4.1 Project website

The Connecting Ireland plan is available at www.nationaltransport.ie/connecting-ireland/. The website was updated with all the relevant public consultation information and went live on 29th October 2021. A screenshot of the website can be found in Appendix C. The website featured a 'Document Library' where visitors to the site could access and browse all plan information documents. The Document Library had the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility plan in both English and Irish versions, an easy-to-read format, and an accessible format of these van be viewed in Appendix H. The Connecting Ireland Brochure was also available in English and Irish versions and an easy-to-read format, see Appendix D. All documents in the Document Library allowed visitors to view, download or print the documents. A Connecting Ireland Public Webinar with a Sign Language Interpreter was also available in the Document Library.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) website also featured frequently asked questions (FAQ) for the Connecting Ireland project. The website detailed the project timeline benefits of the Connecting Ireland project and members of the public also had the opportunity to share the Connecting Ireland page on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or via email. In addition to the NTA website, the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility plan was also published on the Transport for Ireland (TFI) website and on all 17 TFI Local Link websites.

4.2 Project email

A specific Connecting Ireland email was made available at connectingireland@nationaltransport.ie and went live on 29th October 2021.

This email address was used to receive submissions during the public consultation process, to respond to any queries that came in and send out project updates to stakeholders.

The project email address was also advertised online, in print media and in the consultation brochure. The project email is continuously monitored, and any feedback, questions or comments continue to be dealt with even though the formal public consultation has closed.

4.3 Project phoneline

The Connecting Ireland phoneline was available at +353 0818 300 121.

The phone line was managed during office hours and a voicemail was set for anyone who contacted during out of office hours. Similar to the project email address, the phone line was also advertised in print media and in the consultation brochure. The phone line was used to respond to queries during the consultation period and was deactivated at the end of the consultation period. A forwarding message for any further enquiries was enabled directing people to contact the Connecting Ireland team via the Connecting Ireland email address.

4.4   The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan Report

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan Report detailed the public transport proposals and was available on the project website. The Summary report was available in an English or Irish version as well as accessible and easy-to-read versions. See Appendix H.

4.5   Connecting Ireland Public Consultation Brochure

The public consultation eight-page brochure provided information on the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility plan and details of the public consultation process. The brochure was available to download from the NTA website and an Irish Language version was also available. Similarly, to the Summary Report, the brochure was available as an accessible and easy-to-read version. Copies of the English and Irish versions of the Connecting Ireland brochures are provided in Appendix B, D and E of this report.

4.6   Network Maps

The Connecting Ireland website included a section under 'proposals' that utilised an interactive map of Ireland with county maps, proposed networks, and route tables for each of the 26 counties within the State. Clicking on a particular county brought up a popup listing a high level summary of the main proposals for that county and links to further details. Each link had three pages – the current network, the proposed network tables, and the proposed network map. Irish versions were also made available for counties with Gaeltacht areas. A sample can be viewed in Appendix K.

4.7   Stakeholder Webinars

Online webinars took place during the public consultation period due to Covid 19 restrictions. These webinars were held for members of the public and Elected Representatives to gain a better understanding of the gaps in the network and how the Connecting Ireland project plans to improve public transport on a local level. The webinars gave stakeholders an opportunity to listen to a presentation on the Connecting Ireland project and ask the project team any questions that would assist in making a submission.

4.7.1   Elected Representative Webinars

Four Councillor webinars and one Oireachtas webinar were held via Microsoft Teams over four days in November 2021 with 45 attendees in total. All Elected Representatives were invited with one webinar facilitated as an overflow for those that could not attend their original time slot. An email invitation was issued to Councillors, TDs and Senators and a copy of this invitation can be found in Appendix J. Attendance and dates of webinars can be viewed in Appendix L.

5 Elected Representative Webinars

45 Attendees

4.7.2   Public Webinars

Three public webinars took place on the 15th, 16th and 18th of November 2021 with 137 attendees in total. These webinars gave the public an opportunity to listen to a short presentation on the project and proposed plans, raise concerns and to ask any questions that would assist them in making a submission. One public webinar utilising an Irish Sign Language interpreter was recorded and this recording was made available on the website for subsequent viewing or download. Detail on dates and times can be viewed in Appendix L.

3 Public Webinars

137 Attendees

4.8   Newspaper adverts

Print adverts publicising the public consultation were published in 26 regional newspapers on two separate dates in November 2021. In total there were 52 adverts publicising the consultation. For a full list of regional papers please see Appendix L. The newspaper advertisement included a description of the project, details of the public consultation, and instructions on how to submit feedback. A copy of the newspaper adverts and a list of regional papers can be found in Appendix F.

52 Newspaper Adverts

4.9   Stakeholders Emails

Emails were sent to Connecting Ireland stakeholders on 29th October 2021 advising them of the consultation. A copy of the email that was sent to stakeholders can be found in Appendix I.

4.10   Press release

A press releases was issued to national and regional press on the 29th of October 2021 to coincide with the start of the public consultation for Connecting Ireland. A sample of the press release can be found in Appendix K.

4.11   Media Spokesperson

Throughout the public consultation period, the NTA had a nominated project spokesperson who was available for interviews with the media to ensure the public consultation process was widely publicised. There were four regional interviews promoting the consultation during November and December 2021. Please see Appendix L for radio stations.

4.12   Radio Adverts

Radio adverts publicising the public consultation were broadcasted across regional radio stations such as Radio Kerry and Midlands 103. There were 130 adverts scheduled per week across 13 regionals radio stations with a total of 780 adverts for the six-week consultation process. For a full list of stations advertised on, see Appendix L.

780 Radio Adverts

13 Regional Radio Stations

4.13   Online and social media

Notices of the public consultation period were published on the NTA LinkedIn page and the TFI Facebook and Twitter pages. Digital communication tools were heavily relied on during the consultation period given the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. Consultation launch information and details of how stakeholders and members of the public could make a submission were posted on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn as well as through the NTA and TFI websites. Samples of these posts can be viewed in Appendix H.

These communication channels were used to maximise engagement with the public and stakeholders and to promote a high level and diverse range of submissions and project awareness. Reminders of the public consultation closing dates were also posted in the days leading up to the close of the consultation.

Overall, the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan Generated 21 Facebook posts and 23 tweets, with a reach of 65,427 impressions on Facebook and 52,941 impressions on Twitter. On LinkedIn there were 2 posts generated with 8,504 impressions and on Instagram there were 19 posts generated with 3,299 impressions.

Platform	Impressions
23 Tweets	52, 941 impressions
21 Facebook Posts	65, 427 impressions
2 LinkedIn Posts	8,504 impressions
19 Instagram posts	3,299 impressions

5

Feedback and Submissions

5. Publicising the Public Consultation

5.1 Introduction

The public consultation period initially ran for six weeks from the 29th of October 2021 to the 10th of December 2021. As the Project Team is committed to continuing to engage with all stakeholders, particularly people living in rural Ireland, feedback received after December 10th has also been considered where deemed appropriate. Submissions were invited via the following channels:

- Via the online feedback form
- By post using a dedicated Connecting Ireland address
- By telephone using a dedicated free phone line at 0818 300 121
- By email to connectingireland@nationaltransport.ie

There were 3,491 valid submissions received in total during the public consultation period with 3189 online feedback form responses and 302 email submissions. The majority of submissions received were from private individuals, however, a number of submissions were received from groups/organisations. The information presented in this section is a summary of the feedback received. Feedback is not presented in order of importance.

Submission Type	No of Submissions
Online Feedback Form	3189
Written Submissions	302
Total Submissions	3491

All submissions received via the online feedback form and by email have been considered by the project team. The consultation received most responses from private individuals, 110 responses came from groups/organisation and 33 from Elected Representatives. A list of the organisations/groups and Elected Representatives who shared their names in their submissions can be found in Appendix M.

Stakeholder groups who made a submission.

3343
Individuals

192 Organisations/
Groups

33 Elected
Representatives

Breakdown of Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Group	Number
Not for Profit	19
Local Authorities	9
Commercial Bus Operators	6
Community Groups	70
Business Groups/Community Growth	33
State Agencies	11
Lobby Groups	7
Sporting Associations	4
Business Organisations	5
Educational Institutes	7
Local Government	15
TFI Local Links	6

Breakdown of Elected Representatives who made a submission

Elected Reps

- Councillors 64%
- Local TD's 27%
- Senators 6%
- MEP's 3%
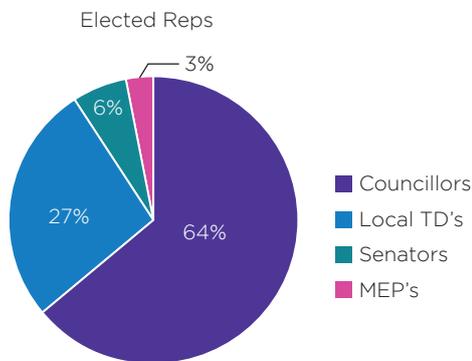
Of the 3189 submissions received via the online feedback form, there were 62 that had written attachments as part of their submission and 1764 feedback forms included written responses to three open-ended questions. These responses, along with the 302 written submissions, were captured, analysed and coded and summarised into 11 key themes and presented in Section 6.3 Overview of Written Submissions. Each key theme is presented as a main chapter in Section 6.3.

169 references were captured during the coding process of the written submissions that included comments that were deemed out of scope, as these related to queries on when the consultation was over and where to go for more information on the proposals.

Open-Ended Questions in the Online Feedback Form

1. What do you think could improve your current public transport service?

2. Can you think of a time where you were unable to attend an appointment?
   If yes please specify?

3. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about the
   Connecting Ireland Plan?

A coding framework was developed to analyse the written submissions and to provide an independent analysis of the views expressed in these submission responses. This was joined with the quantitative analysis of the closed questions presented in the online feedback form. Together this provided a clear picture of the breadth of views expressed by respondents.

This report is intended to set out how the public consultation process was managed, how many people interacted with the project, and summarise the issues and concerns raised throughout the public consultation process. Individual submissions will not be responded to or addressed on an individual basis through the design process, however, all feedback received as part of this public consultation will be considered by the Project Team and will inform the next steps.

5.2 Overview of Feedback Form Submissions

In total, there were 3189 online feedback forms completed. The online feedback form had a total of 26 questions. The order in which the questions were asked can be found below.

5.2.1 Profile of the stakeholder

Respondents were asked if they were completing the feedback form as a representative of an organisation with 90% or respondents not representing an organisation.

Before we start, are you completing the survey
as a representative of an organisation

10%

90%

■ No

■ Yes
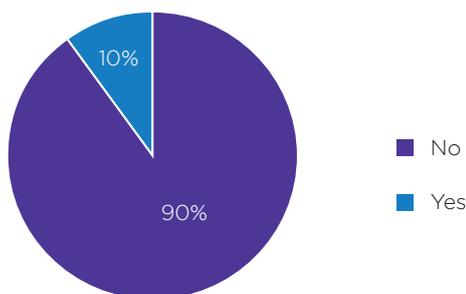
5.2.2 Do you currently use public transport?

36% of respondents answered yes, but not often only a few times a year. 17% of respondents said yes regularly, most days/weekdays while 18% said never. 15% of respondents said yes sometimes once or twice a month. Lastly, 14% said yes often, at least once a week.

Do you currently use public transport?
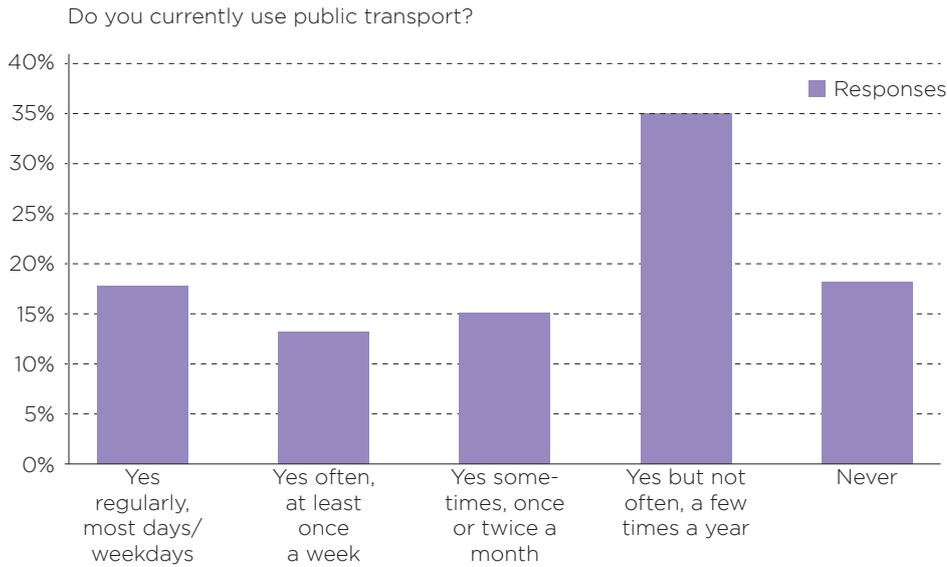
5.2.3 What type of ticket do you use most often?

Cash ticket was the most popular form of ticket use at 36%, followed by online ticket at 25%. TFI Leap Card use was 21% while 18% used the free travel pass/ DSP card.

Do you currently use public transport?
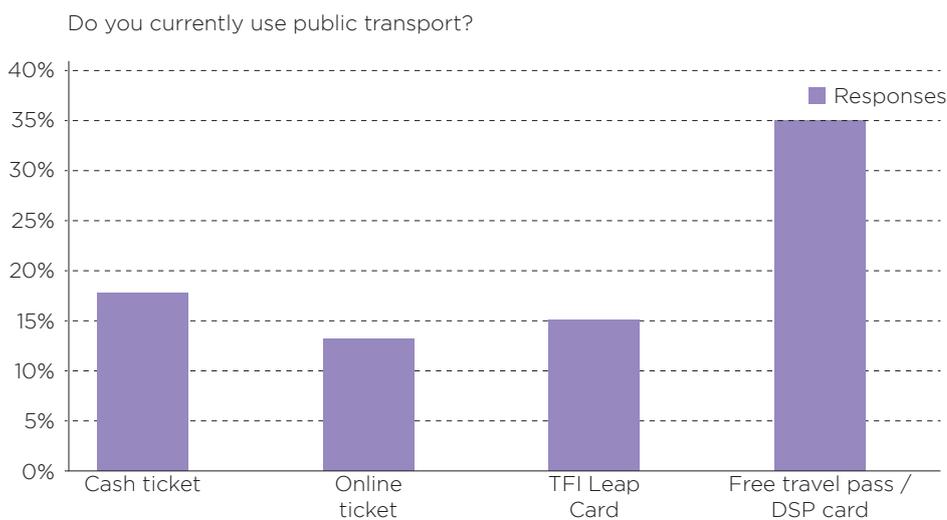
5.2.4 What activities do you use public transport for? Choose one or many?

41% chose visiting friends, relatives and socialising and 41% noted shopping trips as the most frequent activity for using public transport. Day trips and tourism was at 39%, followed by going to medical or other appointments at 31%. 30% said they use it to travel to work while 30% of stakeholders said they use public transport to attend an event. Travel to school or college was at 17% while 13% of stakeholders said they use public transport for something else.

What do you think could improve your current public transport services? Choose one or many.
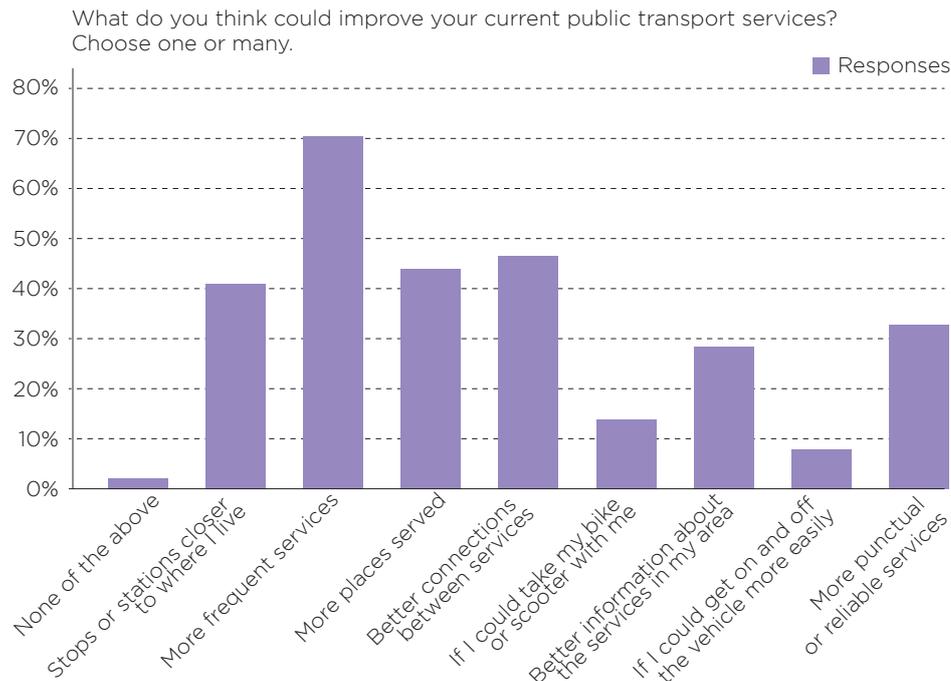
5.2.5 What types of public transport do you use? Choose one or many?

The most popular answer was Bus Eireann or other bus services at 79%. Rail services were the second most popular answer with 53% followed by 22% saying they use TFI Local Link services. 21% said they use Taxi or Hackney services followed by 1% saying they use a community car.

What types of public transport do you use? Choose one or many
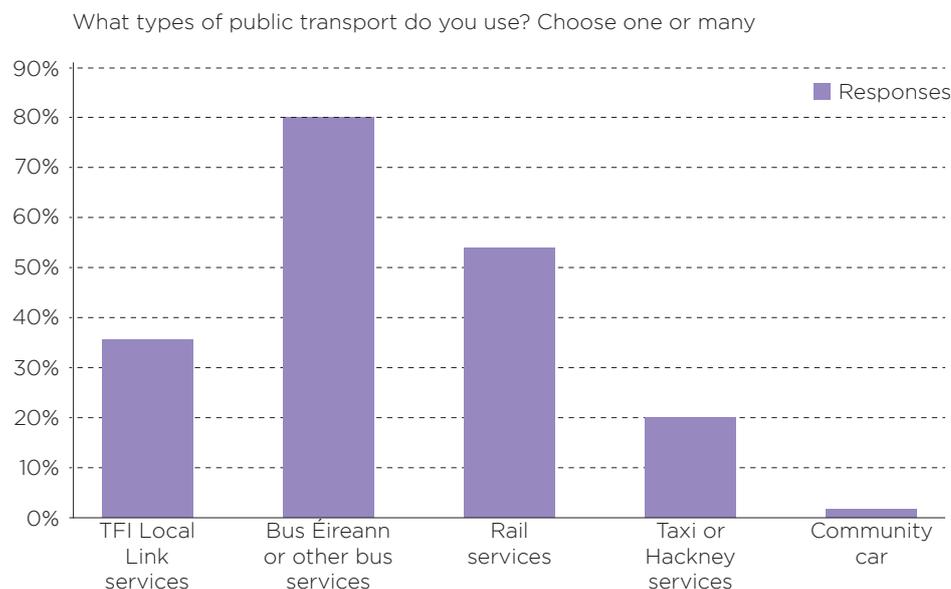
5.2.6 How would you rate your current public transport service?

27% said very poor followed by 25% fair. 22% of respondents said poor while 16 % of respondents said good. Very good was at 6% while I have no service was 4%.

How would you rate your current public transport services?
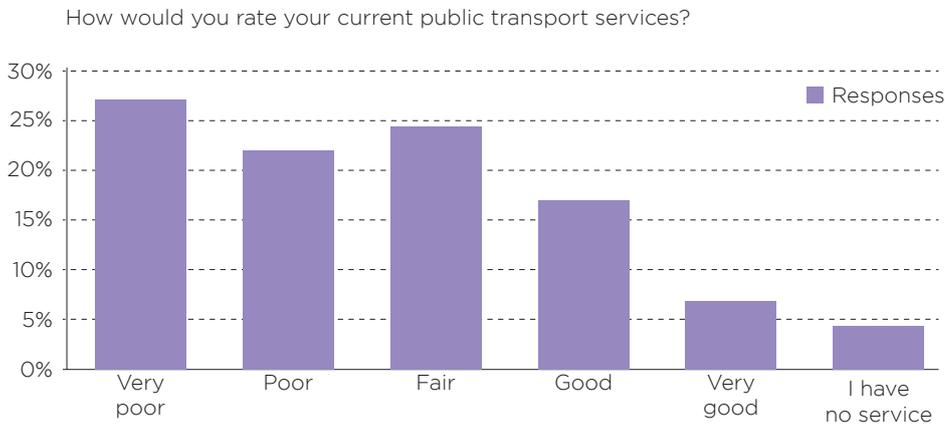
5.2.7 What do you think could improve your current public transport service? Choose one or many

70% answered more frequent services and 46% said better connections between services. More places served was at 44% followed by 41% saying that they think stops or stations closer to where they live would improve the current services. 33% said that more punctual or reliable services would improve transport services followed by 28% saying that they need better information about the services in their area. 15% said they would like to be able to take their bike or scooter with them on public transport and 7% said if they could get on and off the vehicle more easily.

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What do you think could improve your current public transport services? Choose one or many.
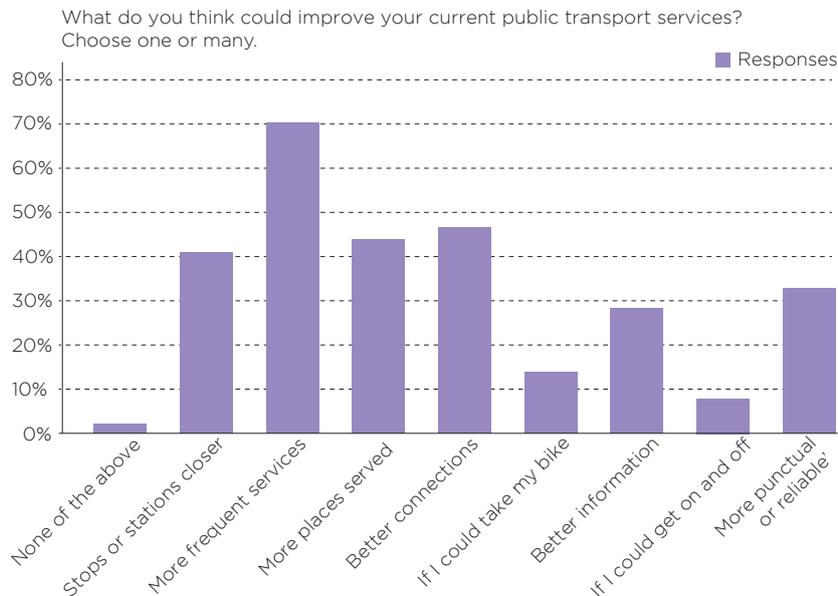
5.2.8   Do you have access to a car either as a driver or passenger?

64% of respondents said yes, they have access all of the time while 24% said yes some of the time and 12% of respondents answered no that they do not have access to a car either as a driver or passenger.

Do you have access to a car either as a driver or passenger?
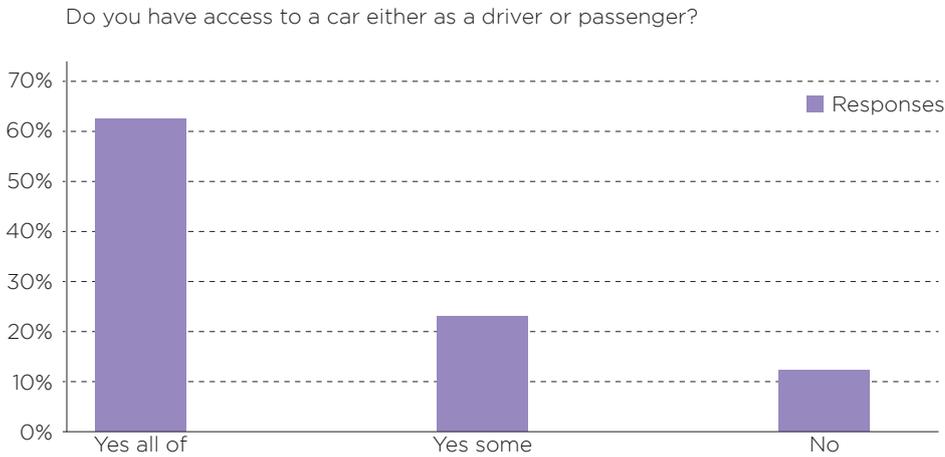
5.2.9   Can you think of a time when you were unable to attend an appointment or go somewhere because you had no transport available to you?

45% of respondents said that they have not been able to attend somewhere because they had no transport available. 38% of respondents answered yes sometimes while 17% said that they often were unable to attend somewhere due to having no public transport available.

Can you think of time where you were unable to attend an appointment or go somewhere because you had no transport available to you?
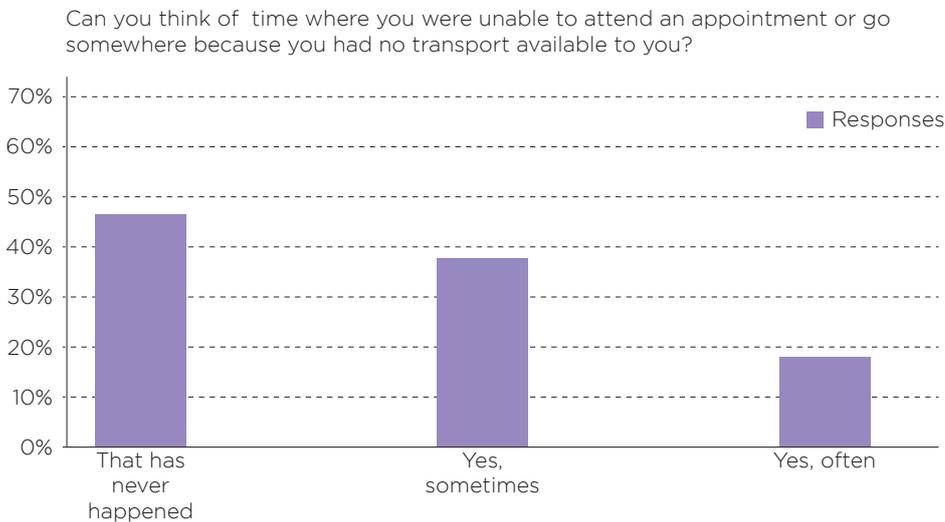
5.2.10 Have you ever not taken a job or educational/training opportunity because you had no way of getting there?

55% of respondents answered no while 45% answered yes.

Have you ever not taken a job or educational / training opportunity because you had no way of getting there?

- Yes 45%
- No 55%
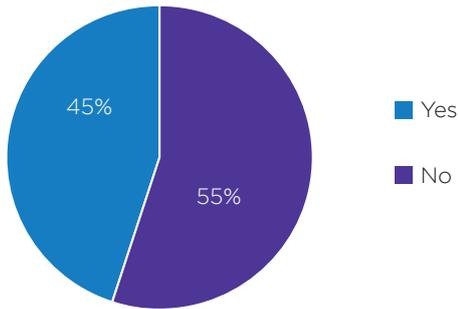
5.2.11 Connecting Ireland will provide greater access to services, work and educational opportunities and improve the economic competitiveness of rural Ireland

47% of respondents said that they strongly agree that connecting Ireland will provide greater access to services and work and educational opportunities and will improve the economic competitiveness of rural Ireland. 31% said they agree while 11% said they neither agree nor disagree. 5% of respondents said they disagree, 3% said they strongly disagree while 4% answered that they don't know.

Connecting Ireland will provide greater access to services and work and educational opportunities and improve the economic competitiveness of rural Ireland.
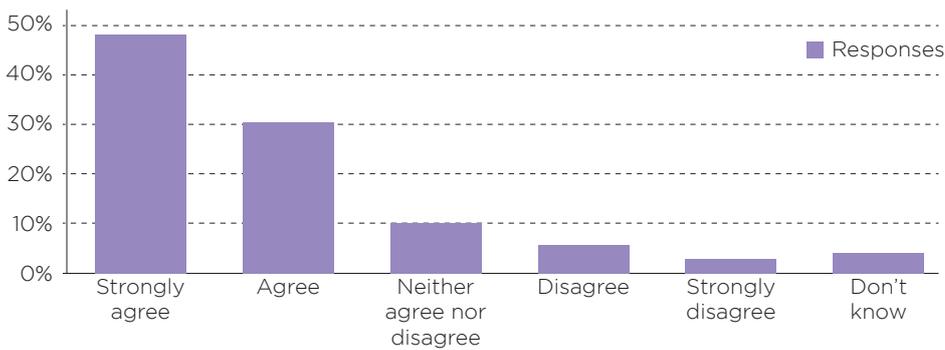
5.2.12 Connecting Ireland will provide a better rural transport network and reduce rural isolation

45% of respondents said that they strongly agree with the statement that Connecting Ireland will provide a better rural transport network and reduce rural isolation. 31% said they agree while 9% were neutral. 7% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed while 4% of respondents said they did not know.

Connecting Ireland will provide a better rural transport network and reduce rural isolation
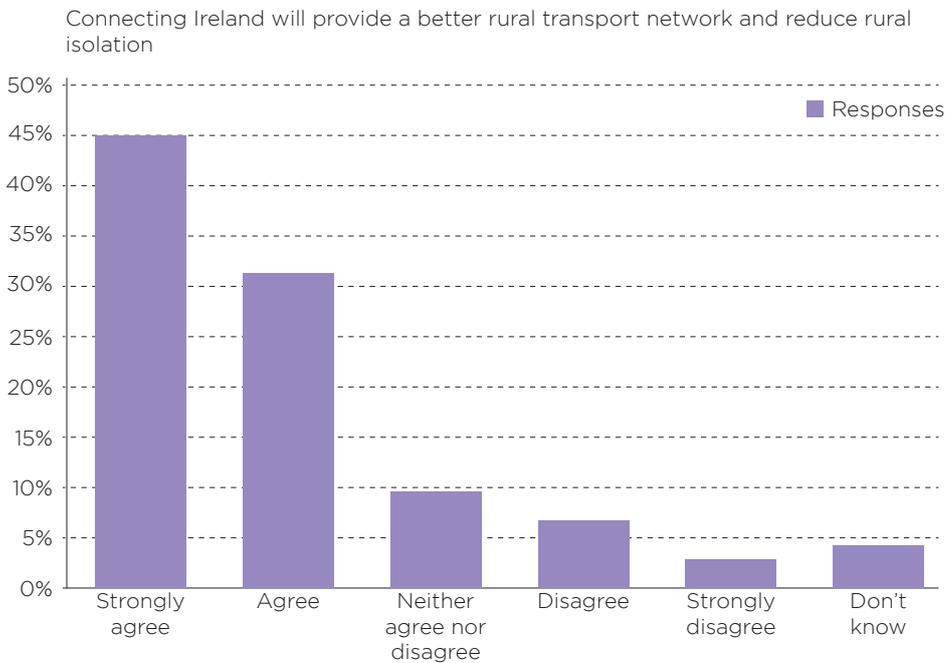
5.2.13 Connecting Ireland will lead to a reduction in car dependency and transport emissions in rural Ireland

38% of respondents said that they strongly agree with the statement, 28% said that they agree while 14% of respondents said they neither agree nor disagree. 6% said they strongly disagree and 4% of respondents said they don't know if Connecting Ireland will lead to a reduction in car dependency and transport emissions in rural Ireland.

Connecting Ireland will provide a better rural transport network and reduce rural isolation
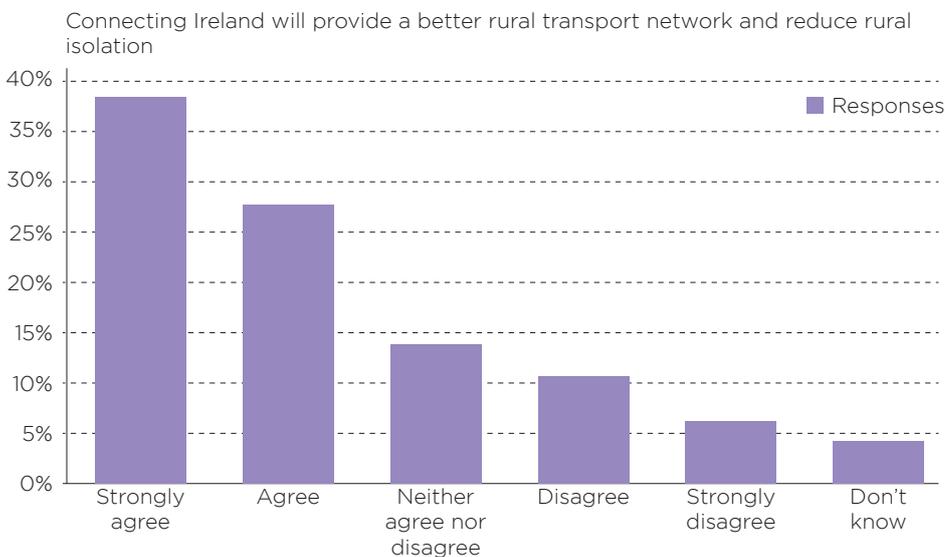
5.2.14 When thinking about public transport, which option do you prefer?

52% of respondents said they would prefer to have less frequent but more direct services while 48% said they would prefer to have more frequent but indirect services where they have to change service once on the way.

When thinking about using public transport, which option would you prefer?

■ Less frequent but more direct services from my home to my destination

■ More frequent but indirect services from my home to my destination, where I have to change services once on the way
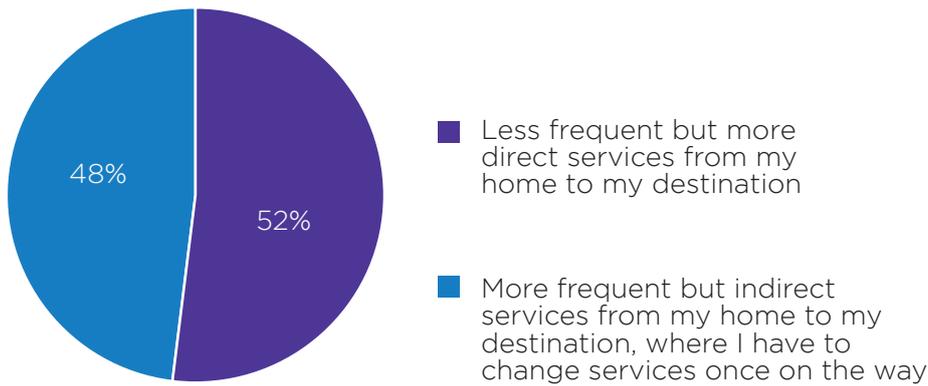
5.2.15 Considering the Connecting Ireland plan for your area, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: I understand the proposed network in my area.

38% said they agree, 20 % said they neither agree nor disagree while 18% said they strongly agree. 12% said they disagree, 5% said they strongly disagree and 6% said they don't know.

Considering the Connecting Ireland plan for your area, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: I understand the proposed network in my area.
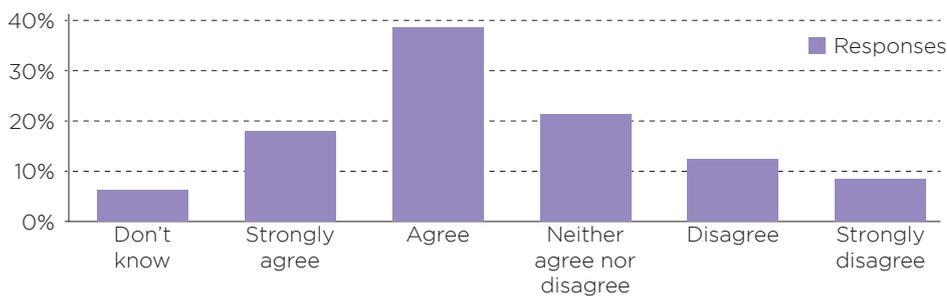
5.2.16 The proposed network for my area is an improvement on what is already there

31% of the respondents agreed, 20% said they strongly agreed and 18% said they neither agree nor disagree. 12% strongly disagreed, 11% disagreed and 8% of the respondents said they don't know.

The proposed network for my area is an improvement on what is already there.
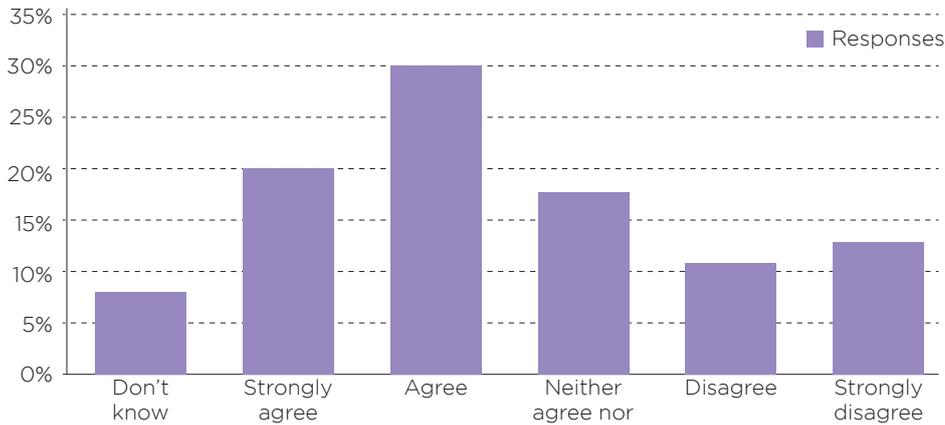
5.2.17 The frequency of services and range of destinations served by the public transport in my area will make me use public transport more

30% of respondents said they agree with the frequency of services and the range of destinations served by public transport will make them use public transport more. 23% said they strongly agree, 16% said they neither agree nor disagree while 6% of the respondents said they don't know. 11% strongly disagreed and 13% of respondents disagreed with the statement.

The frequency of services and range of destinations served by public transport proposed in my area will make me use public transport more
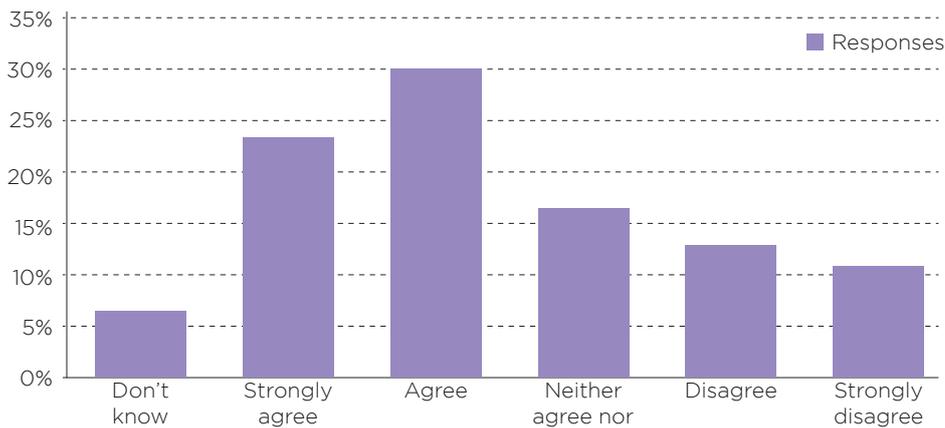
5.2.18 Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about the Connecting Ireland plan?

Respondents were then given the option to provide the Project Team with any open feedback about the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility plan. 1629 respondents provided further feedback while 1560 respondents chose to skip the question.

5.2.19 Or if you prefer you can upload a document to give your feedback on the Connecting Ireland plan

64 respondents uploaded a document while the majority of the respondents (3125) chose to skip this question.

5.2.20 Gender, how do you identify?

56% of the respondents who filled out the Connecting Ireland survey were women, 38% were men. 4% chose not to say and 1% said they prefer to self-describe.

Gender, how do you identity
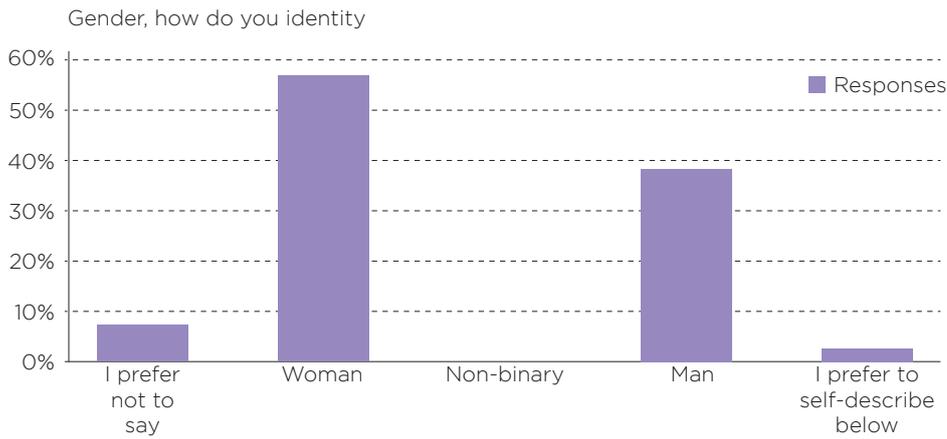
5.2.21 What is your age?

24% of respondents who filled out the Connecting Ireland survey were aged 45 to 54. 54% were aged 35 to 44, 16% were aged 55 to 64 and 12% were over 65. 11% of respondents were in the 25-34 age category while 9% were between the ages of 18-24. 4% were under the age of 18 and 2% preferred not to say.

What is your age?
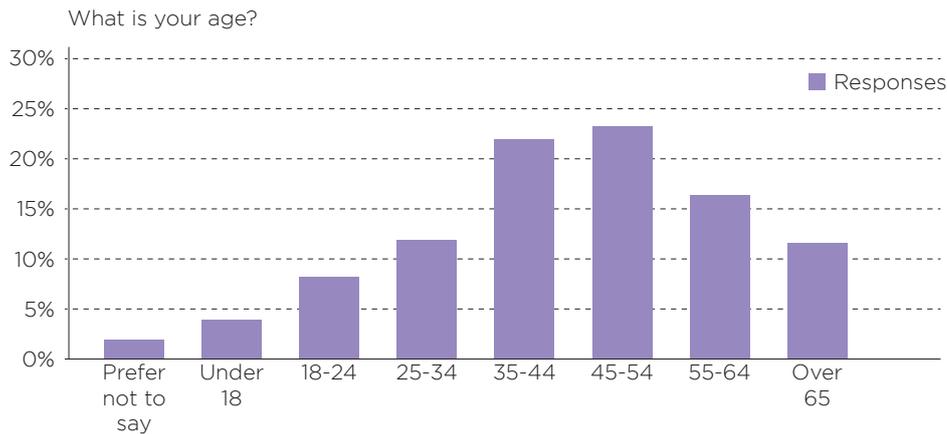
5.2.22 Do you have a disability?

85% identified they don't have a disability and 10% said they do have a disability while 5% said they prefer not to answer.

Do you have a disability?
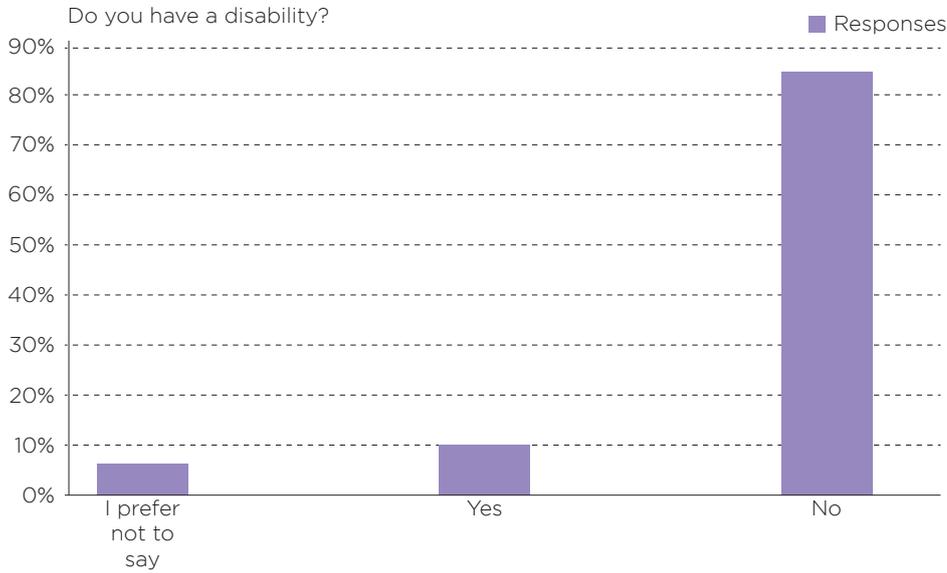
5.2.23 Where do you live?

Respondents were then asked where they live. The top ten counties of residence of respondents were:

• Cork at 14%

• Galway at 9%

• Cavan at 7%

• Meath at 7%

• Kildare at 6%.

• Wicklow at 5%

• Mayo at 5%

• Waterford at 5%

• Limerick at 4%

• Roscommon at 4%

Where do you live?

Legend: Responses

County	Responses
Carlow	
Cavan	
Clare	
Cork	
Donegal	
Dublin	
Galway	
Kerry	
Kildare	
Kilkenny	
Laois	
Leitrim	
Limerick	
Longford	
Louth	
Mayo	
Meath	
Monaghan	
Offaly	
Roscommon	
Sligo	
Tipperary	
Waterford	
Westmeath	
Wexford	
Wicklow	
Northern Ireland	
Outside of Ireland	

X-axis: 0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12% 14% 16%
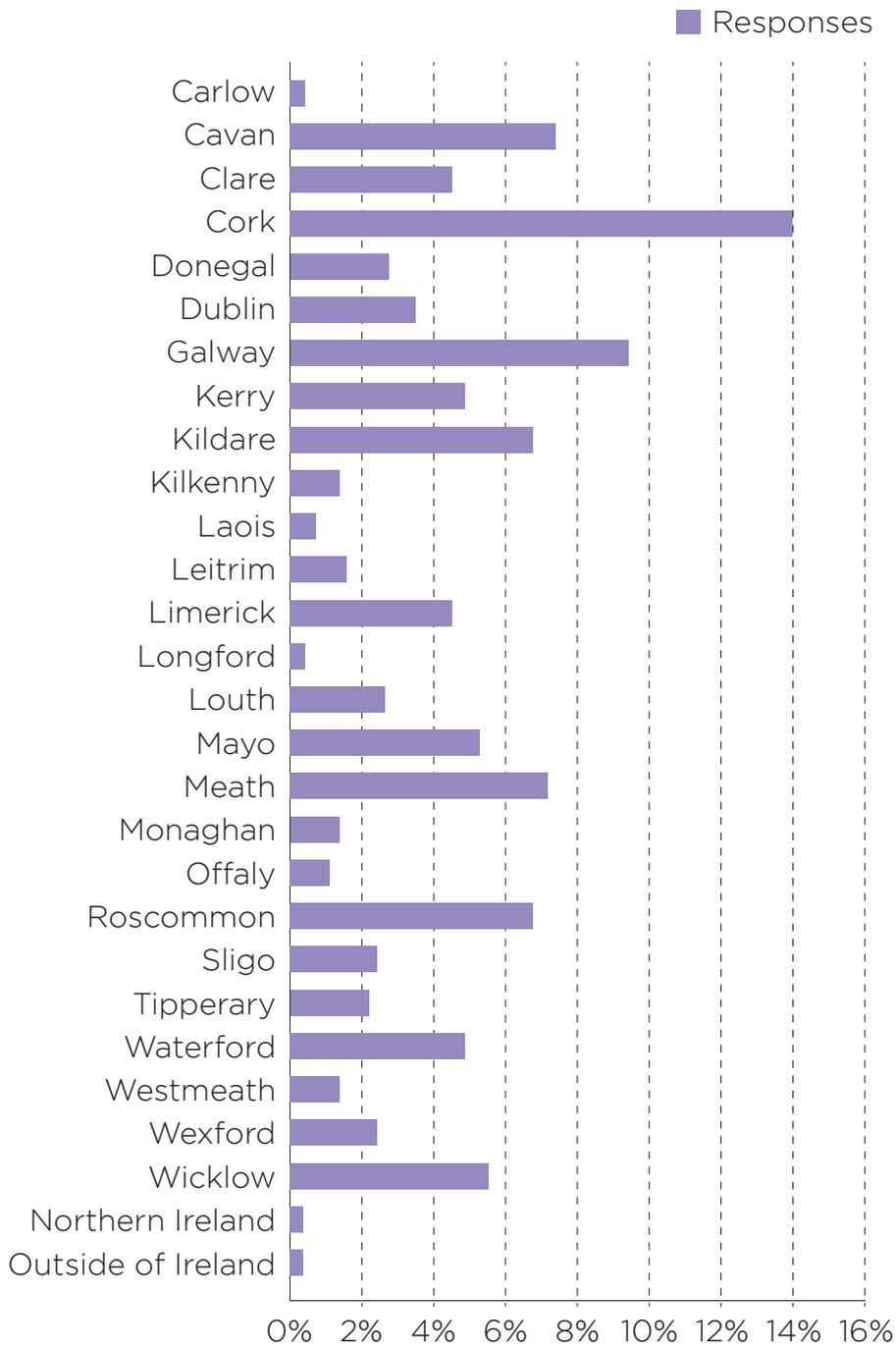
5.2.24 How would you best describe the place where you live?

The majority said they would describe where they live as a rural area at 46%. 28% said they live in a village, 22% said a town and 4% said they live in a city.

How would you best describe the place where you live?

5.2.25 What is your employment status?

The majority of the respondents at 59% said they were working, 7% said they were working in the home and 5% said they were not working currently. 12% of the respondents were retired, 10% of them were in education and 3% of respondents were volunteering or a carer.

What is your employment status?
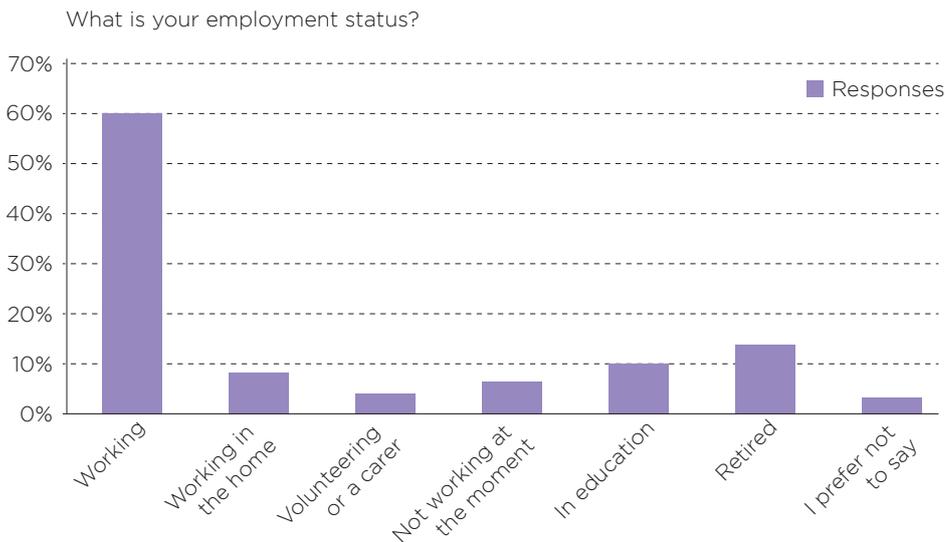
5.2.26 If you are working remotely, do you plan to continue to do so?

46% of the respondents said it did not apply to them, 31% said yes some of the time and 7% said they plan to continue working from home all of the time. 16% of the respondents answered no.

The next sections summarises the written submissions that were received via the online feedback form and the email submissions.

If you are working remotely do you plan to continue to do so?
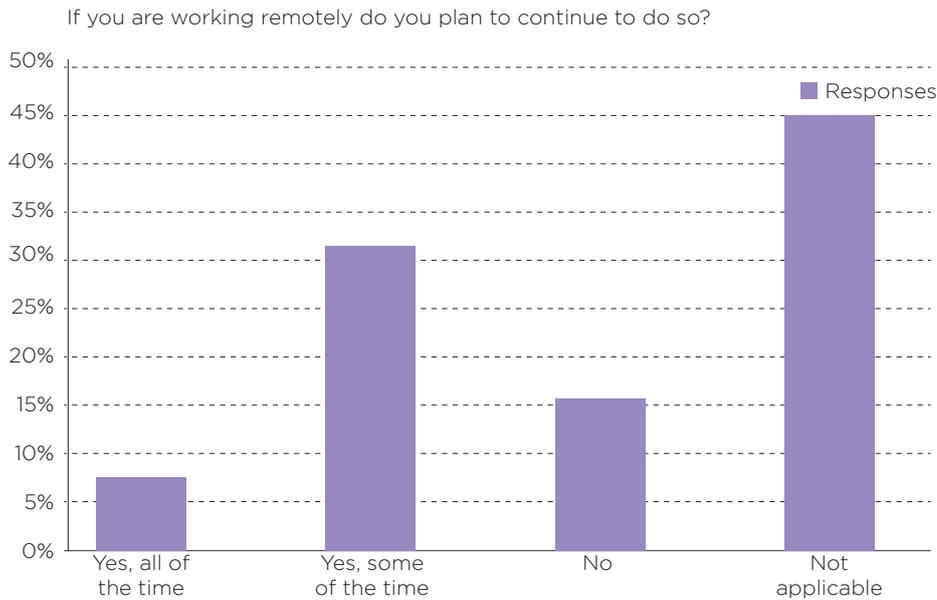
5.3 Overview of Written Submissions

All written submissions were collated, analysed and summarised into 11 key themes. These key themes were then broken down further into sub-themes which are presented and discussed in the sections following. The key themes and sub themes are listed below:

Key Themes	Sub Themes
Environmental Issues	• Climate Issues • Zero Emissions Vehicles
Alternatives	• Alternative Solutions • Rail
Infrastructure	• Bus Stop Infrastructure • Roads • Accessibility of Buses
Need for the Project	• Public Transport • Connectivity • General • Cost
Public Consultation Process	• Level of Engagement • Access to Information • Messaging/Information
Socio-Economic	• Local Economy/Competitiveness • Impact to Communities/Commuters
Active Travel	• Walking/Cycling
Plan Design	• General • Safety • Traffic Management • Accessible to All Transport Users • Impact of Covid 19
Implementation	• General • Delivery/Timing • Licensing
Integration	• Integration/ Interchange with Other Modes of Travel • Interconnectivity Between Communities • Timetables/Scheduling • Ticket Types • Fares • Journey Times • Public Service Obligation/Commercial Bus Operators
Local Issues	• 26 Local Authority Areas

Overview of the key themes

- ■ Environment
- ■ Need for project
- ■ Active Travel
- ■ Integration

- ■ Alternatives
- ■ Local issues
- ■ Plan design
- ■ Public Consultation process

- ■ Infrastructure
- ■ Socio- Economic
- ■ Implementation
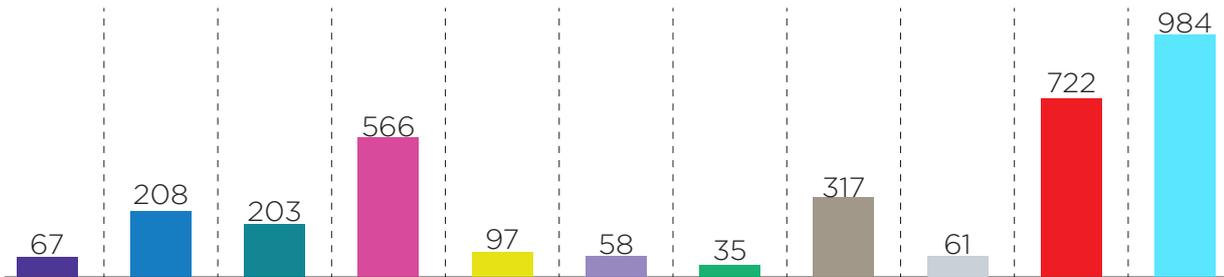
The five most popular key themes identified were;

1. Local Issues

2. Integration

3. Need for Project

4. Plan Design

5. Alternatives

5.4 Environmental

Under the theme of Environmental there was a total of 67 references. This theme was broken down into Climate Issues and Sustainable Transport. 37 referenced Sustainable Transport and 30 referenced Climate Issues.

Environmental

- ■ Low/zero emissions vehicles/ fleet (sustainable)
- ■ Climate issues
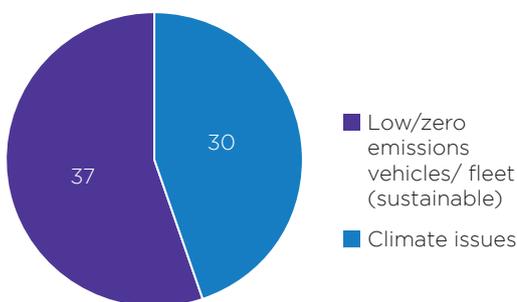
Climate

Of the 30 references to Climate the majority of respondents commented generally that public transport needed to be more environmentally friendly if Ireland is to meet its climate change targets over the coming years. Several respondents noted the public transport system needs to be more reliable to encourage uptake. It was noted that that vehicles, bus stops, ticketing and timetabling must all be of a sufficiently high quality to offer a viable and attractive alternative to private vehicle.

A stakeholder agreed that the climate change agenda promotes increased use of public transport and to reduce journeys by vehicles occupied by one person and further noted that the addition of more choice for the people living in rural areas would help change commuter behaviour.

It was highlighted that a shift to public transport is fundamental to achieving Ireland's aim to halve emissions by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It was noted that Connecting Ireland is an important contributor to the Climate Action Plan (2021) target requirement of attracting an additional 500,000 trips per day to sustainable modes by 2030.

Age Friendly Ireland the Older People's Council members stated they are very aware of the climate change agenda and see public transport improvements as positive in terms of reducing emissions and energy use. They further iterated that they would welcome further engagement with the National Transport Authority in relation to the implementation of Connecting Ireland.

Another stakeholder noted in its submission that emissions from the transport sector are one of the biggest contributors to climate change and a reduction in the amount of private car journeys is necessary as well as a more efficient public transport alternative. They further advised that in order to cater for a wide range of journey purposes (work, education, medical appointments) there is a need for frequent services between rural towns and villages and the larger regional hubs to offer a realistic alternative to the use of private cars.

Zero Emission Vehicles

Of the 37 references to Zero Emission Vehicles the majority of respondents asked for more clarity about plans to introduce electric buses to the public transport system noting it as an alternative to private car transport, which will in turn, reduce emissions. There was also a suggestion to trial electric vehicles or hydrogen powered buses on some rural routes under a pilot scheme. A stakeholder asked that a sustainability category should be considered in the Connecting Ireland tender evaluation process awarding higher scoring for vehicles with lower carbon emissions.

Another stakeholder noted sustainability should be addressed as a core concept in the implementation plan, including maximising current resources and services where possible to align with the Climate Action Plan 2019. They further requested that weighting should be provided for operators who have demonstrated a whole of company commitment to meeting national targets on greenhouse gas emissions, in waste management, diversity and inclusion. This, they iterated, would encourage the transition to low and zero-emission modes of transport on an inter-region and inter-city basis.

5.5   Alternatives

Under the theme of Alternatives there was a total of 208 references.191 respondents referenced the sub theme of Rail and 17 respondents made reference to Alternative Solutions.

Alternatives

Rail
Alternative solutions
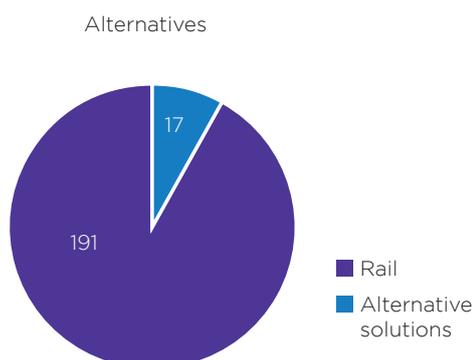
Alternative Solutions

There were 17 references under Alternative Solutions with suggestions including nipper buses connecting people to hospitals, dial-a-bus for more remote areas and utilising the school bus network as alternative options to the Connecting Ireland proposals. A volunteer operated Community Car Scheme was also suggested which could take people who are isolated to the nearest bus stop or to appointments that are not currently accessible by a local bus service.

Rail

There were 191 submissions on Rail under the theme Alternatives. The majority of respondents commented that the Connecting Ireland plan is heavily bus-centric and ignores the benefit of rail and the opportunity to restore and improve existing rail routes. Many noted that rural Ireland would be better served by rail highlighting that rail had advantages over buses in terms of climate challenges and using existing infrastructure more intensively. One stakeholder welcomed the proposals and any improvement in public transport provision in their region.

They noted however that some of the proposed routes may be better served by maximizing the usage of existing rail infrastructure, rather than the duplication involved in providing regional corridor bus routes along rail routes, and that rail transport should be prioritized where there are existing rail lines in place. They further outlined their support for the proposed National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) proposed by the Department of Transport.

There were many submissions that noted that there was no reference to the Western Rail Corridor in the Connecting Ireland proposals. A stakeholder observed that all of the improvements proposed for counties in the west and North West are entirely bus-based and requested that the draft proposals be revised completely to reflect the objectives set out in the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy and County Development Plans in particular the proposals for the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor.

It was highlighted that rail has a complementary role to play in connecting rural Ireland. The importance of the new rural services proposed in the Connecting Ireland plan integrating with the railway in its present form was highlighted and if there is further expansion of rail services across the country. It was noted that, in the context of wider national rail policy and development, the Department of Transport and the Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland have commenced an all-island Strategic Rail Review with the objectives of providing faster intercity connectivity, improved regional connectivity, and increasing the proportion of freight on rail.

5.6   Infrastructure

Under the theme of Infrastructure there was a total of 203 submissions. Infrastructure was further disaggregated to deal with Bus Stop Infrastructure, Roads, and Accessibility of Buses. The most frequent discussed sub theme was Bus Stop Infrastructure with 123 references. This was followed by Accessibility of Buses with 63 references and Roads with 17 references.

Bus Stop Infrastructure

The majority of the 123 respondents requested the provision of better bus stop infrastructure. Bus stops with adequate shelter and improved lighting were mentioned frequently as well as parking facilities for both cars and bikes being necessary to encourage the wider use of public transport. Several submissions noted the current state of some bus stops as being unsafe due to being positioned too close to the road and others due to a lack of adequate lighting.

A number of stakeholders also requested that better signage be made available at bus stops, with several stakeholders requesting up-to-date timetable information be provided at them. One stakeholder outlined that many bus stops in rural locations consist of just a single pole, providing no waiting space or shelter and noted it as a disincentive to using public transport.

Bus stops in both directions on a route was mentioned as being essential, with several stakeholders expressing the need for more bus stops at strategic locations such as local employment centres, industrial estates, retail outlets, shopping centres and hospitals/primary care centres to encourage public transport use.

■ Bus stop infrastructure
■ Roads
■ Accessibility of buses

Infrastructure

123	17	63
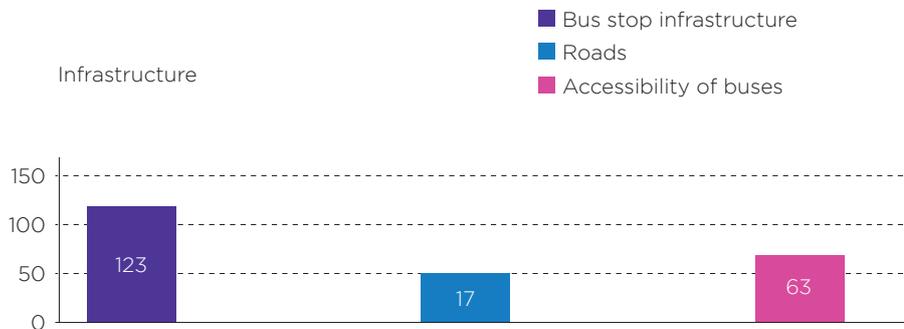
Roads

There were a total of 17 references in relation to Roads. The majority of submissions requested more bus lanes prioritising road space to allow for the effective flow of buses, with one stakeholder asking why there is a focus on buses in places where there are no bus lanes which leads to questioning the effectiveness of such a service.

Several respondents mentioned the need for rural road infrastructure improvements to facilitate buses. They highlighted that rural roads were either too narrow or congested to support the frequency of bus services outlined in the proposals.

Accessibility of Buses

A total of 63 respondents referred to the Accessibility of Buses under the theme of Infrastructure. Many respondents discussed the lack of wheelchair accessibility on rural buses.

Wheelchair accessibility was noted as a particular problem by respondents, highlighting the expectation that users with a disability are expected to forward plan to an extent that non-disabled users do not. Several submissions expressed the need for wheelchair spaces on all buses at all times so that mobility impaired users can also 'turn up and go' like other people.

Low floor buses and a preference for small buses in lieu of coaches were mentioned in several submissions. Facilitating the ability to carry bicycles on board rural buses and bike racks was noted as being extremely valuable in rural areas where there are long distances between bus stops and to enable onward journeys within towns to final destinations.

5.7   Need for project

Under the theme Need for Project there was a total of 566 references. The theme Need for Project consisted of the sub themes Public Transport, Connectivity, General and Cost. The most frequently discussed sub theme was Connectivity with 227 references, followed closely by General with 186. 111 respondents discussed Public Transport and 42 respondents discussed Cost.

General

The majority of 186 references under the sub theme General welcomed the proposals noting the overarching need for accessible, good quality and affordable transport for communities across rural Ireland who need access to essential and social services.
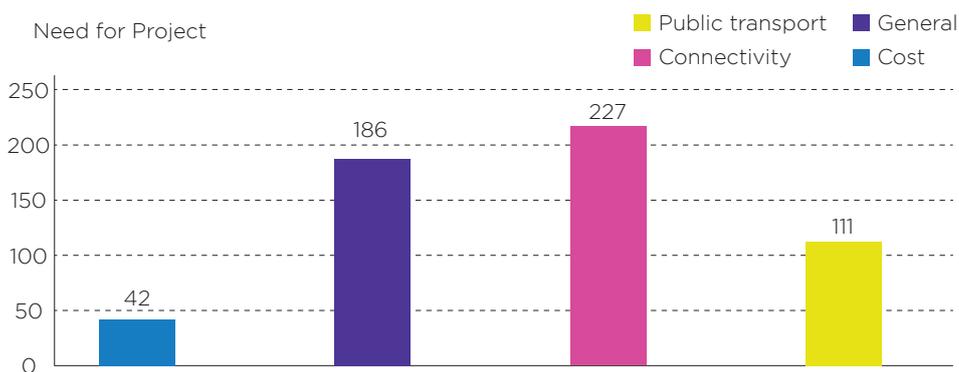
The most frequent comments under General related to users who are currently unable to attend medical appointments, social outlets, and healthcare facilities due to lack of transport options. This varied from medical appointments in hospitals to job interviews. Lack of access to transport for college and third level courses was also mentioned. One stakeholder noted they fully supported the Connecting Ireland initiative and see these proposals as being the first step in providing increasing connectivity and improving mobility in rural areas around the country.

Cost

Of the 42 references to Cost, some respondents said that current public transport services were both expensive and unreliable. They noted that affordability of public transport is important and that the government should subsidise some services or ensure adequate resourcing of the service. Some referred to the expense in using the traditional alternative of taxi for those without access to a private car, and that good bus services would benefit so many people.

Several submissions sought clarity on the cost-benefit of the proposals and the breakdown of allocation per county, requesting that the allocations should be subject to public scrutiny.

Connectivity

Under the sub theme of Connectivity there were 227 references. The majority noted that Connecting Ireland needs to provide regular, consistent services to rural communities if it is to succeed. Direct services to major centres and large towns, stopping less often on route to improve journey times were requested several times. Many suggested better connections to airports, third level institutes, shopping centres and health facilities. It was highlighted that local and regional bus services should have better connections with intercity bus and rail services.

Several submissions mentioned tourism in their submissions noting the lack of transport options to heritage sites and other rural attractions. Rural isolation was noted among several submissions particularly for people who do not have access to a private vehicle.

Public Transport

There were 111 references to Public Transport. The general consensus from respondents was that there was a lack of public transport where they currently live. Many observed that to travel outside of their town is difficult without getting a lift or taxi. Submissions noted the reputation of public transport has deteriorated in rural areas as a result. Several submissions highlighted that the provision of an improved public transport service would help in tackling numerous societal issues such as rural isolation, congestion, travel costs, access to schools, health centres and other public services, as well as addressing climate change.

One submission acknowledged that there is a basic need to encourage people to use public transport and that Connecting Ireland "need to re-invent the wheel" – as public transport is a vital necessity. One submission noted that if we were to compare the Irish public transport system to that of other European countries it is severely lacking.

5.8   Public Consultation Process

Under the theme of Public Consultation Process there was a total of 97 references. This theme included the sub themes, Level of Engagement, Access to Information and Messaging/Information. 41 respondents discussed the Level of Engagement, followed by 36 respondents discussing Messaging/Information and finally 20 respondents discussed Access to Information.

Public Consultation Process

- Level of engagement
- Access to information
- Messaging / Information
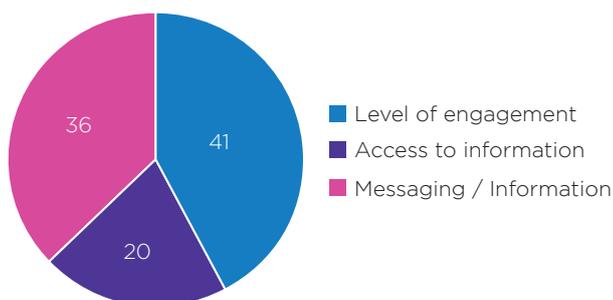
Level of Engagement

Of the 41 references here the majority of respondents asked that better information about the services in their area be provided as part of the consultation. It was remarked that the survey was not sufficient enough to gather all the feedback required and the plan requires a more consultative approach. Respondents requested more engagement with locals, residents and councillors with regards to the needs of the people to which the proposed routes are affecting. Several respondents discussed being excluded from the consultation highlighting that their town or village was omitted from the plan entirely. Several organisations suggested setting up focus groups and ongoing consultation in order to gather more observations, share data to enhance up-take of transport services and to better understand the rationale behind introducing new services

Access to Information

There were 20 references to Access to Information. A number of respondents expressed difficulty accessing information online during the consultation. This varied from issues with accessing the website due to issues with a plug in, downloading and opening maps and navigating the website. One stakeholder raised concerns that the only methods for the public to comment is through online meetings, engagement with representatives and local media as well as through an online survey. They went on to acknowledge the effect Covid 19 restrictions had on public consultation but encouraged the NTA to consider more inclusive consultation mechanisms to engage with people with disabilities and older people as part of this plan. They further highlighted all information (written, spoken, signed and digital) delivered by a public transport services provider (which includes consultation information), should be universally designed and suggested the NTA should use the Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service.

Messaging and Information

Of the 26 references to Messaging and Information the majority of respondents commented that the proposals were lacking in detail. They asked for more information in particular on what local services are proposed, this included clarity around fares, stops and timetables for each service. Several respondents outlined that they did not hear about the plan and queried the advertising around the consultation suggesting the plan needed more promotional activities. It was also suggested continued advertising and promotion would help raise and maintain awareness of new public transport options after introduction.

5.9   Socio-Economic

Under the theme Socio Economic there was a total of 58 references. This theme was broken down into Local Economy/Competitiveness and Impact to Communities/Commuters. 40 respondents referenced the Impact to Communities/Commuters and 18 respondents referenced Local Economy/Competitiveness.

Socio Economic

■ Impact to Communities / Commuters

■ Local Economy / Competitiveness
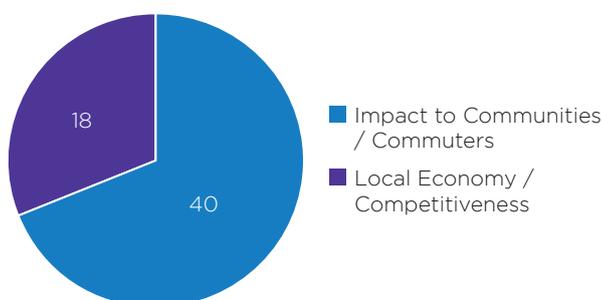
Local Economy and Competitiveness

There were 18 references to Local Economy and Competitiveness with the majority of respondents expressing how better public transport would help build the local economy in different regional and rural areas leading to retention in local towns and villages, more employment opportunities and income for the rural communities. Several submissions mentioned the positive impact a more frequent transport system would have on tourism noting areas in Ireland such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Barrow Blueway, West Kildare and the Boyne Valley.

Impact on Communities and Commuters

Of the 40 references to Impact on Communities and Commuters a number of stakeholders articulated how the lack of public transport has adversely impacted their lives and the general effects it has had on their community. This varied from reducing opportunities to attending college, hospital appointments, the take up of new job opportunities, socialising and access to basic amenities.

Stakeholders addressed how the impact on commuters has resulted in a lack of confidence in public transport with anecdotal reports of services being cancelled or delayed at short notice with significant impacts on passengers. Social isolation was mentioned in several submissions noting the importance of a regular bus service for the elderly and young people.

One stakeholder emphasised that delivering services to key locations in urban areas is of critical importance to get people where they need to go. Another submission explained co-ordination between the new and improved services being proposed and existing services has the opportunity to open up the rural countryside in a substantial and positive way and will contribute hugely to economic activity and to the quality of life of the people of the areas.

5.10   Active Travel

35 respondents discussed walking and cycling under the theme Active Travel

Active Transport
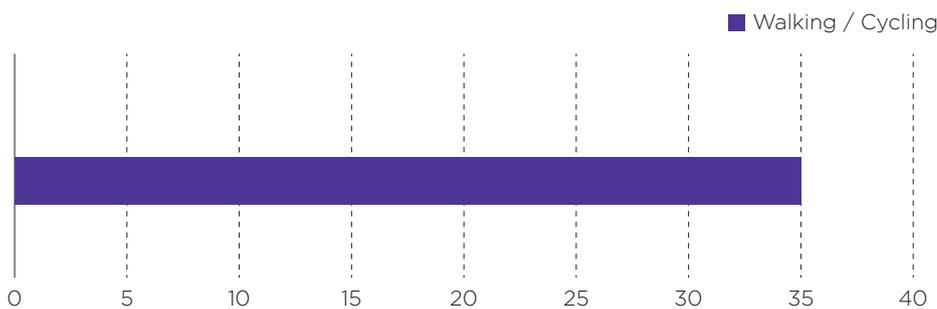
Several respondents requested for safer and better bicycle infrastructure, including bike shelters and protected bike parking at bus stops. Some submissions requested more cycle lanes, to make cyclists feel safe and to reduce rural speed limits. A number of stakeholders expressed disappointment that there were no proposals for multi-modal trips integrating active travel and the importance of bicycle parking and bike sharing schemes and e-bikes to facilitate multi-model trips.

Walking infrastructure was also mentioned, with some stakeholders asking for better walking facilities to access bus stops especially from homes located on the outskirts of towns.

5.11   Plan Design

Under the theme of Plan Design there was a total of 315 references. The theme Plan Design was made up of the sub theme General, Safety, Traffic Management Accessible to all Transport Users and Impact of Covid 19. There were 197 references under general, followed by 83 respondents discussing Accessible For all Transport Users. 22 respondents discussed Safety, followed by 7 discussing Traffic Management and 6 discussing the impact of Covid-19.

Plan Design

- ■ General
- ■ Accessibility/Accessible to all transport users
- ■ Safety
- ■ Traffic Management
- ■ Impact of Covid-19

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250
200        197
150
100               83
 50                      22      7       6
  0
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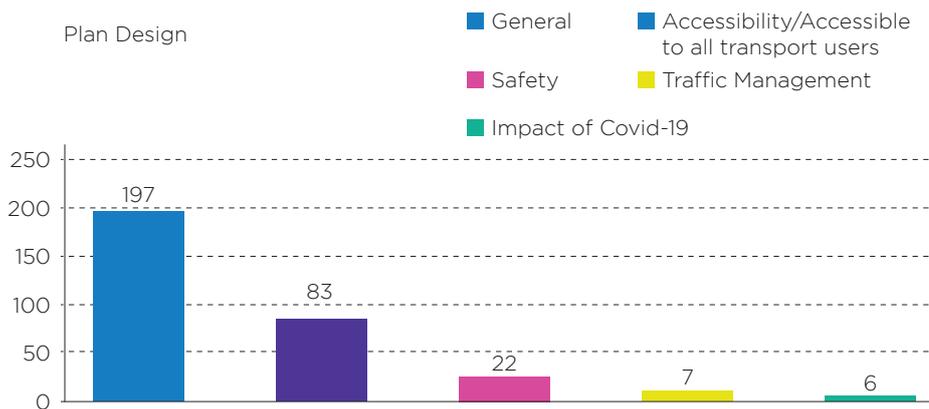
General

Of the 197 references in relation to General under Plan Design, the majority of submissions observed public transport as critical to achieving balanced regional development which in turn supports towns and villages to grow sustainably. Several submissions were positive about the overall programme and the improvement it offers to the current public transport network across the country, citing it as a significant and very welcome step in the right direction. Many submissions noted that the topics of rural and town mobility have been neglected for too long and the Connecting Ireland proposals are very positive. Some questioned the ambition of the plan and speculated it may be insufficient to achieve a transformative change in travel behaviour.

It was pointed out that the proposed routes need to include stops in residential areas of towns they serve highlighting that most housing developments are a substantial walk from their town centre and public transport, representing a large population that are car dependent while still technically living in towns.

There was a lot of commentary that observed the plans focus on linking urban centres which have existing services already in place, instead of connecting the rural county which still requires people living outside of those routes to travel into an urban centre to access public transport. Some regional areas were pointed out as unserved by public transport such as the north west of the county where it was observed that many routes are entirely unserved by transport to urban centres.

Circular routes that connect villages were asked to be considered rather than a central hub-and-spoke model. This was reiterated by several remarks that noted public transport in rural Ireland is characterised by too many stops that make journeys to and from areas too long and therefore, people will be less likely to use services. Express services were raised by several stakeholders as being a better option. Some of the routes proposed were found to be complicated or in some cases vague.

One stakeholder acknowledged and commended the proposed improvements outlined in the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan commenting that the policy needs to ensure that localised county rural transport needs are considered in the context of wider transport issues. Another stakeholder noted that Connecting Ireland requires effective local collaboration for the plan to successfully deliver for individuals, communities and economies throughout rural Ireland.

Accessible to all Transport Users

Easy access for disabled users was requested repeatedly in the 83 references to Accessible to all Transport Users. Advanced booking was highlighted as a discouraging requirement for mobility impaired people when considering travel options. Wheelchair access appeared in numerous submissions with several observing that the Connecting Ireland proposals will be ineffective unless the new and expanded services are also fully wheelchair accessible.

One submission noted that trying to accommodate those most in need such as the young, the old and those who have no alternative should be a priority before serving the working population as improving the commuter routes improves choices. A submission observed that 40,000 people in Ireland have epilepsy and it is very socially isolating for those living in rural Ireland particularly where there are poor transport services.

A stakeholder advised the NTA that a Universal Design approach needs to be adopted and implemented in the design process to ensure that any new networks proposed are easy to access, easy to understand and easy to use by everyone regardless of age, size, ability or disability. It was further highlighted that in the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Report there are no details provided as to how this initiative will meet the needs of persons with disabilities or will enable more persons with disabilities and older people to access public transport services.

The stakeholder requested that all personnel involved in the planning and design of this project and all staff who will be providing public transport services should be trained to provide services and supports to persons with different disabilities and older people. One stakeholder cited the WHO Checklist for Age Friendly Cities and Communities which outlines considerations for making Transport Age Friendly. This included but not limited to, affordable transportation, reliable and frequent public transport, accessible and not over crowded services, and specialized transportation is available for disabled people. It was advised that this checklist should be considered as part of the Connecting Ireland framework and especially in relation to frequency and reliability of service, driver education, accessible information, accessible and well-maintained vehicles and supports for people with disabilities.

Safety

Of the 22 references coded under Safety several commented on the need for adequate footpaths on rural roads to get to bus stops safely. There were a number of submissions that referenced anti-social behaviour as being an issue on services and requested an increase in monitoring for such incidences with one submission requesting that transit police service be required.

Stop safety was mentioned in several submissions with concern over main road stopping points as not being safe due to oncoming traffic and lack of pedestrian infrastructure.

Impact of Covid-19

There were 6 references to the Impact of Covid 19 in the consultation. Several noted that buses need to remain well ventilated to encourage continued use of public transport.

One stakeholder noted that with remote working now part of Government policy and the development of remote working and co-working hubs in rural areas, adequate funding for a reliable public transport system so people can access these hubs will facilitate remote working post COVID.

It was observed that Covid-19 presented one of the most significant challenges to the public transport industry in modern times and that the urgent recovery of the sector is of critical importance to support national policy objectives on emissions reduction and sustainable development. A stakeholder stated they recognise the need for rapid recovery of the sector and support the approach of encouraging sustainable development through the provision of well connected, integrated public transport networks which offer viable alternatives to the private vehicle.

Traffic Management

There were 7 references to Traffic Management with traffic issues in Galway dominating. Respondents highlighted that attending work appointments in the centre of Galway was challenging as a result of traffic. One submission raised concerns that the proposed routes and timings in Connecting Ireland have been produced without any traffic flow monitoring to validate the routes and timetable information.

5.12   Implementation

Under the theme of Implementation there were a total of 61 references. This theme was made up of the sub themes General, Delivery/Timing and Licensing. There were 34 general comments in relation to Implementation, followed by 25 comments relating to Delivery/Timing and 2 under Licensing.

Implementation
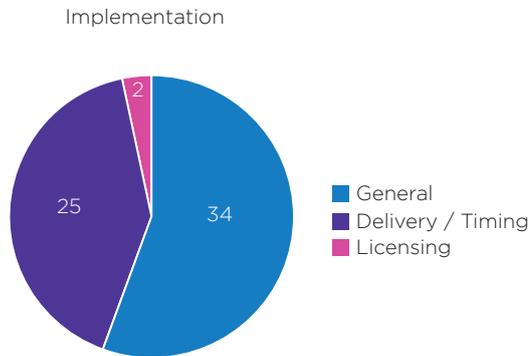
General

Advertising of services within rural areas was noted as critical to usage and uptake. This included up to date information about the location of buses and when they will be due as well as clearly searchable timetable information available online. The establishment of a user group made up from young people using/potentially using public transport was highlighted as being a good platform to target new services, timetabling and frequency. Cross-collaboration was noted as being key between operator, drivers, service users, the NTA and Local Authorities to ensure the full implementation of rural transport services and continued coordination with all public bodies, timelines and funding streams.

This was further reiterated by a stakeholder who suggested that the Connecting Ireland initiative should contain an action and key deliverables for a cross agency approach between the NTA, the public transport service providers, relevant Government Departments, local authorities, and related agencies to ensure the effective development and implementation of the proposed plan. It was further noted that the development of a more inclusive universally designed transport system requires input, involvement, and planning from the general public, the public sector, the private sector, academia, and advocacy groups.

A stakeholder queried if the NTA would revisit the re-establishment of committees such as National Integrated Rural Transport (N.I.R.T) to ensure all local transport services are delivered by state entities or funded by state entities and coordinated through TFI Local Link Offices operating in that area and in consultation with the NTA. Another stakeholder suggested that the fastest way to deliver on the objectives of Connecting Ireland is to seek to extend existing services and increase frequency on existing routes from main locations.

Delivery and Timing

There were 25 references to Delivery and Timing. The majority of respondents wanted a detailed plan for delivery and that the implementation of these plans be brought forward as soon as possible due to demand for public transport in rural areas and to address the climate crisis, with urgent attention being given to enhancing and extending existing services. A stakeholder noted that the lead-in times for mobilisation, including bus procurement and driver recruitment and training, and promotion of planned new and enhanced services requires consideration and new initiatives to accelerate this phase. It was noted that private operators seeking to provide transport on routes will need time to finance and procure new vehicles, and recruit and train drivers to high standards following the severe commercial impact arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. It was highlighted that many operators may find it difficult to obtain finance and recover passenger numbers on many routes and will require time and a balanced consideration.

Licensing

Only two respondents referred to licensing issues. One stakeholder outlined the difficulties of the industry nothing the difficulties for someone trying to get into the business, as there is too much red tape. More attention needs to be taken to supporting operators and encouraging new operators.

Another stakeholder noted the economic risk in positing commercial and PSO operations on the same corridor, and cautioned that innovative solutions would be required to protect passenger and employee interests into the future.

5.13   Integration

Under the theme of Integration there was a total of 722 references. The theme Integration encompassed the sub themes Integration/ Interchange with Other Modes of Travel, Interconnectivity Between Communities, Timetables/Scheduling, Ticket Types, Fares, Journey Times and Public Service Obligation/ Commercial Bus Operators.

The most frequently referenced topic was Timetables/ Scheduling with 373. Second was Interconnectivity between Communities with 115 references, followed by 89 references under Fares and 83 references relating to Integration / Interchange with other Modes of Travel. The least referenced topics were Ticket Types with 33, Journey Times at 23 and finally PSO/CBO with only 4 references.

Integration

- Integration / Interchange with other model of travel
- Interconnectivity between communities (urban/rural)
- Timetables / Scheduling
- Ticket Types
- Fares
- Journey Times
- Out of scope
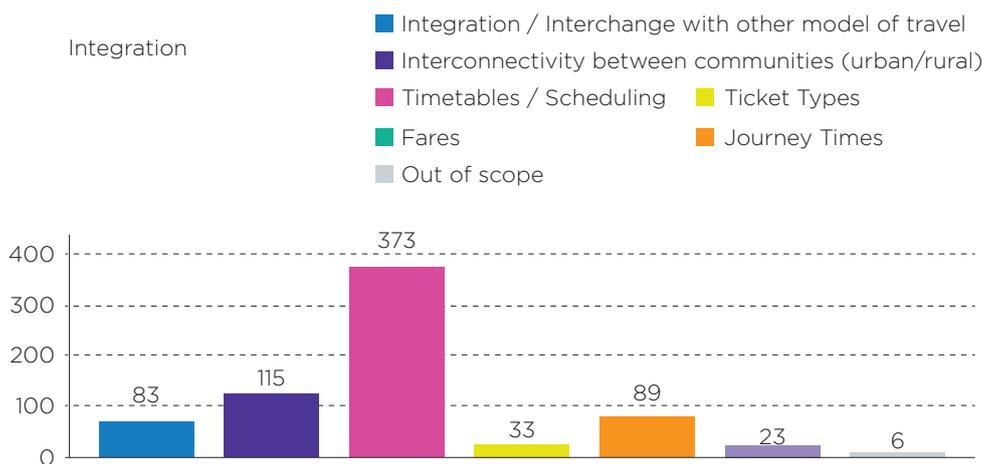
Integration and Interchange with other modes of travel

83 references were made to Integration/Interchange with other modes of travel. Synchronized connections to main public transport schedules on bus and rail was highlighted as a key concern for many in this section. Stakeholders observed that changing bus, and changing mode from bus to rail and vice versa, needs to be easy in order for more people to do it.

A stakeholder remarked that linking all public transport services is important for enhancing regional and rural connectivity and also connecting regional airports and ports. Several submissions commented on the lack of connectivity to airports, with Knock, Kerry, Dublin, Shannon and Cork mentioned frequently. One submission noted that TFI Local Link services could also play a greater role in connecting Shannon and Knock airports to tourist areas in the West and Midlands which can further support development of these areas.

The non-provision or inadequate Park and Ride facilities were mentioned in numerous submissions. One queried whether it would be beneficial to pilot the development of transport hubs in towns which bring all of the modes together and also provide comfortable spaces for waiting passengers. One stakeholder wanted to highlight the idea of intermediate hubs that bring passengers from rural Ireland to a central suburban hub location that would allow them to change vehicles and move to a dedicated, green transport solution. Another Stakeholder welcomed the emphasis on the new local bus services that will complement the existing railway and not compete with it. It was noted that an essential pillar of any modern country is a sustainable public transport network, with reliable and efficient integration between mobility modes.

Interconnectivity between Communities (Urban/Rural)

115 respondents commented under this theme. Most welcome better connections to nearby towns and villages but also sought onward connections to settlements with a wider range of services available. Many submissions sought better connections between smaller villages and towns to encourage both young and old people to lead independent lives. Many commented on the rationale behind some of the proposed routes that were unnecessarily long with too many stops which would ultimately reduce the attractiveness of the service.

A stakeholder noted that any proposed connections between public transport services should be planned to occur in towns, giving older and vulnerable people and a place to park to access the service.

Another stakeholder noted the proposal of better connections between villages and towns by linking them with an enhanced regional network is key to ensuring the ongoing sustainability of rural communities. A stakeholder requested that further progression of the Demand Responsive Transport Modes should be developed as part of the Rural Transport Programme.

Timetables/Scheduling

There were 373 submissions that referenced timetables/scheduling. The majority of submissions here looked for more ambition with regard to the number of services and believe they should extend far beyond three services a day. Submissions noted that the inclusion of night time services would encourage economic activity, reduce social isolation and enable those attending night classes or similar evening events to choose the bus. There were a large number of submissions that looked for more frequent and direct services from their home to a particular destination.

They noted better scheduling of services would be more beneficial for commuters, in particular providing earlier and later services both to facilitate people commuting to work and encourage younger people to use public transport for social purposes and to access part-time weekend employment.

Many submissions looked for better weekend services with many noting that weekend services were lacking in the proposals. Several submissions requested the proposed timetables be published as it was difficult to ascertain the impact on the ground with no indication of start and end times or of the access to key transitions and onward connections. Timetable updates, up-to-date real-time information about the routes and services running on any given day, whether online or via the Real Time App were a particular discussion point.

One submission fully agreed with the principle of integrated timetables which would allow for trips in the middle of the day for those shopping, attending health appointments, or visiting friends and family. It was noted that the proposal should schedule early morning services particularly for work and education trips and an evening return home which would potentially provide later services for socialising and evening retail where there is demand.

Ticket Types

There were 33 references under Ticket Types. Several submissions noted that integrated or combined ticketing between services to include rail allowing multi-modal trips would be very beneficial. A large number of submissions noted that paying by card was not possible on many rural services and that a cashless option should be available on all services. TFI Leap Card was frequently mentioned in submissions requesting that it be available everywhere and there should be more investment in public TFI Leap Card machines. Many submissions noted a monthly unlimited pass or weekly saver ticket should be offered. Two submissions noted that integrated ticketing across the commercial and PSO portfolio of services is key to making interchange work for passengers.

Fares

Under the theme of Integration there were 89 submissions on Fares. The general consensus was that current fares were too expensive. Lower fares, student rates, family tickets and free travel for rural services were mentioned frequently.

Many submissions asked for fares to be subsidised so that the use of public transport is more affordable and it will therefore entice people away from private transport. Several submissions requested that the price of fares be made comparable to those in neighbouring European countries.

It was noted that Connecting Ireland makes no reference to making transport fares more attractive on buses or trains serving rural areas. Several submissions proposed that free transport be offered on all rural services to encourage uptake.

There was some commentary on the booking fees associated with fares even with individuals who are Travel Pass holders and are still subject to a booking fee which defeats the purpose of the free Travel Pass with one submission looking for "better prices for local trips".

An alignment of fares was requested with commercial operators to allow commercial operators to operate alongside new services without being at a competitive disadvantage, not allowing this was described as being counterproductive to the Connecting Ireland plans and would possibly drive many operatory away from servicing loss making routes.

Journey Times

There were 23 submissions on Journey Times with many submissions looking for either faster more direct routes or shorter journeys with less stops highlighting that current journey times for most routes are too long and unreliable. Express services were frequently mentioned noting faster more direct routes to cities are better as commuters need practical journey times to get a bus to college or work. There were several more local examples of circular routes noted in this section resulting in journeys taking many times longer than they need to.

Public Service Obligation /Commercial Bus Operator

One respondent outlined that for a number of years they have expanded and invested in commercial services between Galway and Letterfrack. The respondent stated that the proposed level of service in the Connecting Ireland plans risk undermining the current services provided by the respondents company.

One submission explained that increasing frequency and extending currently unserved or under-served PSO routes can be implemented quickly if a Direct Award Contract system is utilised, allowing for greater connectivity and a greater frequency of service, particularly in areas of dispersed population.

One respondent outlined that consideration should be given where there is a gap on existing PSO services to extending these PSO routes to service larger towns and urban centres, it was added that this would consolidate both the service currently offered while also expanding on the potential customers who could be accommodated.

5.14   Local Issues

Under the theme of Local Issues there was a total of 984 references. The theme of Local Issues was sub themed under the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland. The top five counties with the most references were Cork, Galway, Kildare, Meath, Kerry and Wicklow. Counties with less than 10 references included:

- Carlow
- Kilkenny
- Laois
- Offaly
- Leitrim
- Monaghan
- Longford

Local Issues

6

Summary of Local Issues

6. Summary of Local Issues

6.1   Cork

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 142 references in relation to Cork. A sample of some of the more frequently referenced issues related to public transport in Cork are summarised in this section. Bus route 233 and 235 were referenced frequently as requiring more services. In particular the gap in the Cork to Macroom corridor served by Route 233.

A bus service connecting Macroom to Ballincollig via Coachford and Dripsey, extending the current bus route from Marymount to Waterfall and better connections between Millstreet and Cork City were all highlighted as being necessary. Courtbrack was noted as having recently become very developed and needing a more regular bus service than one that comes only three times a day. Bweeng was mentioned by several respondents as needing a more frequent connection to Mallow and Cork. Grenagh was also highlighted as needing more public transport options. The proposal in Connecting Ireland for East Cork and North Cork was observed as being very poor.

It was highlighted that there is no bus stop in Ballinhassig, and a bus stop was requested for Mons Bar between Macroom and Ballyvourney on the No 40 Tralee-Cork service to make the service more accessible to the people of the Cill na Martra region. The lack of a bus service from West Cork to Munster Technology University was noted.

Concerns were raised over the proposal to link Grenagh to Mallow and why the proposed Mallow-Grenagh service cannot continue on to Cork City. It was noted that services for Ballingeary, Inchigeela, Coachford, Kilmurray, Crookstown, Cloghduv, Aherla, Ovens, Balinora, Farran, Cappeen, Crossbarry and Enniskeane were not included for upgrade in the Connecting Ireland plans.

6.2   Kerry

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 59 references in relation to Kerry. A sample of some of the more frequently referenced issues related to public transport in Kerry are summarised in this section. There was a lack of connectivity noted in Ballybunion, Gneevguilla, Kilcummin, Cromane, Inch and Tarbet by several respondents. The proposed new route in North Kerry connecting the villages of Tarbert to Asdee and Moyvane was welcomed. It was noted there was no wheelchair accessible bus from Listowel to Tralee, Cork or Dublin. Connections to Kerry Airport from Tralee were noted as not being frequent enough.

South Kerry was highlighted for lack of public transport services in particular Caherdaniel, Castlecove, Castletown to Kenmare via Lauragh and the village of Sneem. It was noted a hop on hop off bus for the Ring of Kerry would have a huge economic impact on smaller towns in the area. Timing was an issue on Route 272 and noted as not practical for commuting to and from Tralee for workers in Finuge, Lixnaw and Abbeydorney. A daily connection from Inch Route 561 to Dingle, Killarney or Tralee was requested. Concerns were raised over transport services in Knocknagoshel and the possibility of a daily service from Knocknagoshel to either Tralee, Castleisland or Abbeyfeale citing the need of students attending Munster Technological University in Tralee.

6.3   Clare

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 24 references in relation to Clare. A sample of some of the more frequently referenced issues related to public transport in Clare are summarised in this section. It was suggested that an increase on the service from Sixmilebridge to Limerick routes via Cratloe would be used, as currently the service is not practical for travelling to either Limerick or Ennis. Accessibility of Route 350 was raised as critical for North-West Clare. It was noted that the inconsistency between inaccessible buses and/or stops prevents people with disabilities from having confidence that they will be able to travel. A lack of services in Ennis, Sixmilebridge, Quin, Ennistymon, Kilnamona, Corofin, Doonaha and Kilkee were raised as being an issue.

It was requested that the bus-stop for Bus route 350 in Kilnamona Ennis be moved to a safer location than it is in currently. The bus stop in Ennis town at Dunne Stores was referred to as being problematic for elderly people and those with mobility issues as it's not in the town centre. It was noted that in the village of Broadford there is currently just one weekly service. A connection planned through Quin was welcomed, with the hope of an evening connection to and from Ennis. It was requested if a connection from Quin to Limerick stopping at Tulla were possible considering the large traffic numbers travelling from Quin to Tulla for the secondary school. Route 339 was referred to as being unusable in practise. It was noted that the Loop Head Peninsula while visually spectacular, is not workable as a daily commute. An alternative of running two buses on the route was suggested, with a cheaper solution of diverting the return route back through Doonaha and Querrin after servicing Kilkee.

6.4   Waterford

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 42 references in relation to Waterford. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Waterford are summarised in this section.

The lack of frequent transport options in Cappagh, Villierstown and Aglish were noted. Night time services in Waterford was raised as an issue. It was queried if the Deise link could wait until the bus from Waterford arrives for people who need the connecting bus who live in rural towns. It was highlighted that from the understanding of the proposed routes there are only direct routes from Aglish and Villierstown to Youghal. It was observed that most people living in these villages work and shop in Dungarvan as opposed to Youghal. Local town services for Tramore and Dungarvan were requested with direct connectivity between Tramore and Waterford University Hospital and a bus connection from Waterford Rail Station to Waterford City. Connectivity between Waterford to Dublin via the East Coast serving Saint Vincent's Hospital was requested and an hourly bus service return between Waterford and Dublin.

6.5   Limerick

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 32 references in relation to Limerick. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Limerick are summarised in this section. It was noted the cross-country connections could go further and was suggested that the proposed B17 service could continue past Croom and terminate at Bruff as it would join West Limerick and East Limerick. It was suggested that the proposed 309 service continue past Kilteely and also terminate at Bruff.

Scheduling of bus services for commuters was raised, it was noted that there are two buses from Herbertstown to Limerick which are not suitable for workers, with no service before 12.15pm or after 5.30pm. It was noted that in the village of Broadford there is currently only one weekly service. It was requested that the proposed connecting bus transfer from A41 to 341 link at appropriate times and that the waiting time in between be reduced. The proposed Abbeyfeale to Newcastle West service was noted as a great benefit to those who live in that area. It was highlighted that due to recent changes in bus routes servicing the villages of Castleconnell and Montpelier there is currently no bus connection between the two villages.

The proposed 332 route extension to Limerick via Newport was criticised as it adds a significant amount of time to the journey, it was added that this is a disincentive to use the service for people from Murroe, Cappamore and Doon. It was suggested that the 301 service should be extended to connect Mungret and Clarina and Ballybrown directly to Limerick city, with a frequency of 4-6 buses per hour and that the 314 service from Glin to Limerick should have increased travel to Limerick City by going directly in the Dock Road. The planned improvements of the 314 were supported and the overall improved frequency to a minimum of six return services per day, it was however suggested that there is a need for eight return journeys per day on this route.

6.6   Tipperary

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 16 references in relation to Tipperary. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Tipperary are summarised in this section. It was mentioned that there was no regular bus service from Thurles to Waterford, Nenagh, Roscrea, Cashel, Clonmel, Kilkenny and Tipperary town. Concerns were raised over the lack of transport provision linkage options around the Lough Derg area connecting Nenagh to Portumna and from Newcastle, Clogheen, Glen Of Aherlow, Hollyford to Thurles and connecting towns. It was noted that bus connections between Mullinahone to Killenaule were needed.

It was highlighted that there was an opportunity missed along the Tipperary side of Lough Derg, with the villages of Coolbawn, Kilbarron village, Ballinderry and Terryglass not catered for in the plans. It was suggested that a service operating between Cashel and Kilkenny on Route 692 would link two tourism destinations while also providing transport for the villages of Cloneen, Drangan and Mullinahone. It was suggested that Thurles town needs a large bus stop due to the volume of existing and proposed services entering the town coupled with the town receiving university status. Route 391 Thurles to Limerick was referred to as a brilliant service for the rural areas and it was requested if the service could go into Upperchurch village as more people would use it.

6.7   Carlow

Under the theme of Carlow in Local Issues, there were four references in relation to county Carlow. All four submissions mentioned the lack of public transport in their local areas. The lack of public transport in the area of Tullow and Carlow was discussed. It was suggested that route number 12 will be an added benefit to the village of Clonegal as there are currently no public transport options in that area.

6.8   Wexford

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were 20 references in relation to the public transport service in County Wexford. It was proposed that bus services use the motorway and not stop in Carlow or Kildare as this would reduce journey times to Dublin from Wexford. It was highlighted that the new routes in Wexford seem too vague with no times available. It was mentioned that most routes from rural Wexford head towards major towns but there is concern over people trying to access built up rural towns which are not being serviced. Concern was also raised over the lack of services to take residents from where they live into local villages such as Our Lady's Island.

The proposed network for South Wexford was referred to as being very comprehensive. Concerns over the lack of TFI Local Link services in Wexford town was raised. Poor transport links for students was addressed for those wishing to do PLC courses in the areas surrounding Enniscorthy, it was noted as having a negative impact on potential students taking up suitable courses. It was asked that consideration be given to providing a service from Kiltealy through Killanne, Rathnure and Ballywilliam as these affect the uptake of training places in the area.

It was suggested that the NTA discusses with TFI Local Links as they know what the residents of Wexford need. It was highlighted that there is no transport links proposed for the area of Caim to Enniscorthy. A bus route operated by Wexford Bus to Kilkenny was suggested, as it would be convenient for those who travel between counties rather than making alternative arrangements. The expansion of transport services in Enniscorthy as well as New Ross were welcomed. It was highlighted that Enniscorthy is a transport hub for onward connections to Dublin, Wexford, New Ross, Waterford and Clare and should be referenced as such in the Connecting Ireland plans.

6.9   Wicklow

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 58 references in relation to Wicklow. A sample of some of the issues related to public transport in Wicklow are summarised in this section. The new Connecting Ireland proposals were largely welcomed, and further encouraged to expand on existing looped networks within towns and villages as well as creating new connections in particular across the east and west, south and west of the county which currently is lacking connectivity. It was noted that an additional route connecting Wicklow town to Newtownmountkennedy, Kilcoole, and Greystones needs to be included. It was requested that bus services for Enniskerry and Glencree be considered that could link into Powerscourt and parts of the Wicklow Way.

It was observed that there is no bus service proposed from Wicklow town to Greystones. Bray was highlighted as being poorly served, and a regular connection to Bray or Greystones, similar to Route 183 would be much more useful and regularly used. Concerns were raised over no change to Route 132 in the proposals which is the only route that services people in West Wicklow to get to Dublin. An increase in the frequency of buses during the day and in the evening was suggested. Route 132 does not currently serve Hollywood and a demand led service for rural towns and villages of West Wicklow, to include a car pooling/ shared transport scheme such as Go-Cars would be welcomed.

It was highlighted that there are no proposed connections between Rathdrum and Knockananna, Arklow and Baltinglass, Rathdrum and Laragh, or Blessington and north Wicklow. It was remarked that South and West of Wicklow remains sparsely connected by public transport. The additional bus Route 884 proposed that will link Carlow, Baltinglass, Dunlavin and Blessington is welcomed as well as the Route 874 connecting Tullow in Carlow with Knockananna.

The proposed 30 minute frequency between Wexford, Wicklow and Dublin was welcomed. It was asked that a Wicklow/Ashford/Newtownmountkennedy/Kilcoole service be provided to connect to the LUAS in Cherrywood. It was further noted that the frequent return service in the morning/evening on the local route encompassing Wicklow-Ashford-Newtownmountkennedy-Kilcoole-Greystones-Bray would also assist in serving school attendance, connecting to rail and inter town travel between busy and growing settlements along the Wicklow to Bray route and connecting to the Bus Connects proposals.

6.10   Kildare

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 110 references in relation to Kildare. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Kildare are summarised in this section. A new route from Allenwood to Rathangan was proposed and it was suggested to add an additional bus stop for the 120C and 820 routes. It was highlighted that there is no link between Maynooth and Dunboyne with no buses travelling from Celbridge to Naas. Celbridge was also noted as lacking in onward connections.

Increased services were requested in North Kildare. Maynooth was noted as having limited connections apart from Dublin and public transport is heavily biased towards the Newbridge/Kildare/Nass axis, while Northern/Southern Kildare is left lacking in options. Monasterevin was referenced frequently as being an area lacking in public transport and several querying why it wasn't part of the proposal. Also referenced were Rathangan and Allenwood. Calverstown was referenced in several submissions with many welcoming the new bus route proposal. The current public transport links that already exist were acknowledged but an additional bus route set up going from Allenwood, Lullymore, Rathangan, Monasterevin to Athy would like to have been welcomed. It was suggested that a frequent Allenwood to Athy bus route would attract as it provides access to various attractions along the Blueway.

6.11   Laois

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were eight submissions in relation to county Laois. The lack of connectivity was noted in Stradbally, Bunmahon, Mountrath, Castletown, and Borris-In-Ossory. It was noted that the plan includes existing routes provided by Dublin Coach who provide an unreliable service and neither connects Ballybrittas to Portarlington. It was suggested that a simple adjustment to the route could provide better connections for those areas. It was suggested that there needs to be a route serving Portlaoise to Wexford, and consideration be given to including stops in Borris-In-Ossory, Castletown and Mountrath on the proposed Route 17.

6.12   Offaly

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were eight submissions in relation to County Offaly. It was asked that the direct bus route from Donegal to Galway city remain in place. The journey time for Route 120 Edenderry to Dublin was noted as being too long. It was suggested that a direct route from Edenderry to Tullamore as well as a direct route from Edenderry to Trim be included. It was noted that a more direct route to Dublin via the M4 road would be an excellent idea rather than the current route which has too many stops in towns and villages in north Kildare.

The new proposed A31 service was also mentioned as insufficient as it only has three daily services. A direct route from Edenderry to Mullingar via Kinnegad was also proposed. It was remarked that the current plan does not assist third level students from Portarlington to Athlone who need to attend early morning lectures. A lack of connectivity was noted for those who travel from Edenderry to Mullingar in order to access medical appointments. Concerns were raised over the infrequent transport services from Tullamore to and from Dublin Airport. This was highlighted as a severe obstacle in the development of Tullamore. Banagher was noted as having an infrequent bus service.

6.13   Westmeath

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 15 references in relation to Westmeath. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Westmeath are summarised in this section. A service in Clonmellon was requested and for the villages of Mount Temple and Moate. More frequent links between Mullingar and Killucan to assist with trips to the hospital or for those working in Mullingar were requested.

Athlone and Mullingar were highlighted as two of the largest towns in the country and thus deserving of a more frequent and fast bus service. Concerns were raised for the proposed Route 29 and the potential delays along narrow roads, in particular between Trim and Killucan, which may negatively impact on the reliability of the service between Mullingar and Athlone. It was also suggested that the existing bus Route 837 be increased to the same frequency as the proposed Route 29.

6.14   Meath

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 74 references in relation to Meath. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Meath are summarised in this section. Several respondents highlighted the lack of public transport options in their areas and requested that better connections be made available between locations including, Summerhill to Kilcock, Bettystown to Dublin, Adree to Drumconrath, Ardath to Clonalvey, Navan to Dunboyne, Carlanstown, Bettystown to Duleek, Ratoath to Dublin, Kentstown to Navan, Julianstown to Laytown, Kentstown to Navan and Athboy to Kells. Kilbride was highlighted as it is currently not serviced by any public transport service and with no proposed service in the Connecting Ireland plans. The area of Ardcath, Stamullen and Clonalvey was noted as not having public transport links.

6.15   Galway

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were 122 references in relation to County Galway. A sample of some of the more frequent issues related to public transport in Galway is summarised in this section.

A frequent service for school children in Oranmore and Maree National School was requested. A need for more frequent services were highlighted for Connemara, Kinvara to Galway and Corofin to Galway. It was highlighted there is currently very poor access to transport outside of the Dublin to Galway route. Regional corridors in Galway and Roscommon and local corridors in Galway were proposed to link the towns of Galway and Mayo.

It was suggested that Galway have an hourly service from Rosmuc with five direct services a day connecting Cong and Galway in both directions. Concerns were raised as there is currently no frequent connecting service from Connemara to Galway city or Clifden with only one daily bus service to Galway city. It was highlighted that there are no bus shelters or up-to-date bus information points in Recess, Moycullen, Oranmore and Maam Cross. In Oughterard it was noted there has been added shelters planned for bus stops for several months now that have not come to fruition.

It was remarked that there are no proposals for providing transport services on the Aran Islands. East Galway was noted as being poorly represented in the Connecting Ireland plans with a request for connections from Portumna, Woodford, Loughrea areas to Galway City. It was commented that the proposals for Route 21 and 22A for Galway are inadequate and fail to provide any service to the areas of Annaghdown, Corrandulla, Caherlistrane, Auchloggeen, Bawnmore, Kiloughter. The lack of transport services in Aughclogee between the areas of Ballymoe and Glenamaddy and Headford were highlighted.

6.16   Roscommon

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were 22 references in relation to County Roscommon. A sample of some of the issues referenced in relation to public transport in Roscommon are summarised in this section.

A more frequent bus service from Rooskey to Dublin and Sligo before 9am and return at 6 pm was requested. It was suggested that it would benefit the county of Roscommon if there was a late night bus service that leaves Dublin and Galway cities. Issues with TFI Local Link bus services were also referenced in the village of Arigna with a request for local services from Ballinasloe to Roscommon and Ballinasloe village.

The positive impact of existing TFI Local Links services was highlighted in particular to connect the north of the county to the south. More bus services in Ballaghaderreen were requested and in Strokestown, Castlerea and Boyle. It was suggested that bus services terminating in Athlone should connect with trains to Dublin and Galway. It was noted that the journey time for Route 440 is currently too long.

6.17   Mayo

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were 48 references in relation to county Mayo. A sample of some of the issues related to public transport in Mayo are summarised in this section. More direct services were requested between Sligo and Castlebar. Bus services to Knock Airport from Ballina and Westport were noted as insufficient. More frequent interurban bus services from Charlestown and Ballina to Sligo was also suggested as well as enhanced local bus services from Ballina to Blacksod, Ballycastle and Bunnyconnellan and Westport to Clifden. A more frequent connection was requested from Corraun to Achill Island and Mulranny. An increase in services for Killala to Ballina and a late evening/night weekend service during the spring and summer months was also requested.

Concerns were expressed over the current twice weekly circular bus Ballina, Castleconnor, Bonniconlon being removed, leaving Bonniconlon with no bus service. An increase in frequency on the 22A, 22B, 27A and 21/22 bus services to Belmullet was requested which is currently not serviced by any regional route. Achill Island would also benefit from these extensions. A bus service from Ballycastle to Bonniconlon was requested and an increase in the frequency on the route between Ballina and Blacksod. A connection between Ballina and Belmullet and an additional service connecting Downpatrick Head with both Ballina and Belmullet was also suggested. An extending Route 454 between Castlebar and Ballina was recommended. Improved interurban services between Galway City and Ballina, Foxford, Castlebar, Claremorris, and Charlestown and between Galway City and Westport, Ballinrobe and Ballyhaunis were recommended. It was suggested a bus service from Ballina, Foxford and Charlestown to co-ordinate with existing rail services from Westport, Castlebar and Claremorris with further connections from Ballina and Foxford, to Dublin. Enhancements were requested for; Route 440 Athlone to Westport, Route 445 Bunnyconnellan-Ballycastle, Route 446 and Route 978.

6.18   Leitrim

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were nine submissions concerning County Leitrim. A sample of some of the frequent issues related to public transport in Leitrim is summarised in this section. More direct services were requested from Leitrim to Longford, an increase of services from Belmullet to Castlebar and a direct link between Carrick-on-Shannon, Elphin and Strokestown.

6.19   Louth

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 14 references in relation to Louth. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Louth are summarised in this section. Togher was mentioned as having poor public transport links. Sandpit was noted as requiring a bus service to Drogheda. It was suggested if Route 168 is to merge with Route 161 it must be a frequent service and available at weekends. Additional services from Ardee to Drumconrath were requested.

6.20   Dublin

Under the theme of Local Issues, there were 27 references in relation to County Dublin. A sample of the more frequent issues relating to public transport in Dublin is summarised in this section. Improvement to services in Backweston, a connecting bus from Maynooth town to Dunboyne and a direct connection from Dublin city centre to Swords and Dublin Airport were requested. TFI Local Links services in Naul were requested. It was noted that the Wicklow Mountains are not accessible from Killester and the current St.Kevins timetable does not suit for a daily walk in the mountains.

A direct route from Finglas to Ballymun and Swords was suggested and an extension of the Route 239 from Tyrrelstown to Coolmine. It was highlighted that the new bus stops in Lucan now stops at the main junction beside traffic lights which is causing further traffic congestion in the area. Concern about anti-social behaviour on board some services in Dublin was highlighted . Confusion over what would happen to the NX in exchange for the new Route 31 was mentioned in particular the proposed reduction frequency. A night time bus service to Dublin Airport was also requested.

6.21   Donegal

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 35 references in relation to Donegal. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Donegal are summarised in this section. It was commented that the Connecting Ireland plans are not ambitious enough to reduce car dependency in Inishowen. Poor daily transport options were highlighted from: Buncrana to Moville, Gweedore to Letterkenny, Derry, Buncranna, Ballybofey and Dungloe.It was highlighted that there is currently no TFI Local Link service in Bridgetown, Laghey, to Ballyshannon or Donegal town any time of day. Concerns were raised over discontinuing the direct service between Galway and Donegal.

It was commented that there was little for South west Donegal in the proposal and a daily Donegal to Sligo route would be a welcome addition for students enabling them to attend Sligo I.T. It was suggested that an express service from Derrybeg via the Errigal road in Glenveigh would be a huge benefit to the people living in that area and make it so much more accessible to get to Dublin. The lack of a regular service between the main towns in Inishowen; Buncranna, Carndonagh and Moville was highlighted. It was explained that public services for Inishowen are based in Buncranna or Carndonagh, and that the people of Moville, and Northeast Inishowen in general are at a huge disadvantage when it comes to accessing any type of public services due to the lack of regular public transport services. An increase in bus services between Ardara/ Glenties and Letterkenny and Fintown and Glenties were requested.

6.22   Cavan

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 53 references in relation to Cavan. A sample of some of the more frequently mentioned issues related to public transport in Cavan are summarised in this section. Ballyjamesduff was noted as needing more frequent bus services as well as regular TFI Local Link service for Shercock, Bailieboro, Killinkere Cross Virginia and Mullagh. More regular TFI Local Link services in East Cavan especially the large parishes of Killinkere and Laragh were requested. In Cavan town it was highlighted that there are no services to Shercock, Kingscourt or Bailieborough on weekends or evenings. It was noted that in comparison to neighbouring towns of Cootehill, Shercock and Kingscourt which have four direct daily buses between 5:30am and 6:30pm, Bailieborough has two bus routes serving the people of the town.

It was suggested the Route 108 service has an early morning service from Mullagh to connect in Kells with Dublin bound bus services and that the return service has equal connectivity with evening bus services arriving into Kells. Consideration for Route 187 to stop in Mullagh, Crossreagh and Enagh to allow for greater connectivity to Cavan Institute was requested. A need of public transport in Bailieborough and the surrounding hinterland was highlighted. It was requested that the proposed Route 30 be high frequency and arrive in Cavan town before 8:30am.

6.23   Monaghan

Under the theme of Local Issues there were six submissions in relation to Monaghan. A sample of some of the issues referenced are reviewed in this section. One submission commented that travelling to anywhere else in the country from Monaghan can only be accomplished via Dublin first and expressed that this does not make much sense. There were concerns over the existing Clones to Cavan route being cut as part of the proposals.

6.24   Longford

Under the theme of Local Issues there were three submissions in relation to Longford. A sample of some of the issues referenced in Longford are presented in this section. That the journey time for Route 842 that links Center Parcs with Ballymahon, Mullingar was noted as being too long. It was suggested the route should continue on from Center Parcs to Mullingar and provide a loop service, with buses running in each direction which would cut down journey times from Ballymahon and Center parcs to Mullingar. Ballymahon was highlighted as lacking in public transport options.

6.25 Sligo

Under the theme of Local Issues there were 22 submissions in relation to Sligo. A sample of some of the issues referenced in Sligo are presented in this section.

A more frequent and reliable bus service for Sligo town was requested. It was highlighted that any Sligo town bus service needs to include Carraroe Retail Park, Lakeview School and Carraroe Community Centre to allow people from Ballisodare, Ballygawley, Collooney and Ballintogher make use of a park and ride facility in the retail park.

It was suggested that Route 462 to Manorhamilton needs to be more frequent for working commuters. It was noted the Connecting Ireland plans lacked in detail for services in West Sligo.

It was highlighted that there is no bus service from Sligo to the neighbouring town of Claremorris. More frequent bus services in Enniscrone was also requested. A bus service connecting Ballina, Bonniconlon and Tubbercurry were suggested.

7

Conclusion and Next Steps

7. Conclusion and Next Steps

This post-consultation report aims to set out how the public consultation was managed, how many people interacted with the Connecting Ireland Proposal and to summarise the issues and concerns raised throughout the public consultation process.

The transparency of the public consultation process is supported by the production of this consultation report to demonstrate that the points raised through the submissions received are being recorded and considered. As discussed throughout this report, the feedback and opinions expressed in the submissions and other associated engagement are now being considered by the project team and will feed into the development of the transport strategy for Connecting Ireland.

The public consultation allowed the NTA to better understand where rural bus service improvements are required with a view to introducing new and improved connections between villages and towns; and providing better access to public transport in rural areas.

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. Rollout of new and improved services will happen on a phased basis from 2022 to 2025.

A

Appendix A

English Feedback Form

Appendinx A - Engilsh Feedback Form

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan - Consultation Survey
How do you travel now?
To better understand how we should provide for better public transport access for more people to more places throughout rural Ireland, it is important for us to know how you travel now.

Before we start, are you completing the survey as a representative of an organisation?

○ No

○ Yes

If yes, please specify:

[   ]

Do you currently use public transport?

○ Yes regularly, most days / weekdays

○ Yes often, at least once a week

○ Yes sometimes, once or twice a month

○ Yes but not often, a few times a year

○ Never

1

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan - Consultation Survey

What type of ticket do you use most often?

○ Cash ticket

○ Online ticket

○ Leap Card

○ Free travel pass / DSP card

What activities do you use public transport for?
Choose one or many

☐ Travel to work

☐ Travel to school or college

☐ Shopping trips

☐ Visiting friends and relatives and socialising

☐ Going to medical or other appointments

☐ Going to an event like a concert or hurling match

☐ For day trips and tourism

☐ For something else

2

What types of public transport do you use?
Choose one or many

☐ TFI Local Link services

☐ Bus Éireann or other bus services

☐ Rail services

☐ Taxi or Hackney services

☐ Community car

How would you rate your current public transport service?

○ Very poor

○ Poor

○ Fair

○ Good

○ Very good

○ I have no service

3

What do you think could improve your current public transport service?
Choose one or many

☐ Stops or stations closer to where I live

☐ More frequent services

☐ More places served

☐ Better connections between services

☐ If I could take my bike or scooter with me

☐ Better information about the services in my area

☐ If I could get on and off the vehicle more easily

☐ More punctual or reliable services

☐ None of the above

Other please specify

[   ]

Do you have access to a car either as a driver or passenger?

○ Yes all of the time

○ Yes some of the time

○ No

Can you think of a time where you were unable to attend an appointment or go somewhere because you had no transport available to you?

○ That has never happened

○ Yes, sometimes

○ Yes, often

If yes, please specify where

[   ]

4

Appendinx A - Engilsh Feedback Form

Have you ever not taken a job or educational / training opportunity because you had no way of getting there?

○ Yes

○ No

5

Connecting Ireland
Rural Mobility Plan

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan - Consultation Survey
Designing the Network
This is the start of a 5 year process of service improvements and the network will continue to evolve. To inform that process, we would like to hear your views on the current proposals, this information will help our teams design better services for you.

Considering the whole of the Connecting Ireland plan (not just your area), how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Connecting Ireland will provide greater access to services and work and educational opportunities and improve the economic competitiveness of rural Ireland

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Don't know

6

Connecting Ireland will provide a better rural transport network and reduce rural isolation

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Don't know

Connecting Ireland will lead to a reduction in car dependency and transport emissions in rural Ireland

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Don't know

When thinking about using public transport, which option would you prefer?

○ Less frequent but more direct services from my home to my destination.

○ More frequent but indirect services from my home to my destination, where I have to change service once on the way.

7

Considering the Connecting Ireland plan for your area, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

I understand the proposed network in my area

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Don't Know

The proposed network for my area is an improvement on what is already there

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Don't Know

The frequency of services and range of destinations served by public transport proposed in my area will make me use public transport more

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neither agree nor disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

○ Don't Know

8

Appendinx A - Engilsh Feedback Form

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about the Connecting Ireland plan?

[   ]

Or if you prefer you can upload a document to give your feedback on the Connecting Ireland plan

[Choose File] [Choose File] No file chosen

9

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan - Consultation Survey About You
Thank you for taking the time to consider the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan. We're very excited about the plan and we are really interested in your views on it. To help us better understand how you feel about Connecting Ireland could you please tell us a little bit about yourself?

Gender, how do you identify?

○ I prefer not to say

○ Woman

○ Man

○ I prefer to self-describe, below

Self-describe:

[   ]

10

What is your age?

○ Under 18

○ 18 to 24

○ 25 to 34

○ 35 to 44

○ 45 to 54

○ 55 to 64

○ Over 65

○ I prefer not to say

Do you have a disability?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I prefer not to say

Where do you live?

[�⇕]

How would you best describe the place where you live?

○ City

○ Town

○ Village

○ Rural Area

○ I prefer not to say

What is your employment status?

[�⇕]

11

If you are working remotely do you plan to continue to do so?

○ Yes, all of the time

○ Yes, some of the time

○ No

○ Not applicable

12

B

Appendix B

Connecting Ireland Brochure Easy-to-read Version

Appendinx B - Connecting Ireland Brochure Easy-to-read Version

Connecting Ireland

Better Public Transport Across Rural Ireland

This is an Easy to Read information leaflet.
October 2021

Connecting Ireland – Better Public Transport Across Rural Ireland

Connecting Ireland is a plan for public transport in Ireland.
Connecting places means joining them up.

This plan was put together by the National Transport Authority.

The plan wants to make it easier for people to get around, especially in rural areas.
A rural area is in the countryside.

There will be more public transport services between villages and towns.

Public transport will link rural villages and towns to larger towns and cities.

1

Who is the National Transport Authority?

The National Transport Authority was set up in 2009.
It is also known as the NTA.

The NTA works under the Department of Transport.

We put together plans for a good quality, accessible transport system.

The transport system should be good value for money.

Transport plans need to think about the environment too.

3

The NTA looks after public transport in cities.
We also look after public transport in local towns and villages.

There are TFI Local Link buses in every county.
These buses help people in rural areas get around.

These are paid for and supported by the NTA.

TFI Local Link buses are managed by people in local offices who know their own communities.

In 2019, our Local Link buses carried 2.5 million passengers.

4

C

Appendix C

Sample Website Content

Appendinx C - Sample Website Content

D

Appendix D

English Information Brochure

Appendinx D - English Information Brochure

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

2 in 5 villages are not connected to their nearby bigger town.

▸ 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.

Proposed work programme — **2021** Public Consultation — **2022** Analysis of Feedback and Detailed Planning — **2022 To 2025** Phased Implementation subject to funding

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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E

Appendix E

Irish Information Brochure

Appendix E - Irish Information brochure

An Plean Soghluaisteachta Tuaithe
Éire a Nascadh

Iompar Poiblí a Fheabhsú ar fud Cheantar Tuaithe na hÉireann

ÉIRE A NASCADH - FREASTAL AR PHOBAIL TUAITHE

Is é atá sa Phlean 'Éire a Nascadh' ná mórthionscnamh náisiúnta iompair phoiblí ar fhorbair an tÚdarás Náisiúnta Iompair é d'fhonn nascacht a mhéadú, go háirithe do dhaoine a chónaíonn lasmuigh dár gcuid cathracha agus bailte móra. Tá sé mar aidhm leis an bplean feabhas a chur ar shoghluaisteacht i gceantair thuaithe. Déanfaidh sé amhlaidh trí naisc níos fearr a sholáthar idir sráidbhailte agus bailte trí iad a cheangal le gréasán réigiúnach feabhsaithe lena nascfar cathracha agus lárionaid réigiúnacha ar fud na tíre.

Mar thoradh ar na feabhsuithe sin, cruthófar córas níos éifeachtaí níos comhtháite lena dtabharfar daoine i gceantair thuaithe chuig na háiteanna ar mian leo dul chucu nuair is mian leo dul chucu.

CÉ HÉ AN TÚDARÁS NÁISIÚNTA IOMPAIR?

Oibríonn an tÚdarás Náisiúnta Iompair faoi choimirce na Roinne Iompair. Bunaíodh an tÚdarás Náisiúnta Iompair sa bhliain 2009 agus tá freagracht air as straitéisí a fhorbairt agus a chur chun feidhme chun iompar atá ar ardchaighdeán, inrochtana agus inbhuanaithe a sholáthar ar fud na hÉireann. Nuair a smaoiníonn daoine ar an Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair, is minic a smaoiníonn siad ar infheistíocht i seirbhísí iompair phoiblí agus i mbonneagar iompair phoiblí i mór-lárionaid uirbeacha. Tá níos mó i gceist leis an Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair ná tionscadail uirbeacha, áfach. Tá ról lárnach againn freisin in iompar poiblí a sholáthar do dhaoine i mbailte, i sráidbhailte áitiúla agus i gceantair thuaithe mar chuid dár ngréasán 'Transport for Ireland (TFI)'.

Oibríonn busanna Nasc Áitiúil TFI i ngach contae cheana féin, agus iad ag soláthar nascacht ríthábhachtach agus ag freastal ar chinn scríbe ar fud na tíre. Tugann an tÚdarás Náisiúnta Iompair cistiú agus tacaíocht do na hoibríochtaí, a bhíonn faoi bhainistiú ar an leibhéal áitiúil ag na daoine in oifigí Naisc Áitiúil a bhfuil láneolas acu ar a bpobail áitiúla. Sa bhliain 2019, d'iompair ár seirbhísí Naisc Áitiúil 2.5 milliún paisinéir, an líon ab airde riamh.

CÉN FÁTH A BHFUIL 'ÉIRE A NASCADH' AG TEASTÁIL?

Chuir an tÚdarás measúnú cuimsitheach i gcrích ar an ngréasán reatha seirbhísí rialta iompair phoiblí atá ag oibriú ar fud na tíre. Leis sin, ghnóthaíomar tuiscint níos fearr ar na réimsí a bhfuil feabhsuithe ag teastáil iontu. Áirítear iad seo a leanas leo sin:

- Aghaidh a thabhairt ar bhearnaí sa ghréasán, ós rud é nach bhfuil dhá cheann as gach cúig shráidbhaile nasctha chuig an mbaile mór in aice leo
- Nascacht neamhchothrom idir áiteanna, mar a bhfuil roinnt ceantar dea-nasctha agus mar nach bhfuiltear ag freastal ar cheantair eile
- A chinntiú go bhfreastalaíonn an t-iompar poiblí ar fheidhmeanna éagsúla agus go bhfuil níos mó i gceist leis ná díriú ar roghanna a sholáthar le haghaidh taisteal chun na hoibre nó an oideachais
- Amchláir a chomhtháthú ar dhóigh níos fearr chun an t-iompar poiblí a dhéanamh níos úsáidí agus chun naisc idir roghanna difriúla iompair phoiblí a dhéanamh níos fusa

Níl dhá cheann as gach cúig shráidbhaile nasctha chuig an mbaile mór in aice leo.

AN DIFEAR A DHÉANFAIDH 'ÉIRE A NASCADH' DO PHOBAIL TUAITHE

- Beidh rochtain ag níos mó ná 70% de dhaoine a chónaíonn lasmuigh de na Cathracha ar sheirbhís iompair phoiblí a sholáthraíonn trí thuras fillidh ar a laghad gach lá le linn na seachtaine chuig baile in aice leo
- Roghanna soghluaisteachta feabhsaithe a thabhairt do dhaoine i gceantair iargúlta, agus seirbhísí atá Freagrúil don Éileamh agus seirbhísí nuálacha eile iompair á soláthar
- Níos mó ná 100 nasc nua a sholáthar chuig Lárionaid Áitiúla ó lonnaíochtaí tuaithe sa chúlchríoch
- Níos mó ná 100 nasc nua a sholáthar chuig Bailte Contae ó gach cineál lonnaíochta timpeall Bailte Contae agus
- Níos mó ná 60 nasc nua a sholáthar chuig Lárionaid Réigiúnacha nó Cathracha ó gach cineál lonnaíochta timpeall na Lárionad nó na gCathracha sin.

NA TOGRAÍ UAINN A DHEARADH

Cuirfimid prionsabail éagsúla i bhfeidhm chun na tograí uainn a fhorbairt tuilleadh ar dhóigh níos mionsonraithe tar éis an chomhairliúcháin phoiblí. Áirítear leis na prionsabail sin:

- Minicíocht na mbealaí atá ann cheana a mhéadú chun níos mó paisinéirí a mhealladh
- Amchláir úsáideacha chomhtháite a dhearadh
- Seirbhísí a sceidealú chun go sroichfidh siad lárionad roimh 09:00, go háirithe le haghaidh turais chun na hoibre agus an oideachais
- Soláthar a dhéanamh do thurais i lár an lae dóibh sin atá ag dul ag siopadóireacht, ag freastal ar choinní sláinte nó ag tabhairt cuairt ar chairde agus ar bhaill teaghlaigh

Appendix E - Irish Information brochure

- Turas fillidh abhaile a sceidealú ag thart ar 17:30, agus an acmhainneacht ann seirbhísí níos déanaí a sholáthar le haghaidh dul amach agus miondíol tráthnóna in áiteanna ina bhfuil éileamh ann

- Seirbhísí a sholáthar seacht lá sa tseachtain

- Bealaí áitiúla a sholáthar a nascfaidh lonnaíochtaí beaga chuig an ngréasán réigiúnach iompair phoiblí, agus amchláir chomhtháite ann lena dtairgfear níos mó deiseanna cómhalartaithe

- Freastal ar phríomhláithreacha laistigh de bhailte e.g. ospidéil, stáisiúin traenach, institiúidí oideachais, etc.

Bainfear úsáid as na prionsabail sin chun feabhsuithe ar sheirbhísí bus bealaigh shocraithe a threorú. Tá sé beartaithe againn an gréasán Iompair atá Freagrúil don Éileamh a leathnú i gceantair atá faoi líon beag daoine. Is é is Iompar atá Freagrúil don Éileamh ann ná seirbhís ó dhoras go dhoras a chuirtear in áirithe roimh ré agus lena soláthraítear roghanna soghluaisteachta do na daoine sin a chónaíonn i gceantair thuaithe iargúlta, agus a chomhlánaíonn an gnáthiompar sceidealaithe paisinéirí. Fiosróimid cineálacha nuálacha eile cur chuige freisin chun feabhas a chur ar an nascacht iompair phoiblí i gceantair iargúlta.

ÁR GCUR CHUIGE COMHOIBRÍOCH

Thionólamar sraith ceardlann le hÚdaráis Áitiúla agus le Gníomhaireachtaí Náisiúnta. Bhí na ceardlanna sin ina ndeis le tuiscint níos fearr a ghnóthú ar na bearnaí atá ann sa ghréasán iompair phoiblí ar an leibhéal áitiúil agus chabhraigh siad leis na tograí uainn a mhúnlú. Chabhraigh an luath-idirchaidreamh sin lena chinntiú go ndearnamar breithniú ar phleananna sa todhchaí le haghaidh forbartha agus athruithe féideartha ar an éileamh ar thaisteal. Ní a bhí tábhachtach sna luathchéimeanna comhairliúcháin de 'Éire a Nascadh' agus a bheidh tábhachtach i gcéimeanna níos déanaí is ea obair i gcomhar lenár gcomhpháirtithe.

AILÍNÍONN 'ÉIRE A NASCADH' LEIS AN GCREAT BEARTAIS NÁISIÚNTA

RÓL AN IOMPAIR PHOIBLÍ I DTÉARNAMH NA HÉIREANN TAR ÉIS NA PAINDÉIME

Ceann de na dúshláin is mó a bhfuil an t-iompar poiblí ag dul i ngleic leo le blianta beaga anuas is ea paindéim Covid-19. De réir mar a bhreathnaímid ar aghaidh agus a thosaíonn an earnáil ag téarnamh, is eol dúinn go bhfuil seans maith ann go rachaidh a lán ama thart sula bhfillfear ar na leibhéil úsáide a bhí ann roimh an bpaindéim.

Mar thoradh ar an ngá práinneach le hastaíochtaí carbóin na hearnála iompair a laghdú, áfach, ní mór dúinn dlús a chur leis an téarnamh sin chomh tapa agus is féidir linn. Is é is 'Éire a Nascadh' ann ná ár bplean soiléir uaillmhianach chun dlús a chur leis an téarnamh sin agus, go deimhin, úsáid iompair phoiblí níos fearr fós a bhaint amach trí chlúdach an ghréasáin a leathnú agus trí fheabhas a chur ar a éifeachtaí atá sé maidir le freastal ar éilimh nua agus athraitheacha ar an iompar.

BA MHAITH LINN DO THUAIRIMÍ A FHÁIL

Cé nach mbeimid in ann bualadh le daoine i bpearsa le linn an phróisis comhairliúcháin phoiblí, déanfaimid idirchaidreamh le daoine trí chruinnithe poiblí ar líne, trí theagmháil le hionadaithe poiblí, trí na meáin áitiúla agus, rud ba thábhachtaí fós, trí dhaoine den phobal a spreagadh chun freagra a thabhairt dár suirbhé ar líne, rud is féidir a aimsiú ar an suíomh Gréasáin 'Éire a Nascadh'. Ba mhaith linn a fháil amach an bhfuil sé amhlaidh go n-oireann na prionsabail deartha a bheartaímid a úsáid do do cheantar áitiúil nó nach bhfuil agus tuiscint a ghnóthú ar na nithe eile ba cheart dúinn a chur san áireamh de réir mar a dhearaimid do sheirbhísí.

Cé gur ar an Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair a bheidh an fhreagracht fhoriomlán as 'Éire a Nascadh', beidh rath an tionscnaimh ag brath ar iarracht chomhoibríoch le gníomhaireachtaí éagsúla, leis an earnáil bus tráchtála, lenár n-oibritheoirí seirbhísí Oibleagáide Seirbhíse Poiblí agus le Nasc Áitiúil.

- www.nationaltransport.ie
- ConnectingIreland@nationaltransport.ie
- 0818 300121
- Éire a Nascadh, Bosca Oifig Phoist 436, Páirc Gnó Thuaisceart na Cathrach, Bóthar Thuama, Co. na Gaillimhe

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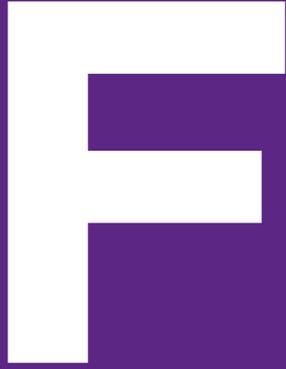
Appendix F

Sample Newspaper Advert

Appendix F - Sample Newspaper Advert

G

Appendix G

Sample Social Media Posts

Appendix G - Sample Social Media Posts

National Transport Authority
9,341 followers
3mo · 🌐

The NTA is proposing an overall increase of approximately 25% in rural bus services as part of the five year #ConnectingIreland plan that was published for public consultation today. ...see more

National Transport Authority
9,341 followers
1mo · 🌐

Last chance to #HaveYourSay! The consultation for #ConnectingIreland closes on Friday 10th December. ...see more

Connecting Ireland
Rural Mobility Plan

Transport for Ireland @TFIupdates · Nov 10, 2021
The NTA will be holding online public information events on the 15th, 16th and 18th of Nov, these webinars will give you the opportunity to hear from the NTA team & to learn more about Connecting Ireland. To register for one of the webinars, visit: ow.ly/K8Y050GK9va

Connecting Ireland
Rural Mobility Plan
Enhancing Public Transport Across Rural Ireland

Register now for an upcoming webinar to learn more

Transport for Ireland @TFIupdates · Nov 6, 2021
The NTA wants your views on #ConnectingIreland, an ambitious programme of enhancements to create a more integrated, accessible, and sustainable #PublicTransport network for rural Ireland.

To view the proposals and share your feedback visit: ow.ly/QEaZ50GBCCj

Connecting Ireland
Rural Mobility Plan

Appendix G - Sample Social Media Posts

H

Appendix H

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobilty Plan Report

Appendix H - Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Enhancing Public Transport Across Rural Ireland

Summary Report

November 2021

Contents

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1   Introduction

The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility 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.

Connecting Ireland seeks to make public transport for rural communities more useful for more people, and it will do this by:

- Improving existing services;
- Adding new services and
- Enhancing the current Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) network which meets the transport needs of people who live in remote locations.

The NTA has undertaken a comprehensive analysis to better understand where rural bus service improvements are required with a view to introducing new and improved connections between villages and towns and providing better access to public transport in rural areas.

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.

Connecting Ireland is the first rural public transport plan of its kind in Ireland and we want to get your views on our proposals to help shape the future of Ireland's public transport network.

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2   NTA's Role in Improving the Public Transport Network

Established in 2009, the NTA oversees the development of the public transport network. In this role the NTA's overriding objective is to ensure that public transport services are designed and implemented so as to ensure the best possible experiences for the travelling public. That is at the core of everything we do.

The NTA has several functions when it comes to public transport:

Public Service Obligation (PSO) Services

Each year NTA makes funding available to public transport operators for the provision of socially necessary public transport services in Ireland. Operators including Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann, Dublin Bus, Transdev and Go-Ahead Ireland provide these Public Service Obligation (PSO) services, under contract to the NTA.

The NTA not only monitors the delivery of the PSO network, but pro-actively works with operators to improve the effectiveness of existing services and to introduce new ones to meet changing needs. The PSO network includes city and town bus services, longer distance routes connecting towns and villages, as well as local services linking rural areas to nearby towns and villages.

Licensed Public Passenger Services

Under the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009 (PTR Act 2009), the NTA is responsible for licensing of public bus passenger services. Licensed public bus passenger services are often called 'commercial bus services', as they are operated without any public subsidy from the NTA. Commercial bus services provide services on a significant proportion of the interurban and regional public transport network providing connections into cities and other major destinations such as large towns and airports. Commercial bus services also provide connections to rural towns and villages.

The Rural Transport Programme

The NTA funds the Rural Transport Programme which is managed at a local level by 15 Local Link offices on behalf of the NTA. Each Local Link office manages a range of services, including regular scheduled bus services connecting rural areas and villages to nearby large towns, as well as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) which provides essential connectivity to more remote rural areas.

These different types of services all make an important contribution to the achievement of government policy to encourage greater use by the public of sustainable transport modes. Each type of service will play an essential role in achieving the ambitious objectives of Connecting Ireland.

Connecting Ireland: Rural Mobility Plan

Enhancing Public Transport Across Rural Ireland.
Summary Report. November 2021.

NTA: Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair / National Transport Authority

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

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These different types of services all make an important contribution to the achievement of government policy to encourage greater use by the public of sustainable transport modes. Each type of service will play an essential role in achieving the ambitious objectives of Connecting Ireland.

3. Benefits of Connecting Ireland

The enhanced network will greatly improve interconnectivity between communities

We estimate the implementation of service improvements emerging from Connecting Ireland work will provide:

- Over 70% of those living outside the Cities will have access to a public transport service that

Summary Report Easy-To-Read Version

Connecting Ireland

Better Public Transport Across Rural Ireland

This is an Easy to Read version of the main report from the National Transport Authority.

October 2021

What is this report about?

Connecting Ireland is a plan for public transport in Ireland.
Connecting places means joining them up.

This plan was put together by the National Transport Authority or NTA.

This plan is very important for people living in the countryside, away from towns and cities.
These people are living in rural areas.

The Connecting Ireland plan will make it easier for people living in rural areas to get around.

It will make public transport in rural areas more useful for more people.

1

Connecting Ireland is the first public transport plan of its kind in Ireland.
It will make changes to give a better public transport system in rural areas.

Public transport will link rural villages and towns to larger towns and cities.

You may be able to go straight from one place to another, or may have to change services to get from a town to a city.

There will be new transport services for rural areas.

There will be more DRT services.
The DRT is a door to door service that people in rural areas can book.

How will the NTA make public transport better?

The NTA was set up in 2009.
We manage the development of the public transport network.

Our main job is to plan the best public transport service possible for the money we get.

We give money to people that run public transport services and check these services.

We work with people running transport services to make them better and to bring in new services.

Summary Report Easy-To-Read Version

I

Appendix I

Sample Email Issued to Stakeholders

Appendix I - Sample Email Issued to Stakeholders

ear Deputy

e National Transport Authority would like to invite you to a Connecting Ireland virtual briefing which will take place through Zoom today, Monday 1st November at 2pm.

e briefing will give us an opportunity to fill you in on our plans for the Connecting Ireland and the type of consultation process we wish to conduct.

onnecting Ireland is the National Transport Authority's plan to increase public transport connectivity between cities, towns, surrounding villages and rural areas.

der the proposals, the number of services is set to increase, and so too will overall capacity, making bus transport more useful to more people than ever before.

enda:

> Presentation by Anne Graham, CEO & Tim Gaston, Director of Public Transport Services
> Concludes at 3.00pm

e National Transport Authority is the state agency charged with developing and implementing strategies to provide high quality accessible, sustainable transport across Ireland.

you are able to attend or send a representative on your behalf, please RSVP via the link below at your earliest convenience.

e look forward to your response.

nd regards,

TA Oireachtas Liaison

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ownload the Transport for Ireland Smartphone Apps:

| Leap Top-up | Journey Plan | Real Time | Driver Check | Cycle Planner | Ireland eGovernment Awards 2016 Winners |

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Appendix J

Maps

Appendix J - Maps

Appendix J - Maps

Carlow Public Transport Network

November 2021

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Map Key
- Existing Regional Route
- Existing Local Route
- Rail Line
- Terminus, where a route begins or ends
- Airports
- Points of Interest
- Ferry Ports
- Third Level Education
- Train Stations

Dublin Public Transport Network

November 2021

Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Map Key
- Existing Regional Route
- Existing Local Route
- Rail Line
- Terminus, where a route begins or ends
- Airports
- Points of Interest
- Ferry Ports
- Third Level Education
- Train Stations

North

Proposed Public Transport Improvements in County Carlow

Regional Corridor Proposals

Proposal	Connecting		Serving*	Description
12	Portlaoise	Wexford	Athy, Carlow, Bunclody, Enniscorthy and other places en route	This is a new corridor, parts of this corridor are currently served by route 73 and route 376. A better integration of these routes is proposed with a minimum service frequency of 2 hours.
13	Dublin	Waterford	Carlow, Muine Bheag, Thomastown and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 4, X4, 600 and 736 a mix of express and all-stop services. We propose more frequent all-stop services on this corridor and better integration of the existing services. A minimum service frequency of 2 hours on all-stop services is proposed.
14	Dublin	Clonmel	Kilkenny, Callan and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 600 and 717. We propose more frequent services on this corridor with a minimum service frequency of 2 hours between Clonmel and Kilkenny.

Local Route Proposals

Proposal	Connecting		Serving*	Description
874	Carlow	Knockananna	Kernanstown, Tullow, Baltinglass, Hacketstown and other places en route	We propose to extend route 874 from Hacketstown to Knockananna, with an increase in frequency. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.
880	Carlow	Naas	Castledermot, Ballitore, Kilcullen and other places en route	We propose to alter route 880 to serve Narraghmore and Calverstown. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.
881	Kilkenny	Graiguenamanagh	Goresbridge, Borris and other places en route	We propose to increase the frequency of route 881 from Kilkenny to Graiguenamanagh. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.
884	Carlow	Sallins	Baltinglass, Blessington, Naas and other places en route	We propose to extend route 884 from Ballymore Eustace to Carlow. Minimum service of 4 return trips on weekdays and 3 return trips at weekends.
A62	Carlow	New Ross	Leighlinbridge, Muine Bheag, Borris, Graiguenamanagh and other places en route	We propose a new route from Carlow to New Ross via Graiguenamanagh. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.
A67	Carlow	Gorey	Fennagh, Bunclody, Killinerin and other places en route	We propose a new route from Carlow to Gorey via Bunclody and Carnew. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.
A82	Abbeyleix	Carlow	Ballinakill, The Swan, Clogh and other places en route	We propose a new route from Abbeyleix to Carlow. Minimum service of 3 return trips a day.

Existing Routes

Route	Connecting		Serving*	
132	Bunclody	Dublin	Tullow, Baltinglass, Blessington, Tallaght	**Regional Corridor Proposals** Regional Corridors generally operate along main roads, connecting cities and large towns and any settlements en route. Corridors can consist of several routes, some provided commercially and some by the State using financial support. Some run the full length of the corridor between places, and some, only on sections. Connecting Ireland will improve the level of service during the core day, evenings and on weekends on Regional Corridors. We will do this by liaising with existing service providers. New services may be added, or existing services improved.
368	Tullow	New Ross	Ballon, Bunclody, Enniscorthy and other places en route	**Local Route Proposals** Local routes connect smaller towns and villages and their rural catchments with nearby larger towns. This will improve access to the range of services available in larger centres, at more useful times of the day and week, for those living in rural areas and smaller villages. It will also permit transfer to Regional Services to travel onwards, with timed reliable connections.
800	Carlow	Arklow	Rathtoe, Tullow, Shillelagh and other places en route	**Existing Routes** No significant changes are planned to these routes. As the public transport network develops, and as more people travel more often and more widely by public transport, we will continue to review their usage and take steps to ensure their continued fitness-for-purpose.
873	Carlow	Kilkenny	Leighlinbridge, Muine Bheag, Paulstown and other places en route	
Train	Dublin	Waterford	Carlow, Muine Bheag, Kilkenny and other places en route	

Notes

*Serving: The map shows the main alignments of our planned routes and services. Most journeys will take that route. However, there may be a need to deviate from that route to provide connectivity to smaller settlements or areas located off the main alignment, but which also require a level of service. Distinctions may be drawn in the passenger information that we prepare, as support to the maps shown. Connecting Ireland proposes a step-change in public transport connectivity. The minimum level of service we have identified is a strating point in many cases. Where our analysis demonstrates a warrant for levels of service above the minimum, we will plan to provide that, where funding can be identified. Improvements may be delivered in

Proposed Public Transport Improvements in County Dublin

Regional Corridor Proposals

Proposal	Connecting		Serving*	Description
7	Cork	Dublin	Mitchelstown, Cahir, Cashel and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 245X, 707 and 704X, a mix of express and all-stop services. We propose a better integration of all existing services and more frequent all-stop services. Minimum service frequency of 2 hours on all-stop services.
11	Wexford	Dublin	Enniscorthy, Gorey, Arklow, Wicklow and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 2, 133, 133B, 133X, 740 and 740A. We propose a better integration of routes along this corridor. A minimum service frequency of 30 minutes is proposed between Wexford and Dublin and between Wicklow and Dublin.
13	Dublin	Waterford	Carlow, Muine Bheag, Thomastown and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 4, X4, 600 and 736 a mix of express and all-stop services. We propose more frequent all-stop services on this corridor and better integration of the existing services. A minimum service frequency of 2 hours on all-stop services is proposed.
14	Dublin	Clonmel	Kilkenny, Callan and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 600 and 717. We propose more frequent services on this corridor with a minimum service frequency of 2 hours between Clonmel and Kilkenny.
17	Limerick	Dublin	Nenagh, Roscrea, Portlaoise and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 300, 712X and 735, a mix of express and all-stop services. We propose a better integration of existing services and more frequent all-stop services. Minimum service frequency of 2 hours on all-stop services.
23	Galway	Dublin	Oranmore, Loughrea, Ballinasloe, Athlone and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 660, 706X, 720, 760, 761 and 763, a mix of express and all-stop services. We propose more frequent services and a better integration of routes along this corridor. Minimum service frequency of 2 hours on all-stop services.
27A	Ballina	Dublin	Foxford, Charlestown, Longford, Mullingar and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 22 and 23. We propose more frequent services and a better integration of routes along this corridor. A minimum service frequency of 2 hours is proposed between Ballina and Dublin and between Sligo and Dublin. In our proposal, routes 27A and 27B combine to provide an hourly frequency between Longford and Dublin.
27B	Sligo	Dublin	Boyle, Carrick-on-Shannon, Longford, Mullingar and other places en route	
31	Donegal Town	Dublin	Ballyshannon, Enniskillen, Cavan, Kells, Navan and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes 30, 109X and NX. We propose to maintain the existing level of service and better integrate routes along the corridor to provide a minimum service frequency of 2 hours between Donegal and Dublin, 60 minutes between Cavan and Dublin and 30 minutes between Navan and Dublin.
36A	Dublin	Letterkenny	Ardee, Monaghan, Omagh, Strabane and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes X3, 32, 180, 932 and 933, 980A. We propose more frequent services and a better integration of routes along this corridor. A minimum service frequency of 2 hours is proposed between Letterkenny and Dublin and between Derry / Londonderry and Dublin. In our proposal routes 36A and 36B will combine to provide a 60 minute frequency between Strabane and Dublin.
36B	Dublin	Derry / Londonderry	Ardee, Monaghan, Omagh, Strabane and other places en route	
39	Belfast	Dublin	Newry, Dundalk, Drogheda and other places en route	This corridor is currently served by routes X1, X2A, X5, 100X, 400, 705X and 900 to 904, all of which are express services. We propose to better integrate routes along the corridor.

Local Route Proposals

Proposal	Connecting		Serving*	Description
192	Balbriggan	Swords	Stamullen, Oldtown and other places en route	We propose a new route between Balbriggan and Swords, part of which is served by route 192. Minimum service frequency of 4 return trips Monday to Friday, 6 return trips on Saturday, 5 return trips on Sunday.
195	Ashbourne	Balbriggan	Oldtown, Ballyboghil, Naul and other places en route	We propose to amend route 195 to serve Ballymadun. Minimum service frequency of 6 return trips Monday to Saturday, 3 return trips on Sunday.

Existing Routes

Route	Connecting		Serving*	
33 / 33A / 33X	Dublin	Balbriggan	Dublin Airport, Swords, Lusk, Rush, Skerries and other places en route	**Regional Corridor Proposals** Regional Corridors generally operate along main roads, connecting cities and large towns and any settlements en route. Corridors can consist of several routes, some provided commercially and some by the State using financial support. Some run the full length of the corridor between places, and some, only on sections. Connecting Ireland will improve the level of service during the core day, evenings and on weekends on Regional Corridors. We will do this by liaising with existing service providers. New services may be added, or existing services improved.
101 / 101X	Dublin	Drogheda	Dublin Airport, Swords, Balbriggan, Julianstown and other places en route	**Local Route Proposals** Local routes connect smaller towns and villages and their rural catchments with nearby larger towns. This will improve access to the range of services available in larger centres, at more useful times of the day and week, for those living in rural areas and smaller villages. It will also permit transfer to Regional Services to travel onwards, with timed reliable connections.
191	Stamullen	Dublin	Gormanstown, Balbriggan, Balrothery and other places en route	**Existing Routes** No significant changes are planned to these routes. As the public transport network develops, and as more people travel more often and more widely by public transport, we will continue to review their usage and take steps to ensure their continued fitness-for-purpose.
197	Swords	Ashbourne	Rowlestown and other places en route	

Notes

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Appendix K

Press Release

Appendix K - Press Release

The National Transport Authority (NTA)

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is proposing an overall increase of approximately 25% in rural bus services as part of the five-year Connecting Ireland plan that was published for public consultation today. The Connecting Ireland plan is a major national public transport initiative developed by the NTA with the aim of increasing public transport connectivity, particularly for people living outside our major cities and towns.

Connecting Ireland proposes to expand the public transport network in rural areas and to increase service levels. As a result:

- 70% of people in rural Ireland will have access to public transport service that provides at least three return trips daily to the nearby town. (This compares to the current figure of 53%.)

- Over 100 rural villages will benefit from frequent public transport service (at least three return trips daily) for the first time

- Over 100 rural areas will benefit from a regular service, at least three return trips daily to their county town for the first time

- There will be over 60 new connections to regional cities from surrounding areas.

- Improved mobility options for those in remote areas with the provision of Demand Responsive and other innovative transport services

Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan said: "This Connecting Ireland plan will significantly increase both the number of routes and the frequency of existing services right across the country. Hundreds of rural villages and areas will for the first time will be served by a viable public transport link. To have strong local economies and to give people real options for getting around you need good public transport links – this plan represents a step-change in delivering good quality public transport in rural Ireland. If we are to deliver on our emissions targets, we need to make sure that people have the services and alternatives they need. My department allocated 5.6m from budget 2022 to the NTA so that as early as next year the NTA can begin investing in these services and giving people those alternatives.

"I have asked the NTA when this consultation process is complete, to put together an implementation plan so that we can get to work on making Connecting Ireland a reality sooner rather than later."

Anne Graham, CEO of the NTA said: "Connecting Ireland is among the most important plans that NTA has produced in recent years.

"Our TFI Local Link network operates in every in every part of the country and the local knowledge we have gathered over the years through our Transport Co-ordination Units has been invaluable to us in putting together these plans.

"We know that for many people, living in a village or in a rural area can mean that accessing services, or employment, or education, or even retail is difficult if not impossible, without using a private car. We want to change that.

"I believe that expanding the public transport network and increasing service levels, in the way we are proposing, will mean that more people in rural areas will have greater levels of freedom whether or not they have a car.

"But it's not about what I believe. What's more important now is for us to get the views of members of the public – particularly those in rural areas – about Connecting Ireland.

"We're asking people to go to nationaltransport.ie, read the details about what Connecting Ireland means for your area and your county, and give us your feedback."

The public consultation process commences today. For more details visit: https://www.nationaltransport.ie/connecting-ireland/

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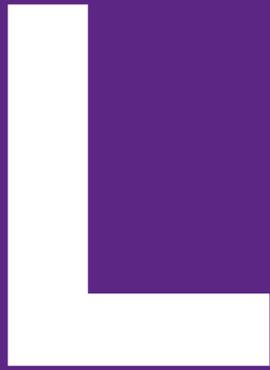
Appendix L

Stakeholder Engagement Figures

Appendix L - Stakeholder Engagement Figures

Figure 2.1 Pre Consultation Local Authorities Webinars Table

County	Date	Number of Attendees
Carlow	12th November 2021	10
Cavan	11th February 2021	9
Clare	4th February 2021	9
Cork	17th February 2021	11
Donegal	17th February 2021	11
Dublin	23rd February 2021	11
Galway	26th January 2021	12
Kerry	11th December 2021	12
Kildare	15th March 2021	19
Kilkenny	25th November 2020	10
Laois Session 1	25th November 2020	8
Laois Session 2	3rd December 2020	6
Leitrim	20th January 2021	11
Limerick	1st February 2021	9
Longford	18th January 2021	14
Louth	25th January 2021	11
Mayo	19th January 2021	12
Meath	11th February 2021	9
Monaghan	8th February 2021	14
Offaly	15th January 2021	14
Roscommon	13th January 2021	12
Sligo	21st January 2021	17
Tipperary	25th January 2021	14
Waterford	7th December 2021	9
Westmeath	26th January 2021	13
Wexford	10th December 2020	13
Wicklow	18th February 2021	15

Appendix L - Stakeholder Engagement Figures

Date	Organisation
2nd March 2021	Office of Planning Regulator
5th March 2021	Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly
9th March 2021	Southern Regional Assembly
10th March 2021	Northern and Western Regional Assembly
23rd March 2021	Transport Infrastructure of Ireland
25th March 2021	Department of Infrastructure Northern Ireland
13th April 2021	Irish Development Agency
22nd April 2021	Chambers Ireland
27th April 2021	Department of Further and Higher Education
28th April 2021	Bus Eireann
4th May 2021	Failte Ireland
5th May 2021	Enterprise Ireland
12th May 2021	Coach and Tourism Council of Ireland
31st August 2021	Dingle Pilot Presentation
1st September 2021	Commercial Bus Operates

Appendix L - Stakeholder Engagement Figures

Figure 3.1 Elected Reps Webinars

Date	Elected Reps	Attendees
1st November 2021	Oireachtas Members	45
3rd November 2021	Northern and Western Regional Councillors	10
4th November 2021	Southern Region Councillors	11
5th November 2021	Eastern and Midlands Region Councillors	18
	Overflow webinar	31

Figure 3.1 Elected Reps Webinars

Date	Attendees
15th November 2021	43
16th November 2021	36
18th November 2021	58

Appendix L - Stakeholder Engagement Figures

Figure 4.1 Newspaper Adverts Locations and Dates

Print	Region	Objective	November
Nationalist Series- Carlow	Carlow	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Anglo Celt	Cavan	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Clare Champion	Clare	Awareness	4th & 25th
Southern Star Donegal Democrat	Donegal	Awareness	4th & 25th
Dublin People Group	Dublin	Awareness	1st & 22nd
Connacht/ City Tribune	Galway	Awareness	4th & 25th
Kerryman	Kerry	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Leinster Leader	Kildare	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Kilkenny People	Kilkenny	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Leinster Express	Laois	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Leitrim Observer	Leitrim	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Limerick Leader	Limerick	Awareness	4th & 25th
Longford Leader	Longford	Awareness	3rd & 24th
The Angus (Dundalk)	Louth	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Western People	Mayo	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Meath Chronicle	Meath	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Northern Standard Midland & Tullamore Tribune	Monaghan	Awareness	4th & 25th
Tullamore Tribune	Offaly	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Roscommon Herald	Roscommon	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Sligo Champion	Sligo	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Clonmel Nationalist	Tipperary	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Waterford News & Star	Waterford	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Westmeath Independent	Westmeath	Awareness	3rd & 24th
Wexford People	Wexford	Awareness	2nd & 23rd
Wicklow People	Wicklow	Awareness	3rd & 24th

Appendix L - Stakeholder Engagement Figures

Table 4.1 IRS Interviews and Dates via Radio Stations

Station	Interview Date
Midlands 103	24/11/2021
KLCR	30/11/2021
Ocean FM	18/11/2021
Northern Sound/Shannon Side	02/12/2021

Table 4.2 List of Stations that advertised the Connecting Ireland project

Stations	
1.	KFM
2.	KCLR
3.	Tipp FM
4.	Midlands 103
5.	Clare FM
6.	Ocean FM
7.	Highland Radio
8.	South East
9.	East Coast
10.	Midwest
11.	Radio Kerry
12.	Shannonside
13.	Northern Sound

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Appendix M

Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Appendix M - Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Not for Profit Organisations	
1.	Barrow Blueway at Rathangan Group
2.	Cyclist.ie
3.	County Roscommon Disability Support Group
4.	West Wicklow Environmental Network (WWEN)
5.	St Vincent De Paul Society
6.	Kildare Leadership
7.	Kildare Age Friendly Alliance.
8.	Active Retirement Ireland
9.	East Coast Family Resource Centre
10.	Hospital Family Resource Centre
11.	Tipperary Age Friendly
12.	Brothers of Charity Galway
13.	Western Care Association
14.	Donegal Old Peoples Council
15.	Third Age Foundation
16.	Ballycastle and District Voluntary Housing Association CLG
17.	Seirbhisi Curam Chill Chomain Teo
18.	Mayo's Old Peoples Council
19.	St John of God Kerry Services
Total: 19	

State Agencies	
1.	Bus Éireann
2.	Iarnród Éireann
3.	Irish Rural Link
4.	Jigsaw
5.	National Disability Authority
6.	Sonairte - the National Ecology Centre
7.	Youth Work Ireland
8.	Tascfhórsa Uíbh Ráthaigh
9.	National Disability Authority
10.	Tipperary Children and Young People's Services Committee
11.	Forbairt Chonamara Láir Teo
Total: 11	

Appendix M - Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Commercial Bus Operators	
1.	Martin Leydon Coaches
2.	Matthews Coach Hire Limited
3.	FOTO/iBus
4.	Foyle Coaches northwest Busways Limited
5.	City Link
6.	Corduff Travel
Total: 6	

Appendix M - Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Community Groups	
1.	Ballyhaunis Community Council.
2.	Trim Family Resource Centre
3.	Ballinrobe Family Resource Centre
4.	Aghabullogue, Coachford, Rylane Community Council
5.	Bailieboro Community Association
6.	Ballira Retired Men's Group
7.	Ballyforan Tidy Towns
8.	Ballyjamesduff Unity Group
9.	Better Ennis
10.	Skreed Dromard Community Council
11.	Oldtown Community Council
12.	Parteen, Meelick and Westbury Active Retirement Group
13.	Ratoath Men's Shed
14.	Mayo's Older People's Council
15.	Chairperson Residents Association
16.	Coachford Community Association
17.	Cois Carraig Retirement Village Clarina
18.	Coiste Cultúr Teanga agus Forbatha Thuar Mhic Éadaigh Teo
19.	Coiste Pobail Chill Chiaráin
20.	Comhchoiste Ghaeltacht Uíbh Ráthach
21.	Cootehill Town Team
22.	Maudabawn Community Alert
23.	Lullymore, Barnaran, Drumsru and Cappanagrid Community Alert
24.	Creagh Parents Association
25.	Cumann Forbartha Chois Fharraige
26.	Kilbride Tidy Towns Group
27.	Garbally Oaks Brothers of Charity
28.	Templeglantine Community
29.	The Vale Community Alert
30.	Waterford Older People Council
31.	Strokestown Town Team
32.	South Roscommon Family Resource Centre
33.	Ballyhaunis Community Council.
34.	Aghabullogue, Coachford, Rylane Community Council
35.	Bailieboro Community Association
36.	Gleacaíocht Mhúscraí
37.	WICRC- West Island Community Resource Centre
38.	Kildare Leadership
39.	Naul Community Council
40.	Moore Youth Club
41.	Cumann Forbartha Chois Fharraige
42.	Ballinora Retired Men's Group

43.	Cootehill Social Community and Cultural group
44.	Comharchumann Forbatha An Leath Triúigh Teo
45.	Cavan Older Peoples Council
46.	Gaslough Tidy Towns Group
47.	Balrath Residents Association
48.	Cois Carraig Retirement Village Clarina
49.	Clones Mens Shed
50.	Wee Greenway Initiative
51.	Mullan Village Tidy Towns
52.	Broadford Community Action Group
53.	Ballaghaderreen Tidy Towns Committee
54.	Leitrim Volunteer Centre
55.	Ballymitty Community Centre
56.	Doon community centre
57.	Finny Community Council
58.	Narraghmore Committee
59.	WexBUG - Wexford Bicycle Users Group
60.	Murroe Community Council
61.	Oranmore heritage group
62.	Mungret Community Council
63.	Knocknagree Fairfield Tidy Towns
64.	Naul Community Council
65.	Caragh Tidy Towns
66.	Carrigadrohid Killinardrish Tidy Towns
67.	Parteen, Meelick and Westbury Active Retirement Group
68.	Athea Tidy Towns
69.	Crossmolina Community Council
70.	Dunkineely Community Ltd
Total: 70	

Appendix M - Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Business Groups/Community Growth	
1.	Atlantic Economic Corridor Chambers Group
2.	Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce
3.	Junior Chamber International Ireland, Cork Chapter not for profit
4.	Coach Tourism & Transport Council
5.	Kilmallock Tourism Development
6.	Mayo North Tourism
7.	Offaly Tourism
8.	Attymon Development Group
9.	Galway Rural Development
10.	Ransboro Development Association
11.	Bailieborough Development Association
12.	Mountbellew District Development Association
13.	Hub Community Café
14.	Cloughjordan Community Development Committee
15.	Latton Social Services and Development CLG
16.	Cavan Local Community Development Committee
17.	Croom Community Development Association
18.	Ballinderry Development Association
19.	Killinkere Development Association
20.	Laytown Development Association
21.	Inishbofin Development Company
22.	Virginia Development Association
23.	Summerhill Development Group
24.	Ballinderry Development Association
25.	Querrin Community Development Group
26.	Caim Community Development Group
27.	Bailieborough Development Association CLG
28.	Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority
29.	Carraroe and District Regeneration Association
30.	Discover Bundoran
31.	Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre
32.	Killala Sustainable Energy Community
33.	Tipperary Town Revitalisation Task Force
Total: 33	

Appendix M - Organisations/Groups who made a submission

Lobby / Interest Groups	
1.	Cork Transport & Mobility Forum
2.	Southeast Track
3.	Western Development Commission
4.	Western Inter County Rail Committee.
5.	West on Track
6.	Coach Tourism & Transport Council
7.	Cork Commuter Coalition
Total: 7	

Education Institutions	
1.	Dunboyne College of Further Education
2.	Lackagh Museum
3.	Coiste Pobail Chill Chiaráin
4.	Munster Technological University
5.	Irish Second-Level Students' Union
6.	Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum DAC
7.	Kiltartan Gregory Museum
Total: 7	

Local Government	
1.	Cavan County Council
2.	Cavan Local Authority
3.	Sligo County Council
4.	Donegal County Council
5.	Galway County Council
6.	Kerry County Council
7.	Kildare County Council
8.	Mayo County Council
9.	Monaghan County Council
10.	Sligo County Council
11.	Tipperary County Council
12.	Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
13.	Northern and Western Regional Assembly
14.	Ennis Municipal District
15.	Northern Western Regional Assembly
Total: 15	

Appendix M - Organisations/Groups who made a submission

TFI Local Link that made a submission	
1.	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal
2.	TFI Local Link Kildare
3.	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal
4.	TFI Local Link Mayo
5.	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim
6.	TFI Local Link Galway
Total: 6	

Organisations that made a submission	
1.	Dublin Airport Authority
2.	Arup Systra Org
3.	Hines Real Estate Ireland LTD
4.	Cratloe Nursing home
5.	Cycle Sense
Total: 5	

Sport Organisations that made a submission	
1.	Killinkere GAA Club Sports Club
2.	Ashbourne Golf Club
3.	Cork CS/BW International group
4.	Butlerstown Gaa Waterford
Total: 4	