

Connecting Ireland Phase 1

Implementation Review 2022



Table of Contents

Foreword	4
Executive Summary	6
Introduction	8
<hr/>	
Plan Objectives	10
<hr/>	
The Rural and Interurban Network	12
<hr/>	
Phase 1 New & Enhanced Services Summary	14
<hr/>	
Coverage and Integration	28
<hr/>	
Mode Shift	31
<hr/>	
Patronage	32
<hr/>	
Vehicle KM	41
<hr/>	
Passenger Satisfaction	45
<hr/>	
Look Ahead	49
<hr/>	

Foreword

When it comes to investment in transport, it can often take decades, and in some cases longer, to deliver projects that benefit communities at local level. The Connecting Ireland rural mobility plan is different. In October 2021, we published our five year plan to dramatically improve public transport in rural Ireland.



In our plan we said that:

- We had an ambition for 70% of people in rural Ireland to have access to public transport services that provide at least three return trips daily to their nearby town;
- Over 100 rural villages would benefit from frequent public transport services for the first time;
- Over 100 rural areas would benefit from a regular service, to their county town for the first time;
- There would be over 60 new connections to regional cities from surrounding areas; and
- There would be an innovative approach to improving mobility for people in remote areas.

In April 2022, the first Connecting Ireland service, the newly enhanced 176 Cavan – Monaghan was launched. Operated by TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan, it offered greater frequency Monday to Saturday, a new regular Sunday and Bank Holiday service, and increased frequency to Cavan General Hospital.

This was followed in subsequent weeks by the enhanced 195 Ashbourne to Balbriggan; the enhanced and extended 840 Banagher to Tullamore; the enhanced 978 Belmullet to Castlebar; and the brand new 331 Ballyvaughan to Ennis.

Six months on from publishing the plan and Connecting Ireland was up and running. By the end of 2022, 38 new and revised services were implemented.

And if the pace of implementing these services by TFI Local Link and Bus Éireann nationwide was impressive, so too was the response from members of the public. Patronage across rural Ireland on the enhanced services increased by 93% to 343,000 compared to 2019. That included 53,000 journeys on brand new routes, journeys that simply weren't possible a year ago.

It is clear that Connecting Ireland has already played a key role in towns and villages across Ireland and provided people with new choices to travel by bus. But now, we want to go further and build on that success with 67 new and enhanced routes planned for 2023 and more to come.

The NTA is continuing its efforts to improve rural bus services by identifying areas that require additional services, and we are committed to continuing to develop connectivity and mobility in rural areas through the phased rollout of new and enhanced bus services this year and in future years.

Anne Graham,
CEO, National Transport Authority



Executive Summary

The Connecting Ireland rural mobility plan (the Plan) is an initiative by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to improve connectivity and mobility in rural areas through the development of new and enhanced public transport services.

This report is a review of the implementation of Phase 1 of the Connecting Ireland Plan in 2022. This report summarises the objectives and definitions of the Plan, including summary highlights of the new and enhanced services, a review of patronage levels on Connecting Ireland services during 2022 and a look ahead to what is planned for Phase 2 (2023) and future phases.

In Phase 1, thirty-eight new and enhanced bus services were introduced via the Connecting Ireland Plan. Over 110,000 weekly vehicle kilometres were added to the public transport network via 13 brand new services, 16 frequency enhancements and 9 route extensions which included frequency enhancements. Over 50 settlements have as a result been newly connected to the public transport network.

A total of 760,534 passenger journeys were recorded on Connecting Ireland routes in 2022, of which 342,607 passenger journeys were recorded from the date implementations were introduced. Connecting Ireland services continue to see an increase in patronage, up 112% at the end of 2022 compared to the beginning of 2019¹. Where Connecting Ireland services have been implemented patronage has increased 128% from the beginning of 2022 to year-end.

Passenger satisfaction was high on Connecting Ireland routes in 2022, with market research finding 97% of customers satisfied with TFI Local Link services whilst further market research found 86% of Bus Éireann stage carriage customers were satisfied with the service.

The Connecting Ireland programme is a multi-phase plan with Phase 2 underway in 2023. In February 2023, there was at least 67 implementations planned to be introduced in 2023.

¹ 2019 is used as the baseline for comparative purposes due to the impact of COVID 19 on regular operational data in 2020 and 2021.

Introduction

Overview of the Plan

Connecting Ireland rural mobility plan is a major public transport initiative developed by the NTA with the aim of increasing connectivity 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 to facilitate access to local services as well as providing connectivity to an enhanced regional network connecting cities and regional centres nationwide. The NTA consulted both stakeholders and the public on the plan in late 2021.

Connecting Ireland is a multiphase plan. Throughout 2022, Phase 1 of the Plan has delivered a number of new and enhanced bus services. The revisions were implemented on routes and services serving areas in several counties.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to Irish society in 2020. As a result of the public health risk, measures were introduced to restrict people's movements and only essential journeys were permitted for much of the year. Whilst full service has resumed throughout the country, the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on the industry in regard to the availability of service providers and bus drivers in particular.

Ukraine Crisis

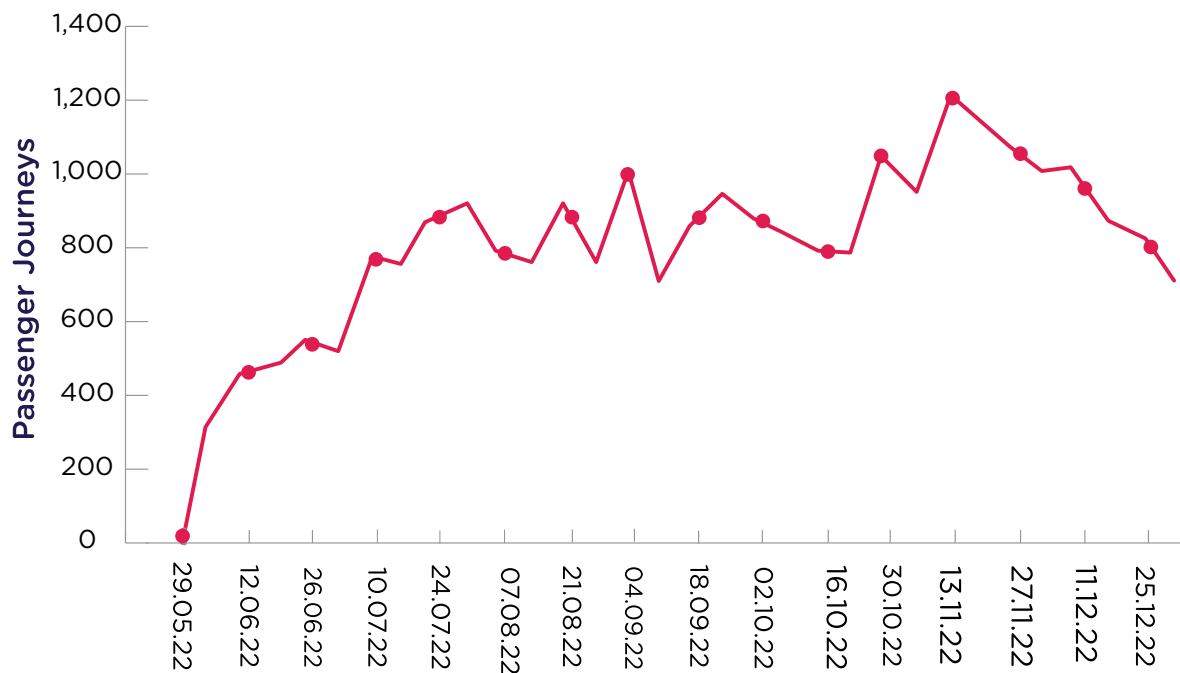
In April 2022, funding was allocated to provide emergency transport services to Ukrainian refugees placed in rural locations. The National Transport Authority and TFI Local Link have introduced a number of transport options to enable better access to a range of activities and onward public transport connections as well as a community once-off fund to aid integration of the new arrivals into local communities.

The Connecting Ireland team continues to identify service enhancements that could be prioritised and accelerated where there is an increased need driven by the needs of Ukrainian refugees.

Case Study: Route 331 – Ballyvaughan > Ennis

As part of the Ukrainian emergency fund, the introduction of route 331 was accelerated under the Connecting Ireland programme due to the significant number of Ukrainians based in Ballyvaughan, Lisdoonvarna and Ennis. Introduced on 27/05/22, the service is currently operated by Local Link on an emergency short term contract. Since its introduction route 331 has carried 25,572 passenger journeys throughout 2022.

Route 331: Ballyvaughan -> Ennis Patronage by Week



Plan Objectives

The Connecting Ireland Plan objectives are summarised below:

Economic

- To develop a framework for continued delivery and management of a fit for purpose all Ireland public transport network outside of the major Metropolitan Areas.
- To provide transport services that are socially beneficial but financially unviable.

Network Development

- To implement a system of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the public transport network responds to changes in demand for transport over time.

Social

- To contribute to reducing transport deprivation, particularly in rural Ireland.
- To contribute to a reduction in rural isolation and promote social equity by providing an alternative to the private car for social trips.
- To support public policy on developing the night-time economy.

Accessibility

To provide improved access to shops, services, employment and education opportunities for all people in all communities in Ireland at a level appropriate to the size of the community and in line with national planning policy. In particular to:

- Reduce car dependency.
- Increase accessibility of more people to more places.
- Provide levels of connectivity appropriate to the scale and function of settlements.
- Provide affordable transport options.

Integration

- To improve both the spatial and temporal integration of the transport network in order to provide more opportunities for bus and rail interchange and thereby increase the range and variety of destinations accessible within a reasonable journey time.
- To align the rural transport network with the strategic policy and achieve the key aims defined in relevant policy.

Regional Connectivity

- To improve regional connectivity (particularly in areas currently underserved) through enhancements to the public transport network.

Counterbalance

- To improve the competitiveness of key towns, regional centres and cities outside the Greater Dublin Area to support economic development and support rural development, by investing in public transport services.

Environmental

- To encourage the use of sustainable transport options.
- To provide a viable alternative to the private car and thereby encourage a shift to more sustainable transport modes.
- To increase the contribution to climate change improvement by the transport sector by reducing the use of the private car for mobility.

The Rural and Interurban Network

The Connecting Ireland Plan aims to target improvements within the rural and interurban network. The rural and interurban network refers to the transport infrastructure and services that connect rural and urban areas. The rural network includes transport services that connect smaller towns and villages to larger cities and towns, while the interurban network includes services that connect towns and cities to one another.

During the Connecting Ireland scoping process, rural settlements to be assessed for the Connecting Ireland Plan were defined as having a minimum of 50 occupied dwellings, with a maximum distance between any dwelling and the building closest to it of 100 metres, and where there was evidence of an urban centre (shop, school etc.).

As a result, the Plan's aim is to improve regional bus routes by providing services more often and by ensuring better connections between towns and cities. Additionally, local bus routes will be improved to provide better connections between towns and villages and to provide better integration with other bus and rail services. The schedules of different modes of transport will be reviewed and integrated to make transfers easier for the user. Non-conventional options like door-to-door public transport will be provided to serve areas not reached by other improvements. Figure 1 on the next page outlines the Connecting Ireland proposed transport network.



Legend:

Implemented
Bus Éireann:



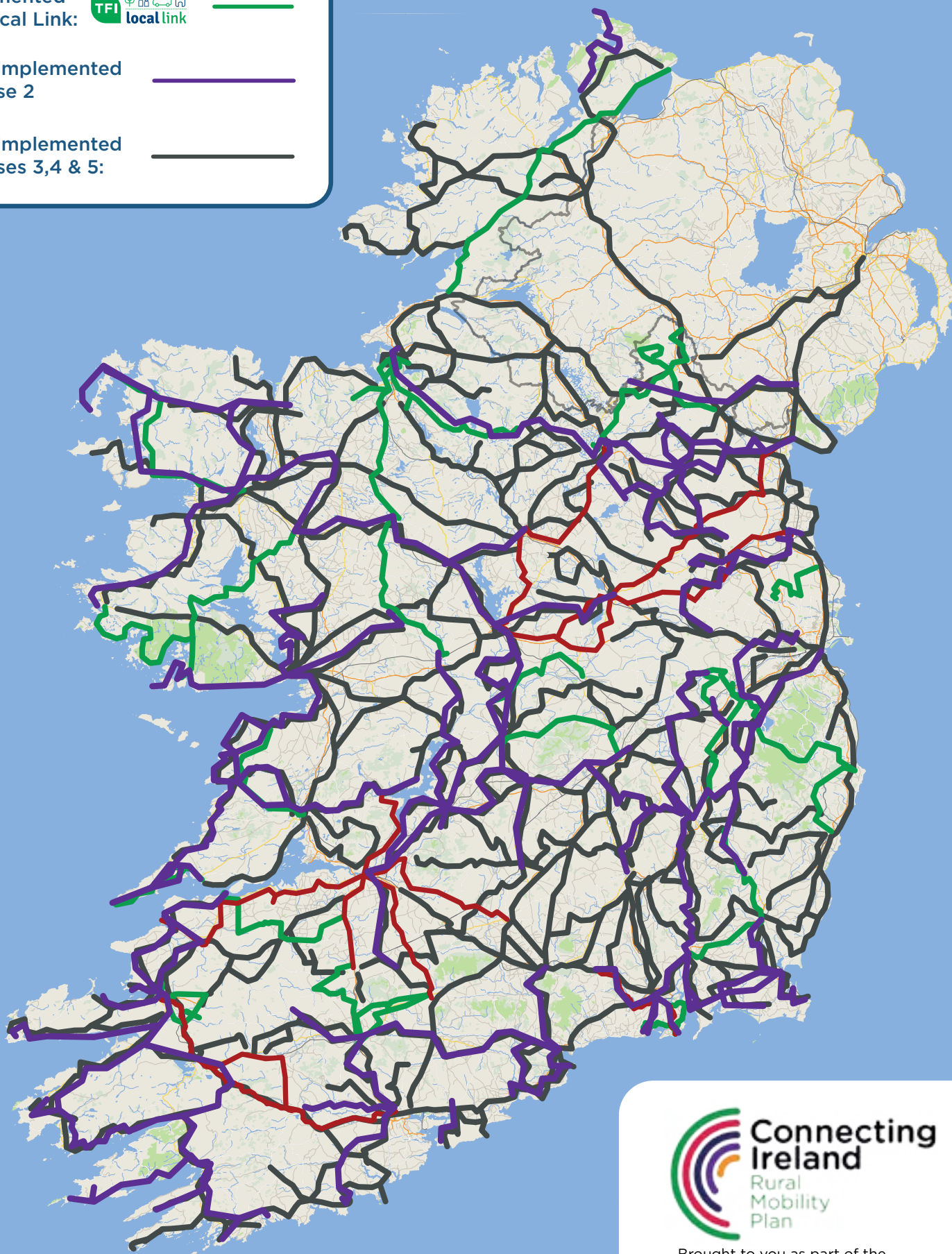
Implemented
TFI Local Link:



To be implemented
in Phase 2



To be implemented
in Phases 3,4 & 5:



**Connecting
Ireland**
Rural
Mobility
Plan

Brought to you as part of the
Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Figure 1: Connecting Ireland Proposed Transport Network

This map reflects the NTA's intention as of today but, is likely to change to respond to changing circumstances as the Plan develops.

Phase 1 New & Enhanced Services Summary

As part of the Phase 1 implementations, following extensive consultation and detailed planning in Q1, 38 revised services were implemented in 2022. This consisted of 13 new services, 16 timetable enhancements and 9 route extensions which incorporated timetable enhancements. The services were delivered by a combination of Bus Éireann and TFI Local Link Regular Rural Services (RRS), the first of which were implemented in Q2. These are outlined below:

Q2 Implementations

In Q2, TFI Local Link in conjunction with NTA delivered 1 new and 4 enhanced services as follows:

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	11/04/2022	176	Cavan - Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Now operates daily with increased frequency Monday to Saturday. New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service. Increased frequency to Cavan General Hospital.
TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	23/05/2022	195	Ashbourne - Balbriggan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Now operates 7 days a week. New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service.
TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	27/05/2022	331	Ballyvaughan - Ennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New service - Operates 3 return services 7 days a week. Introduction of this route was accelerated due to the significant number of Ukrainians arriving to this area.

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	01/06/2022	840	Banagher - Tullamore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced & Extended service - Extended in both directions from Banagher to Tullamore. Now runs at 5 times per weekday and 4 times on Saturday & Sunday. Provides new connection to Tullamore Hospital.
TFI Local Mayo	13/06/2022	978	Belmullet - Castlebar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Now operates 7 days a week. New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service. Now runs at 3 times a day with new mid-day and peak-time service. Now serving Bangor Erris & Ballycroy.

Table 1: Quarter 2 Connecting Ireland Implementation Summary



Q3 Implementations

In Q3, TFI Local Link in conjunction with NTA delivered 1 new and 7 enhanced services as follows:

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	01/09/2022	339	Loophead - Kilrush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Improvement to Winter schedule. Now operates 7 days a week. New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service. Caters to needs of Ukrainian refugees in West Clare.
TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022	264	Ballyshannon - Letterkenny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New morning and evening peak service. Introduction of this route was accelerated due to the significant number of Ukrainians arriving to this area. Provides new peak hour connections for commuters and college students.
TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022	572	Sligo - Ballinamore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - New early morning with increased capacity. Introduction of this route was accelerated due to an increase in demand in the Donegal Sligo Leitrim area and also due to the significant number of Ukrainians arriving in this area.

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022	953	Greencastle - Letterkenny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced & Extended service - Service has been extended to Greencastle. Now operates 3 times per day, 7 days a week. Provides a new peak-time service for commuters into Letterkenny in the morning and evening.
TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	12/09/2022	977	Ballaghderreen - Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Additional services commenced in Castlerea. Introduction of this route was accelerated due to the significant number of Ukrainians arriving in this area. Early morning and later evening services extended.
TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	19/09/2022	880	Naas - Carlow timetable changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Now operates 7 days a week. Now operates 4 return services Mon-Thurs, 6 return services Fri-Sat & 3 return services on Sunday. Service has been rerouted to serve Narraghmore and Calverstown. New peak-time service for commuters to Naas.

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Wexford	24/09/2022	368	Eniscorthy - New Ross (via Clonroch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Now operates 7 days a week. Service now runs 5 times per day Mon-Sat & 4 times per day on Sunday.
TFI Local Link Wexford	24/09/2022	369	Tullow - Bunclody - Enniscorthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service - Now operates 7 days a week. Service now runs 6 times per day Mon-Sat & 4 times per day on Sunday. Service extends to Tullow 2 times a day Mon-Sat & once a day on a Sunday.

Table 2: Quarter 3 Connecting Ireland Implementation Summary



Q4 Implementations

In Q4, TFI Local Link and Bus Éireann in conjunction with NTA delivered 11 new and 14 enhanced services as follows:

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Galway	03/10/2022	431	An Ceathrú Rua - Costelloe - Ballinrobe - Claremorris	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New service - Now operates 4 times per day, 7 days a week.• Creates a new connection between Costelloe and Claremorris.
TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	03/10/2022	595	Tarbert - Croom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New service - Now operates 3 times per day, 7 days a week.• Creates a new service between Tarbert and Croom.• Improved connectivity to Mid-Western Regional Orthopaedic Hospital.• New peak-time service for commuters to Newcastle West.
TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	17/10/2022	821	Newbridge - Naas via Allenwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced service - Operates 6 services daily Mon-Sat and 3 services on Sunday.• Now operates up to midnight on Friday & Saturday.• Now serves Caragh.

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	20/10/2022	823	Birr - Portlaoise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New service - Operates 5 times a day Mon-Sat & 4 times a day on Sundays. • Provides regional bus & rail connections in Portlaoise, Mountmellick & Birr. • Provides a new peak service to Birr and early/late services to Portlaoise for commuters connecting to Dublin.
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	167	Mullingar - Kells - Ardee - Dundalk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended service - new extension from Ardee to Mullingar every 3 hours. • Service enhancement between Ardee and Dundalk (Hourly). • Now serving Carlanstown.
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	190	Athlone - Drogheda Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended service - new extension from Trim to Athlone every 2 hours.
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	314	Limerick - Ballybunion via Foynes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced service - Now operating 7 days a week. • Service levels increased to 104 trips per week. • Now serving Tarbert, Listhowel, Lisselton & Ballybunion
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	320	Charleville - Limerick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended service - 35 trips per day in each direction. • Now serving Charleville.

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	328	Limerick - Mitchelstown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced service. Significant enhanced connections.
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	332	Limerick - Cashel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended & Enhanced service - Now serving Cashel. Service levels increased to 84 trips per week.
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	345	Scariff - Limerick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Service. 5 Return trips Mon-Sat and 4 return trips on a Sunday.
Bus Éireann	23/10/2022	466	Athlone - Longford - Cavan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Service - Significant increase in service levels. Previously 1 trip per direction 7 days a week, now up to 6 trips per direction 7 days a week.
TFI Local Link Waterford	01/11/2022	358	Tramore - Dunmore East - Passage East - Waterford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Service - Operates 4 services a day, 7 days a week. Links Waterford City to Passage East, Dunmore East & Tramore.
Bus Éireann	01/11/2022	354	Portlaw - Dunmore East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Service - Operates 7 services a day, 7 days a week.



Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	07/11/2022	981	Sligo - Coolaney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Service - Operates 4 trips per day, 7 days a week plus additional evening services on Friday and Saturday. • Provides new connection to ATU Sligo and provides new rail connections.
TFI Local Link Galway	16/11/2022	432	Clifden - Roundstone - An Ceathrú Rua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Service - Operates 3 return services per day, 7 days a week. • >Creates new connection between Roundstone and Costelloe. • Provides new, regular service between Clifden & Costelloe. • Provides new peak time service that allows connections to Galway and improved connectivity to regional bus services from Costelloe.



Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	05/12/2022	183	Arklow - Sallins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Service - Now operates 4 return trips per day, 7 days a week. Provides new East-West connection for Wicklow. Ireland's highest Bus Route - 475m via the Wicklow Gap.
TFI Local Link Cork	05/12/2022	523	Mitchelstown - Mallow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Service - Operates 7 days a week, with 4 return services per day Mon-Sat and 3 return services on Sundays. Provides new connections to Kildorrery, Shanballymore & Doneraile.
TFI Local Link Galway	05/12/2022	546	Ballinasloe - Castlerea via Moylough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Service - Operates 3 return services per day, 7 days a week.
TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	05/12/2022	M1	Knockatallon - Monaghan Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Service - Now operates 7 days a week. New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service. Provides connection to Coolshannagh and Ballyalbany.
TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	05/12/2022	M2	Ballybay - Monaghan Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Service - Now operates 7 days a week. New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service.

Operator	Date Implemented	Route Number	Description	Summary
TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	05/12/2022	M3	Emyvale - Glaslough - Tyholland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Service - Operates 7 days a week. • New regular Sunday & Bank Holiday service. • Provides connection to Mullan Village, Emyvale, Glaslough, Tyholland Village & Monaghan Town.
Bus Éireann	11/12/2022	257	Macroom - Killarney via Mill Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Service - Introduction of this route was accelerated due to the significant number of Ukrainians arriving to this area. • Now operates 7 days a week with increased daily services between Killarney/Millstreet and Millstreet/Macroom.
TFI Local Link Kerry	12/12/2022	283	Currans - Tralee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Service - Operates 7 days a week. • >Operates 4 return services Mon-Thurs, 5 return services Fri-Sat & 3 return services on Sundays.
TFI Local Link Cork	12/12/2022	522	Charleville - Mallow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Service - Operates 7 days a week, with 4 return services per day Mon-Sat and 3 return services on Sundays.

Table 3: Quarter 4 Connecting Ireland Implementation Summary

Case Studies

Case Study: Route 821 – Newbridge to Naas via Allenwood:

As part of the Connecting Ireland programme, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin identified areas including Milltown, Allen, Kilmeague, Robertstown, Allenwood, Coill Dubh, Prosperous and Caragh needing new bus services to improve connectivity and mobility for residents living in these settlements. These areas were identified as lacking regular public transport connections to county towns Naas and Newbridge with Caragh not being served by any regular public transport. It was noted that the implementation of new bus services in these areas would greatly improve access to essential services and resources for residents living in these areas.

Alan Kerry, Manager TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin, said “the new service has offered substantial alternatives to private car dependency for people residing along the route. The timetable has also offered connectivity to local train services along with peak time arrivals into Naas to accommodate employment and education needs. Weekend schedules have removed car dependency for people wishing to access their social activities. Route 821 now allows people to adopt public transport usage as part of their daily lives in rural Kildare”.



Since the 17th of October, new Route 821 now provides greater connectivity and flexibility than ever before for the communities in Newbridge, Milltown, Allen, Kilmeague, Robertstown, Allenwood, Coill Dubh, Prosperous, Caragh, Naas and Sallins. The new service now connects communities in north Kildare to their county towns of Naas and Newbridge, as well as to regional bus services and Sallins Train Station. The new service now runs up to six return services Monday to Saturday and three return services on Sunday providing a new peak-time service for commuters to Naas and an early and late service to Sallins for connections to the rail network.



What passengers have said



“This new 821 Service is great news for passengers along the route.

I am over the moon about this new service because not only does it provide a daily service, it also provides an evening and weekend service into Newbridge and Naas for shopping and social purposes and the link to Sallins Train Station allows me to connect with the train network.

On a daily basis, I was paying for taxis from Robertstown into Newbridge, which was crippling financially for me. The 821 service has now removed this cost and has been a great help to us.



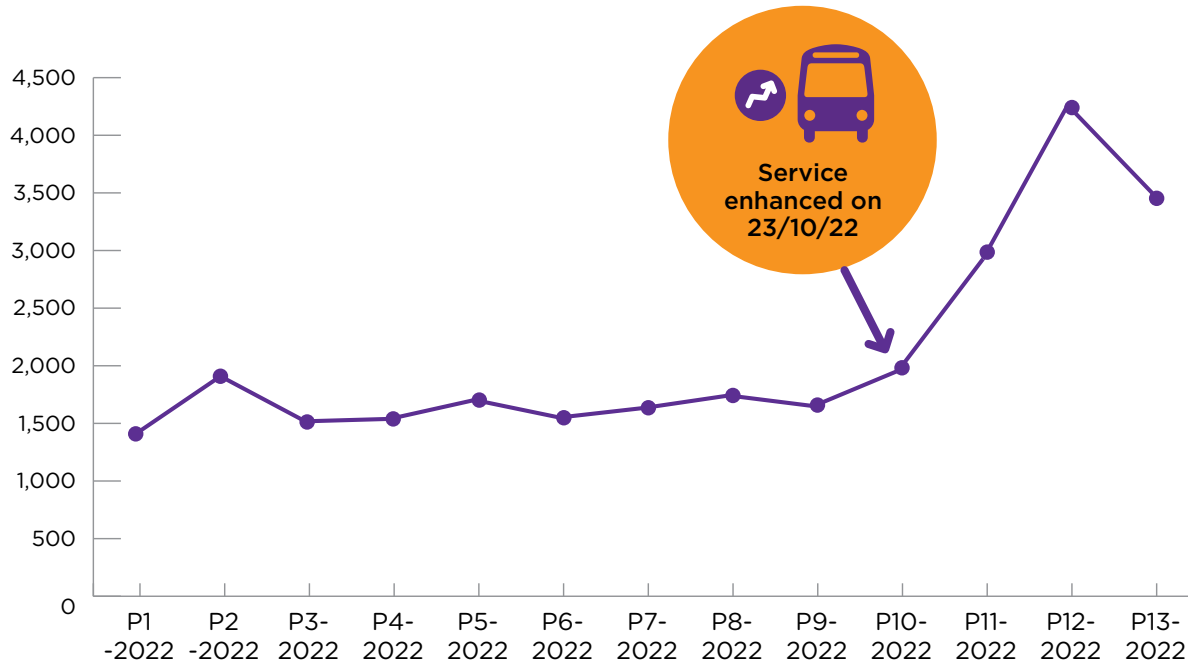
This is a great service and very much needed.”

Case Study: Route 328 – Limerick to Mitchelstown:

As part of the Connecting Ireland programme, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Bus Éireann identified the need for the increased demand on Route 328. The service in its current form had a frequency of 2 return services per day Monday to Friday with one additional service to Limerick and 2 return services on Saturdays. The provision of the enhanced 328 service provides better connectivity across large parts of East Limerick and North Cork. The enhanced route now links Mitchelstown to Limerick six times per day seven days a week. Subsequently the service serves areas such as Galbally, Ballylanders, Knocklong in Hospital, Herbertstown, Caherline Cross and Caherconlish better. Route 328 provides morning and evening peak services to facilitate residents in these areas to commute to employment facilities and to access essential services and resources.

Since the services implementation in October 2022, Route 328 tripled its frequency and the service has seen an increase of over 132% in monthly customer trips with this trend continuing and growing in the early months of 2023. The service has carried almost 23,798 passengers and continues to carry an average of 250 per week since. Customer usage has grown across all age groups particularly amongst Young Adult (18-24 year olds) as the route provides access to 3rd Level education facilities.

Route 328: Limerick -> Mitchelstown - Periodic Patronage 2022



Case Study: Route 328 – Limerick to Mitchelstown

What passengers have said



“The enhanced Route 328 is great news for all passengers along the route.

As a student living in North Cork, I am now able to travel to college on a daily basis, and with the wide range of departures I can still fully enjoy college social activities.



The Young Adult fares are also excellent value and make travelling on the route such good value for students.”

Coverage and Integration

Coverage

Historically, rural public transport in Ireland often has had less coverage and accessibility than urban transport, due to smaller population sizes and greater distances between destinations. The Plan aims to improve the extent and ease of access to which rural areas are served by public transport. The map on the next page shows the routes which were implemented within Phase 1 of the Plan.

Within the 2022 Phase 1 implementations, the Connecting Ireland Plan increased coverage and accessibility throughout rural Ireland. Some accessibility and coverage highlights include;

- A total of 57 new towns & villages have as a result been connected to the public transport network.
- 10 new connections to healthcare facilities.
- 9 new connections to education facilities.
- 254,543 people in 187 settlements have access to new and enhanced services.
- 27,136 people in 54 settlements that had public transport services below the minimum level of service now have access to a Connecting Ireland service.

Integration

The Plan aims to improve the coordination and connections of different bus and rail services in order to provide a seamless and efficient transport system throughout rural Ireland.

Phase 1 implementations saw;

- 100% of new and enhanced services designed to provide connections with existing regional and local bus services.
- 19 new and enhanced services provide connections with existing rail services.

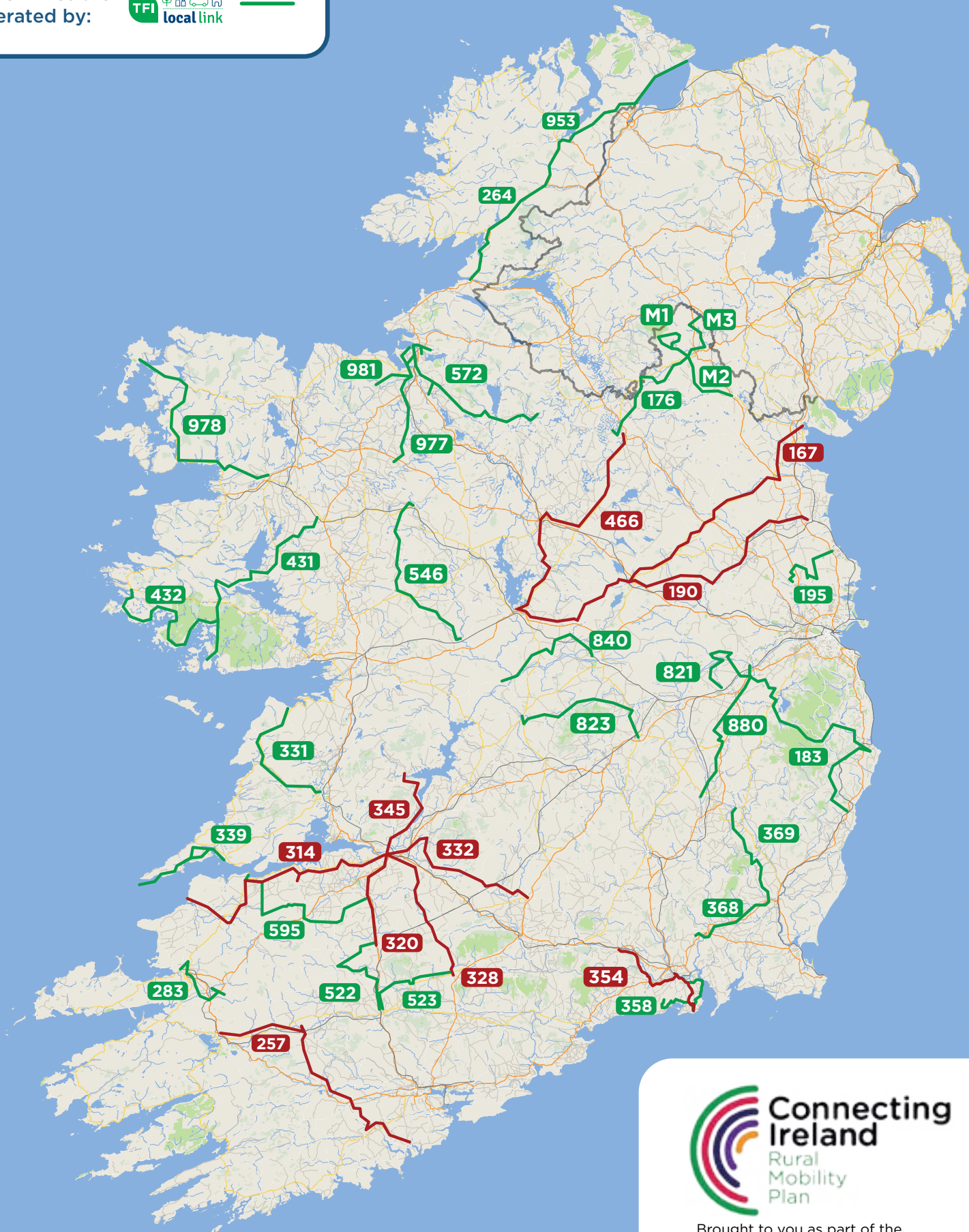


Legend:

Red lines are
operated by:



Green lines are
operated by:



Brought to you as part of the
Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan

Figure 2: Connecting Ireland Phase 1 Implementation Route Map

Phase 1 Key Achievements

Since the implementation of Phase 1 in January 2022, the programme has delivered 38 new and enhanced bus services throughout the country. The introduction of these services has increased connectivity, particularly for people living outside major towns and cities. By designing all routes to connect with the wider TFI bus and rail network, local communities now have improved access to educational, employment and health care facilities – supporting a cleaner, greener and more sustainable future.



↑
254,543

people now have access to new and enhanced bus services



passenger journeys took place on the 38 new and enhanced bus services

53,275



passenger journeys took place on the 13 new services



patronage growth on the enhanced services



passenger journeys took place on the 25 enhanced services



more passengers were carried on the enhanced services in 2022 vs 2019



19



of the new and enhanced services provide connections with existing rail services



10 new connections to hospitals were created



weekly kilometres were added to the Public Transport Network

Connected over

50

new towns and villages



9 new Higher Education connections to colleges were created

Mode Shift

The overall objective of the NTA is to facilitate a shift in mode usage by the public from the car to more sustainable modes including the bus. This is often done to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and promote more sustainable forms of transportation. The NTA undertook market research to ascertain whether there has been modal shift to bus following the introduction of the new and enhanced bus services under Connecting Ireland. Forty four percent of users stated that they used a car as a passenger and 9% of users stated that they drove their own car before using a TFI Local Link bus service.



Patronage

Patronage in relation to public transport refers to the number of people who use public transport services. It is an important indicator of public transport performance and usage, as it provides insights into the demand for public transport services and the required level of service. It can also be used as a proxy to measure the impact of public transport on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a region. Herein, patronage refers to the passenger journeys used on Connecting Ireland routes as reported by the relevant operators.

Network Patronage

Figure 3 below outlines the total passenger journeys carried on Local Link and Bus Éireann stage carriage services from 2019 to 2022. In 2019 a total of 7,232,782 passenger journeys were recorded across both Local Link Rural Regional Services (RRS) & Regional Stage Carriage compared to 7,853,389 in 2022.

Local Link RRS & Bus Éireann Regional Stage Carriage Total Patronage 2019-2022

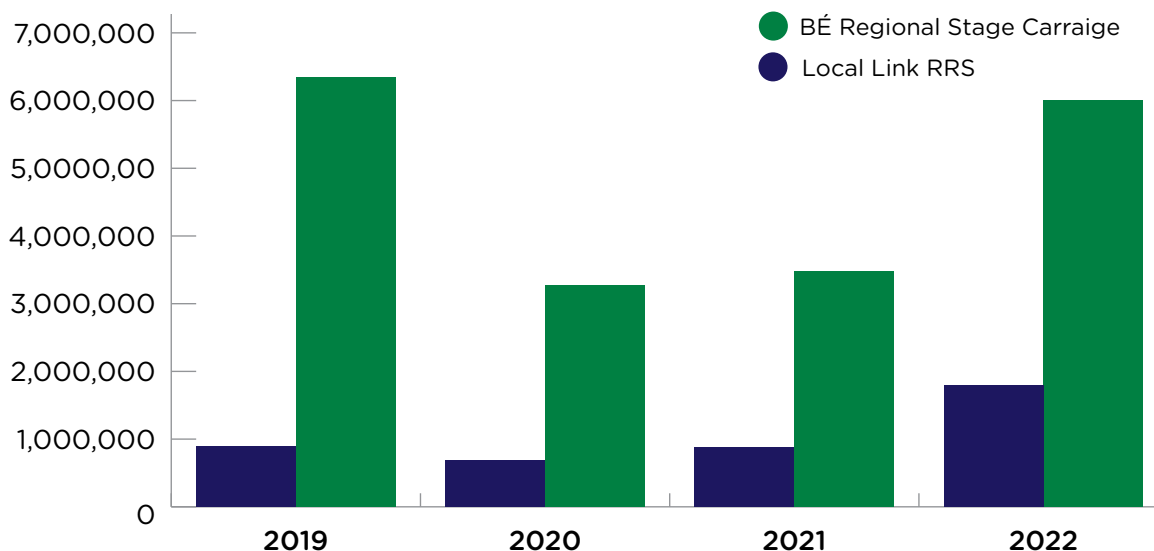


Figure 3: Local Link RRS & Bus Éireann Regional Stage Carriage Total Patronage 2019-2022

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on patronage levels from Period 3² (P3) 2020 onwards as public health measures were introduced. These measures included reducing public transport capacity to as low as 25% and as a result, the public were urged to only use public transport for essential journeys. Figures 4 & 5 below show the rolling average patronage for Local Link RRS & Bus Éireann Regional Stage carriage. Local Link RRS is up 124% in P13 2022 compared to P13 2019.

2 Periods 1-13 refer to the reporting periods within a calendar year used within the NTA and by operators in which revenue and passenger journey figures are reported.



Local Link RRS Patronage (Rolling Average)

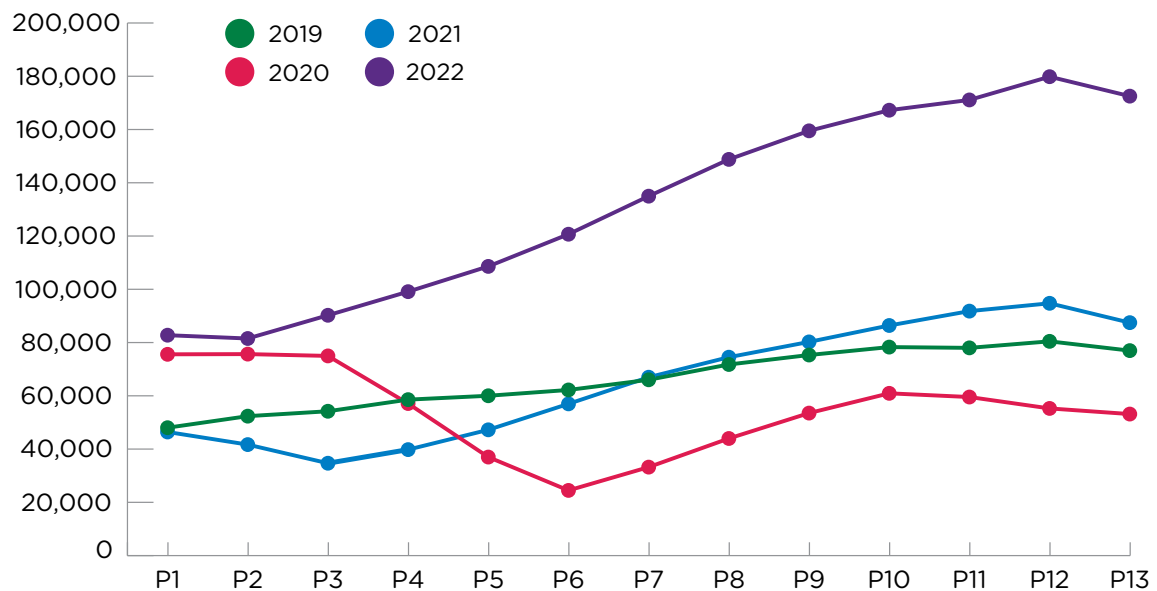


Figure 4: Total Local Link RRS Patronage (Rolling Average)

Regional Stage Carriage services continued to grow throughout 2022, surpassing pre-COVID (2019) levels in P7 2022.

BÉ Regional Stage Carriage Patronage (Rolling Average)

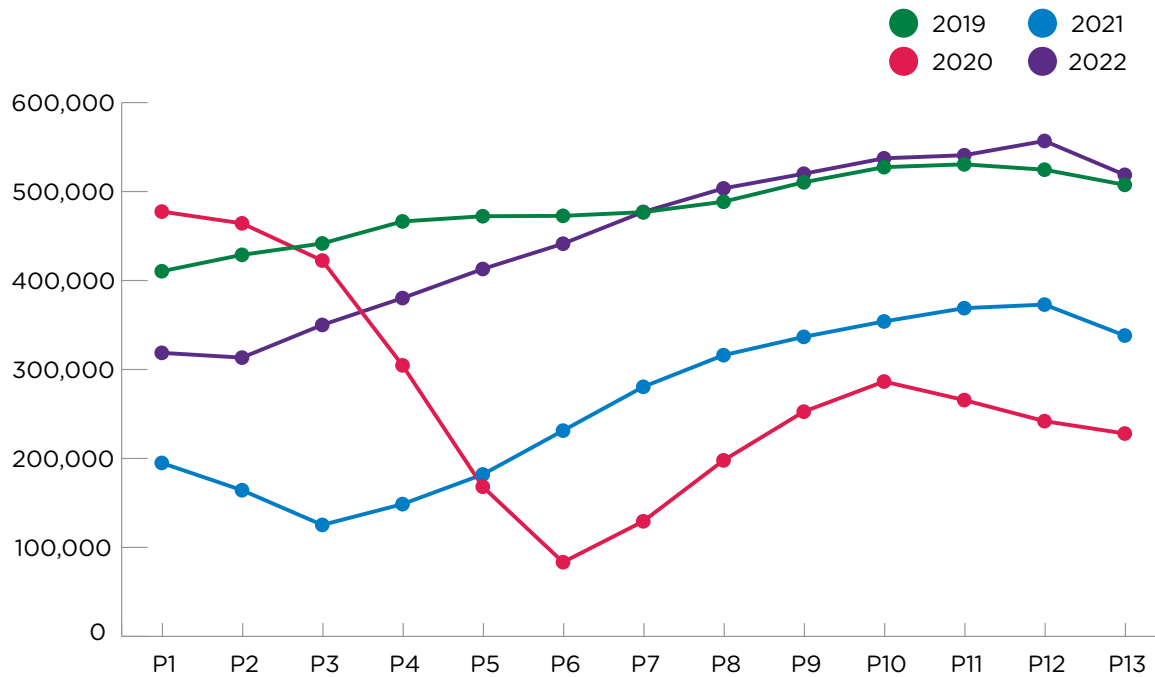


Figure 5: Total Bus Éireann Regional Stage Carriage Patronage (Rolling Average)



Whilst the Connecting Ireland Plan began in 2022, for the purpose of this report and to allow for comparison, Connecting Ireland patronage figures from 2019 to 2021 refer to the passenger journeys undertaken on the Local Link or Bus Éireann routes that would later become enhanced / extended under Phase 1 of the Connecting Ireland Plan.

A total of 760,534 passenger journeys were carried on Connecting Ireland services in 2022, this includes patronage on new routes and includes patronage on routes before enhancements/extensions were introduced. This represents an increase of 21% when compared with patronage figures in 2019 and an increase of 47% when compared with patronage figures in 2021.

Connecting Ireland Total Patronage 2019-2022

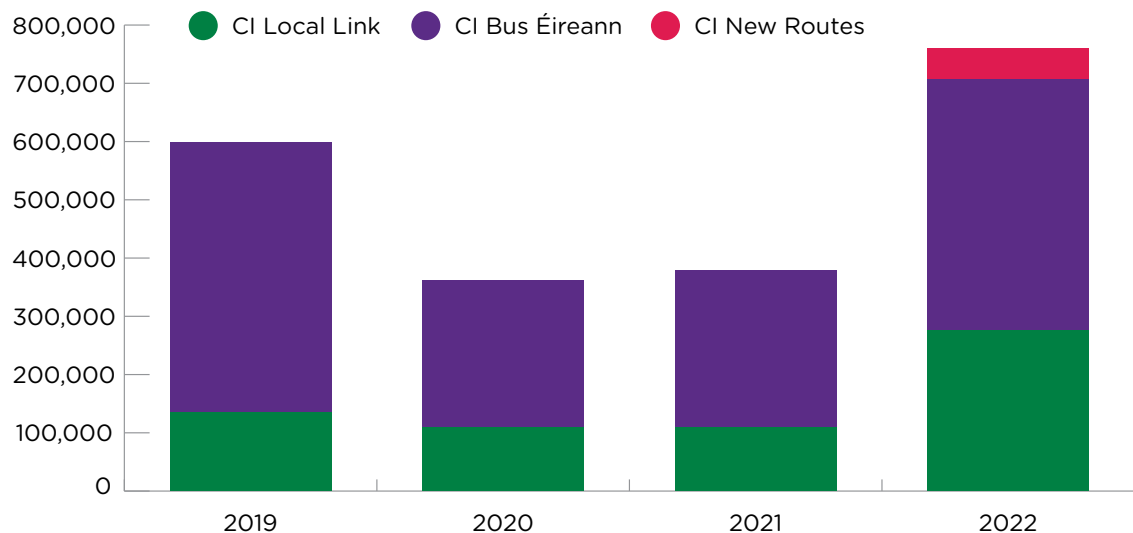


Figure 6: Connecting Ireland Phase 1 Total Patronage 2019-2022

All Connecting Ireland routes surpassed pre-COVID (2019) levels as of P5 2022. Passenger journeys continued to rise throughout 2022, with figure 7 showing the rolling average passenger journeys up 74% from 2019 as of Period 2013 in 2022.

Connecting Ireland Phase 1 Patronage (Rolling Average)

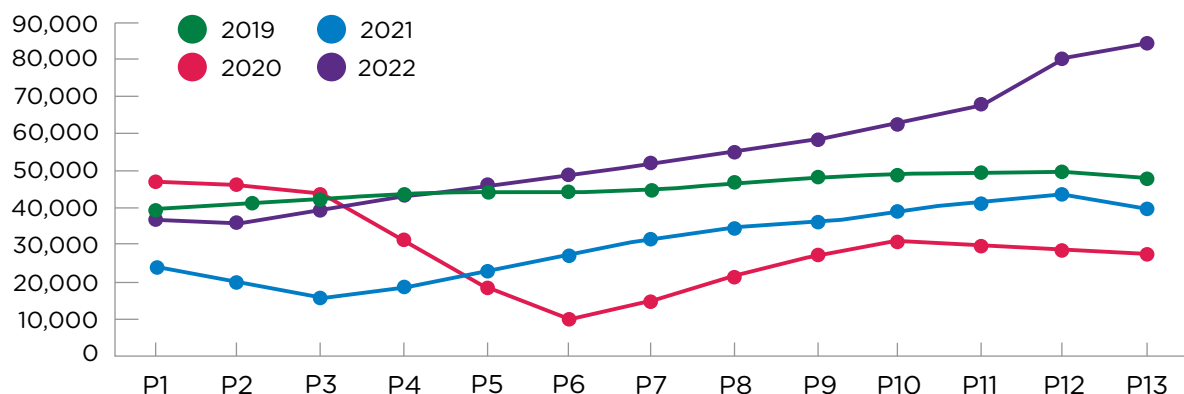


Figure 7: Total Connecting Ireland Phase 1 Routes Patronage (Rolling Average)

2022 Implementations

There was a total of 342,607 passenger journeys undertaken on Connecting Ireland routes measured from the date they were introduced/enhanced in 2022. Figure 8 below shows the passenger split across each improvement type with new routes accounting for 16%, enhanced routes accounting for 39% and routes with extensions and enhancements accounting for 45% of the total passenger journeys carried in 2022.

Phase 1 Routes Total Patronage by Improvement 2022

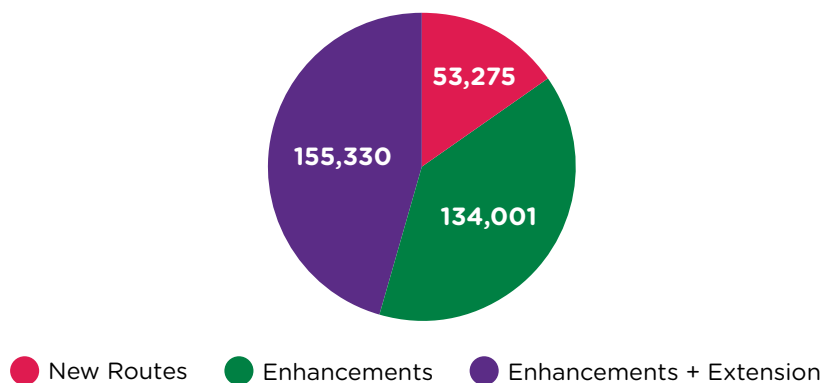
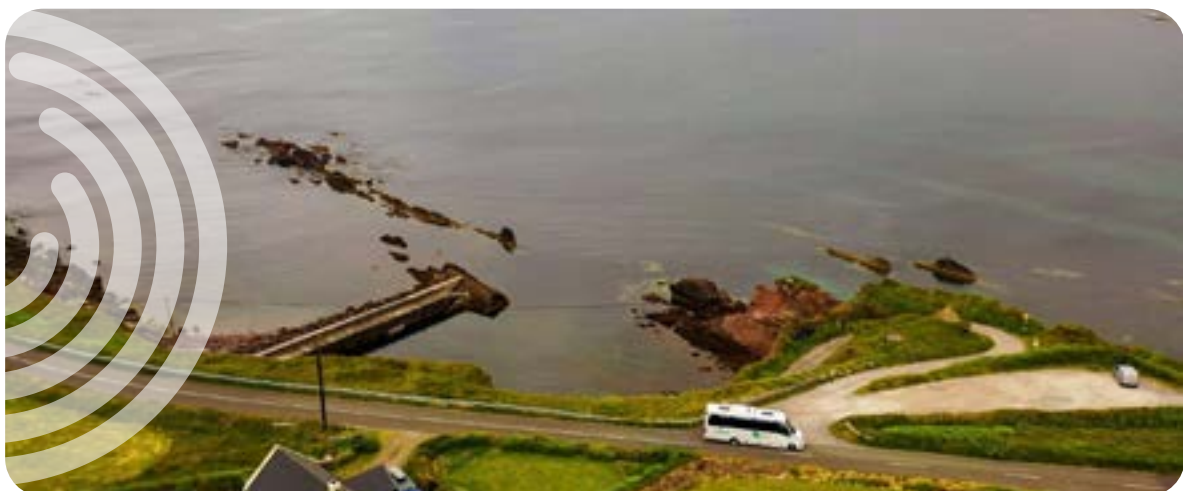


Figure 8: Total Patronage on Phase 1 Routes by Improvement Type

Figure 9 on the next page shows the rolling average³ patronage from 2019 to 2022. Routes with timetable enhancements under Connecting Ireland are up 62% from 2019 to 2022. Routes that have been extended and enhanced are down by 7% overall from 2019 to 2022, however despite this, periods 11-13 are up 15% compared to the same in 2019.



³ Rolling average in relation to public transport patronage is the average number of people using public transport services over a period of time. The rolling average provides an indication of the level of public transport usage and performance over the given period and can also be used to track changes in usage over time.

Phase 1 Implementation Periodic Patronage by Improvement (Rolling Average)

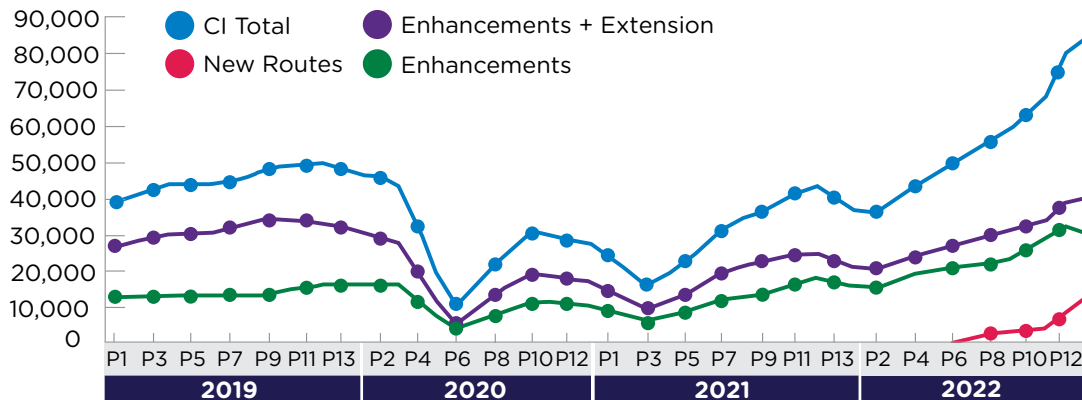


Figure 9: Periodic Patronage by Improvement 2019-2022 (Rolling Average)

Passengers on Connecting Ireland routes in 2022 more than doubled from the start of the year to the end, up 129% from P1 to P13.

Phase 1 Implementations Patronage by Period (Rolling Average)

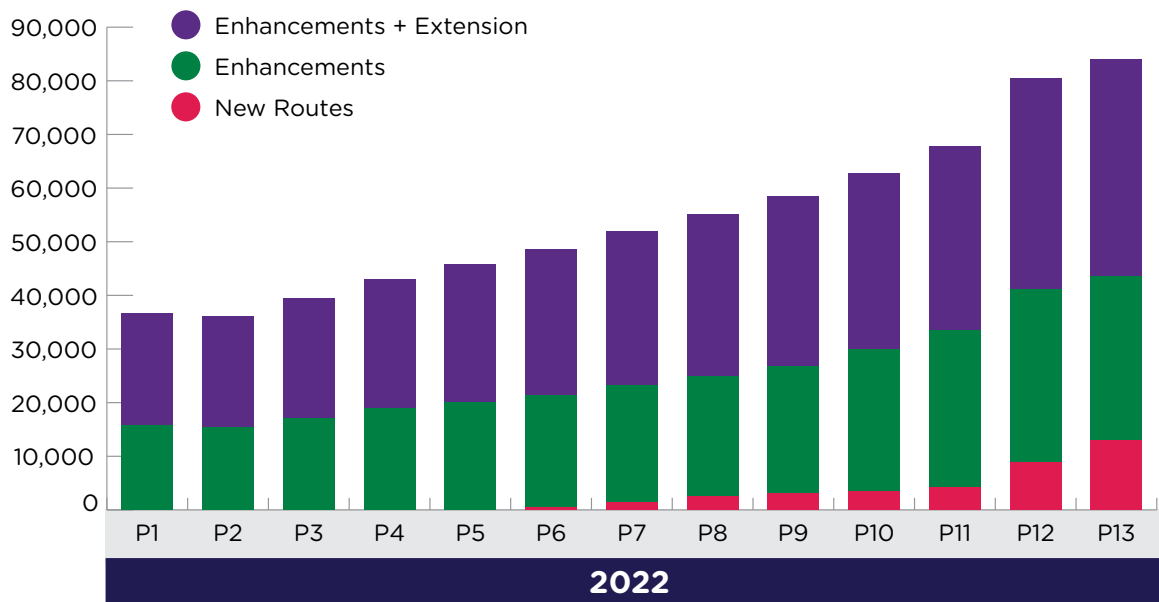


Figure 10: Phase 1 Periodic Patronage by Improvement Type 2022

Market Trend

Connecting Ireland routes are up 112% from P1 2019 compared to 20% on all PSO Bus Routes. Local Link RRS has increased patronage significantly from 2019 - Up 259% from P1 2019 as shown in Figure 11;

Phase 1 Implementations Market Trend from 2019 - 2022

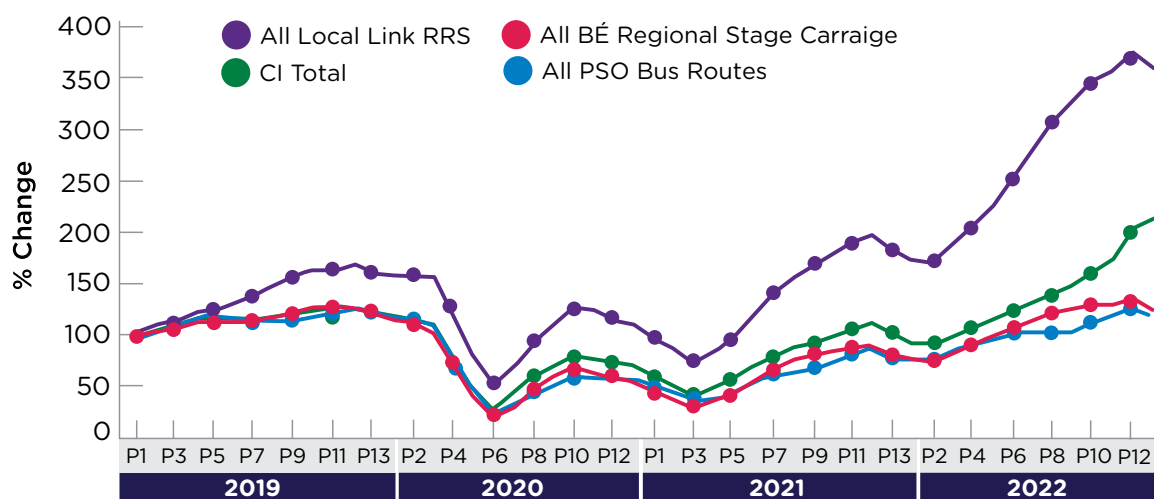


Figure 11: Percentage Change by Network P1 2019 – P13 2022

In 2022, as outlined in figure 12, Connecting Ireland routes increased patronage by 128% from the beginning of the year compared to 63% on all PSO Bus Routes and Regional Stage Carriage. Local Link RRS patronage is up 108% from the beginning of the year. Routes which have been enhanced/extended under Connecting Ireland have increased their patronage by 93% from the start of 2022.



Phase 1 Implementations Market Trend 2022

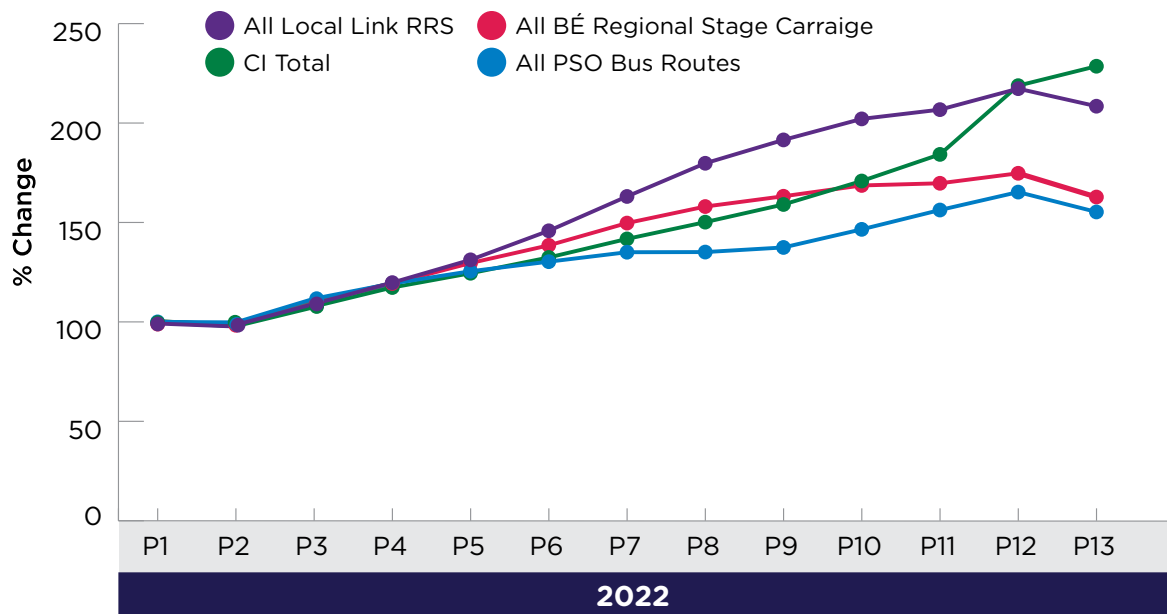


Figure 12: Percentage Change by Network P1 2022 - P13 2022

Phase 1 Enhancement/Extension Routes Market Trend 2022

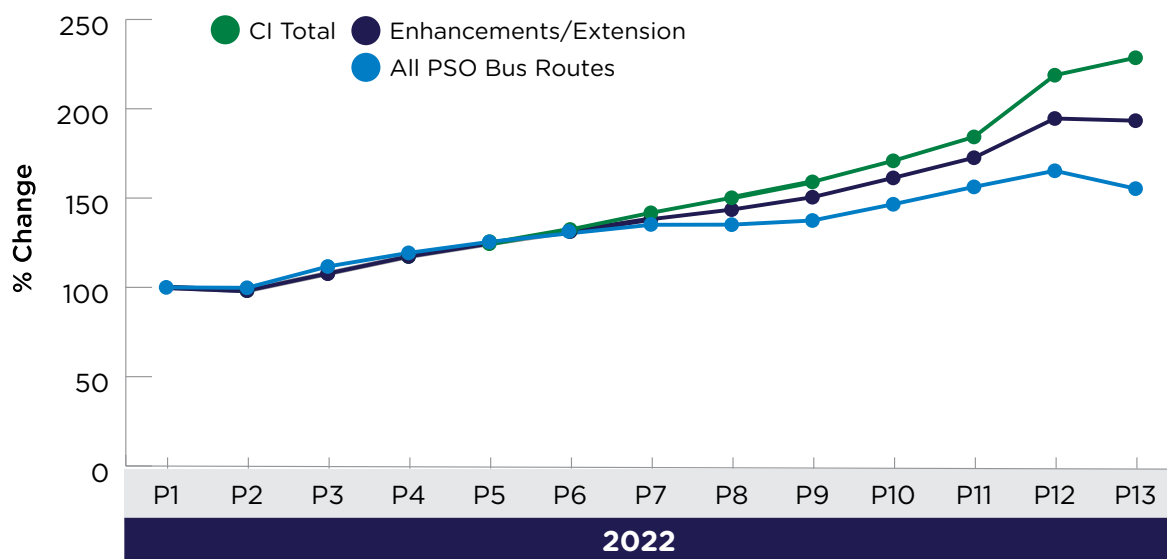


Figure 13: Percentage Change on Enhanced/Extended Routes P1 2022 - P13 2022

Figures 14 & 15 show the percentage change in patronage per period from 2019 to 2022 for the total Connecting Ireland routes and Enhanced / Extended routes. Periods 1-4 in 2022 were down compared to the same periods in 2019. However, as the Phase 1 implementations were rolled out, patronage increased significantly representing a 74% increase on all Connecting Ireland routes in P13 and a 47% increase on Enhanced / Extended routes.

Percentage Change in Periodic Patronage on total CI routes 2019 vs 2022

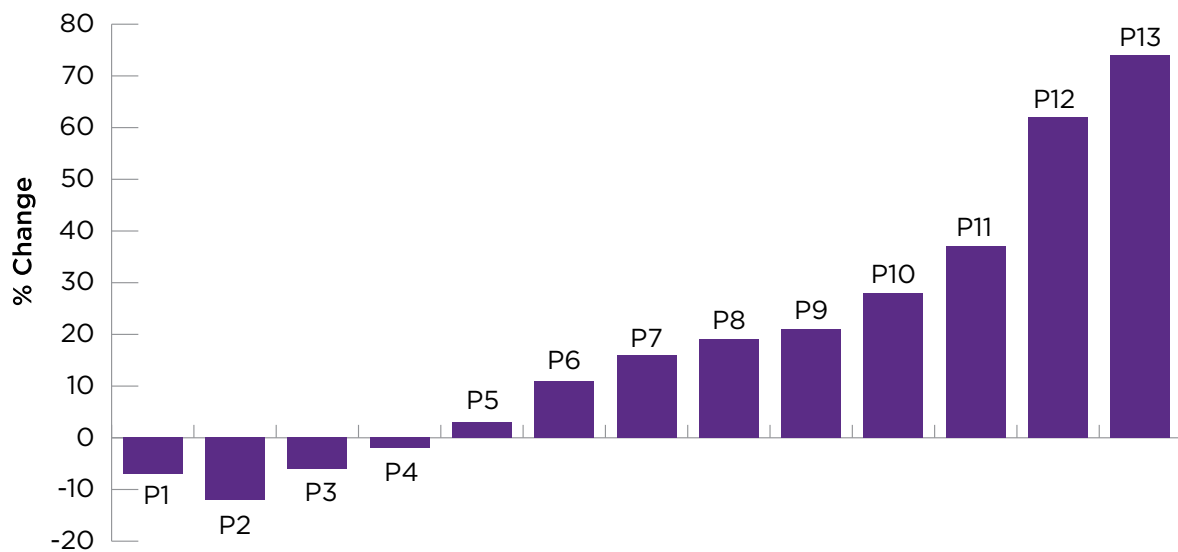


Figure 14: Percentage Change in Periodic Patronage from 2019 vs 2022

Percentage Change in Periodic Patronage on Enhanced/Extended CI Routes 2019 vs 2022

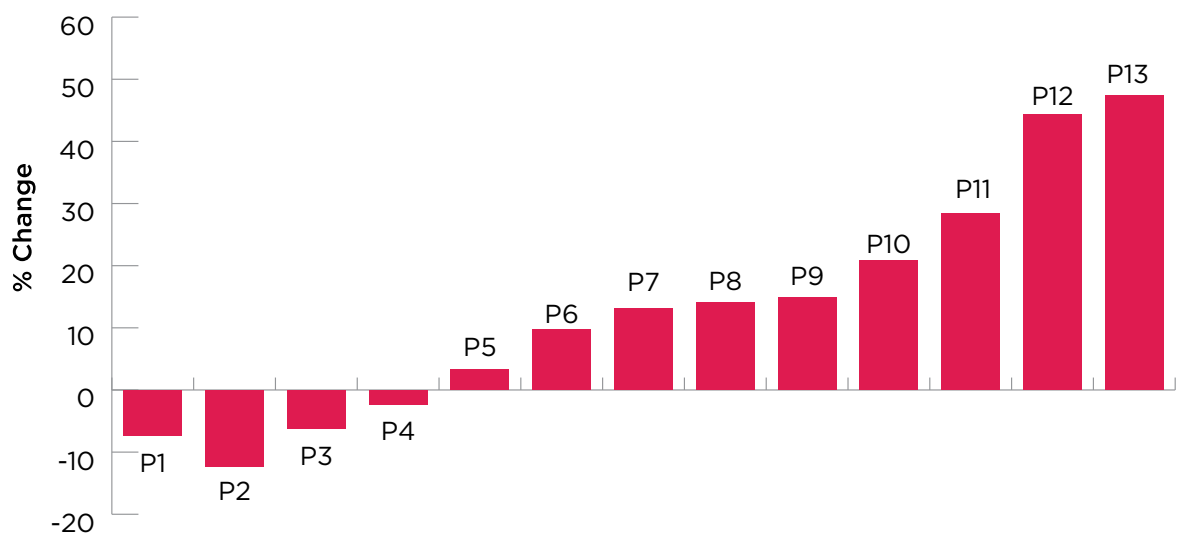


Figure 15: Percentage Change in Periodic Patronage on Enhanced/Extended Routes from 2019 vs 2022

Vehicle-Kilometres (VKM)

Vehicle-kilometres (VKM) is a metric used in the public transport industry to measure the total distance travelled by vehicles in a particular time period. It is calculated by multiplying the number of vehicles in service by the total distance travelled by each vehicle during the period in question. Monitoring the change in vehicle-kms over time is a good way of showing the change in provision of public transport services.

In Phase 1, there was approximately 110,800 weekly Vehicle KMs added through new and enhanced services. This consisted of approximately;

- 36,700 for new services;
- 19,600 for routes with timetable enhancements; and
- 54,600 on routes where the timetable was enhanced as well as the route being extended.

Table 4 below outlines the breakdown by route of the increased weekly vehicle KM added through phase 1 implementations:

Route Number	Operator	Description	Increased VKM
176	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Cavan - Monaghan	900 weekly veh kms
195	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	Ashbourne - Balbriggan	215 weekly veh kms
331	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Ballyvaughan - Ennis	1,600 weekly veh kms
840	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Banagher - Tullamore	3,400 weekly veh kms
978	TFI Local Link Mayo	Belmullet - Castlebar	3,500 weekly veh kms

Route Number	Operator	Description	Increased VKM
339	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Loophead - Kilrush	500 weekly veh kms
264	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Ballyshannon - Letterkenny	700 weekly veh kms
572	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Sligo - Ballinamore	1,200 weekly veh kms
953	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Greencastle - Letterkenny	1,300 weekly veh kms
977	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Ballaghderreen - Sligo	900 weekly veh kms
880	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Naas - Carlow timetable changes	1,253 weekly veh kms
368	TFI Local Link Wexford	Eniscorthy - New Ross (via Clonroch)	590 weekly veh kms
369	TFI Local Link Wexford	Tullow - Bunclody - Enniscorthy	
431	TFI Local Link Galway	Carraroe - Costelloe - Ballinrobe - Claremorris	4,900 weekly veh kms
595	TFI Local Link Limerick Clare	Tarbert - Croom	3,000 weekly veh kms
821	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	Newbridge - Naas via Allenwood	3,900 weekly veh kms
823	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	Birr - Portlaoise	3,800 weekly veh kms

Route Number	Operator	Description	Increased VKM
167	Bus Éireann	Mullingar - Kells - Ardee - Dundalk	7,950 weekly veh kms
190	Bus Éireann	Athlone - Drogheda Extension	15,390 weekly veh kms
314	Bus Éireann	Limerick - Ballybunion via Foynes	5,055 weekly veh kms
320	Bus Éireann	Charleville - Limerick	90 weekly veh kms
328	Bus Éireann	Limerick - Mitchelstown	3,422 weekly veh kms
332	Bus Éireann	Limerick - Cashel	4,978 weekly veh kms
345	Bus Éireann	Scariff - Limerick	2,700 weekly veh kms
466	Bus Éireann	Athlone - Longford - Cavan	7,295 weekly veh kms
354	Bus Éireann	Portlaw - Dunmore East	5,600 weekly veh kms.
358	TFI Local Link Waterford	Tramore - Dunmore East - Passage East - Waterford	
981	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	Sligo - Coolaney	700 weekly veh kms
432	TFI Local Link Galway	Clifden - Roundstone - Carraroe	4,200 weekly veh kms

Route Number	Operator	Description	Increased VKM
183	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	Arklow - Sallins	6,400 weekly veh kms
523	TFI Local Link Cork	Mitchelstown - Mallow	1,500 weekly veh kms
546	TFI Local Link Galway	Ballinasloe - Castlerea via Moylough	2,900 weekly veh kms
M1	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Knockatallon - Monaghan Institute	260 weekly kms
M2	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Ballybay - Monaghan Institute	310 weekly kms
M3	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	Emyvale - Glaslough - Tyholland	1,792 weekly kms
257	Bus Éireann	Macroom - Killarney via Mill Street	4,400 weekly veh kms
283	TFI Local Link Kerry	Currans - Tralee	1,400 weekly veh kms
522	TFI Local Link Cork	Charleville - Mallow	2,800 weekly veh kms

Table 4: Increased Weekly Vehicle KM from Phase 1 Implementations



Passenger Satisfaction

TFI Local Link

The Local Link Customer Satisfaction 2022 report found the below key highlights:

1. Satisfaction with TFI Local Link is very high at 97%, with 76% very satisfied across all their services.
2. Ratings are strongest for cleanliness with 99% satisfied however are high across measure with 98% satisfied with the level of comfort, 96% satisfied with reliability, 93% satisfied with the level of crowding and 93% satisfied with the availability of seat.
3. 97% are very or fairly satisfied with value for money and this is 10 percentage points higher than for any public transport.
4. 63% are aware of the fare reductions and 60% of those are travelling more as a result.
5. More than 9 in 10 feel very safe on-board.





Figure 16: Overall Sentiment towards TFI Local Link

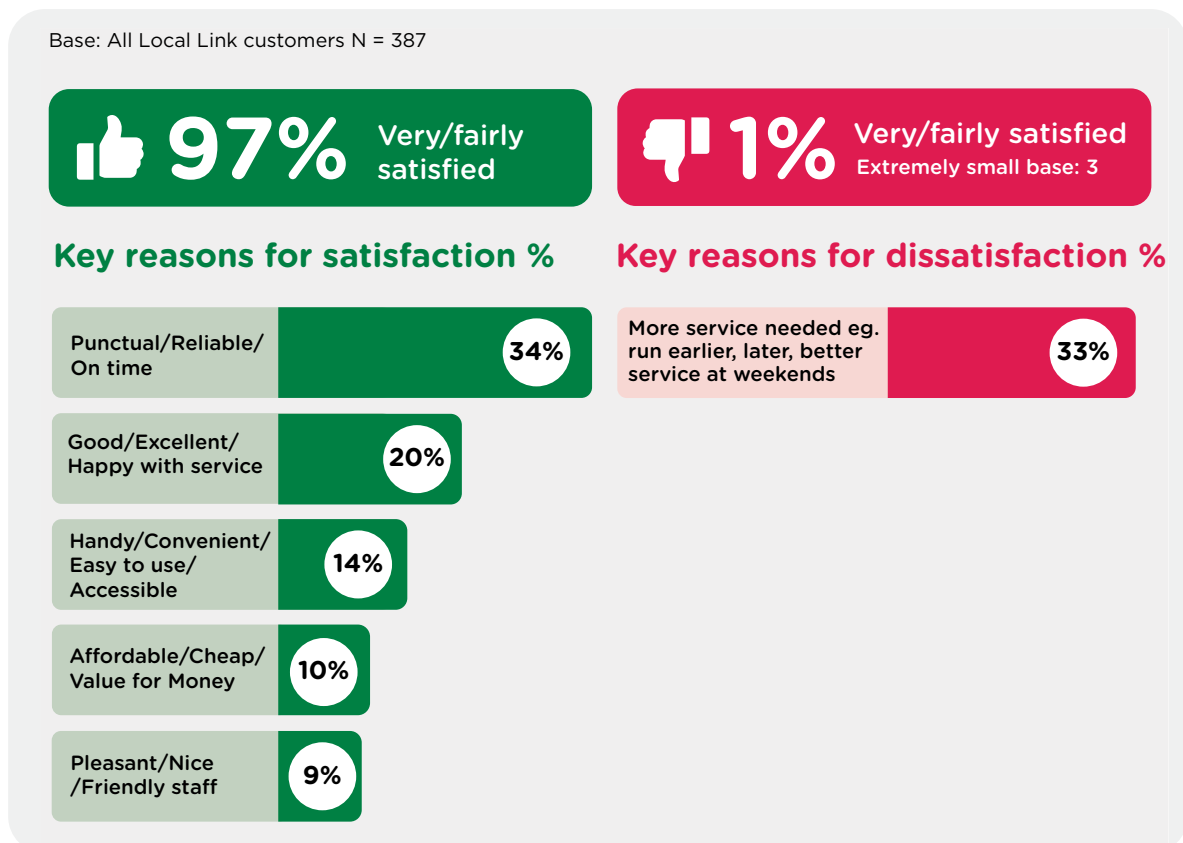


Figure 17: Key Reasons for Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction with TFI Local Link

Bus Éireann

The Bus Éireann Customer Satisfaction 2022 report across all their services found the below key highlights:

1. Satisfaction is high at 82% and in line with satisfaction with public transport overall. Satisfaction has declined in comparison to 2021 (-9%pts) although remains in line with 2019 levels.
2. Bus Éireann scores higher on comfort and seat availability and the lowest for reliability.
3. Satisfaction with value for money is very similar to satisfaction among all public transport users.
4. 63% of Bus Éireann's customers are aware of the fare reduction and this is lower in comparison to all public transport users. However, the impact in influencing increased travel is similar.
5. Safety perceptions are high at all stages, especially for safety onboard.

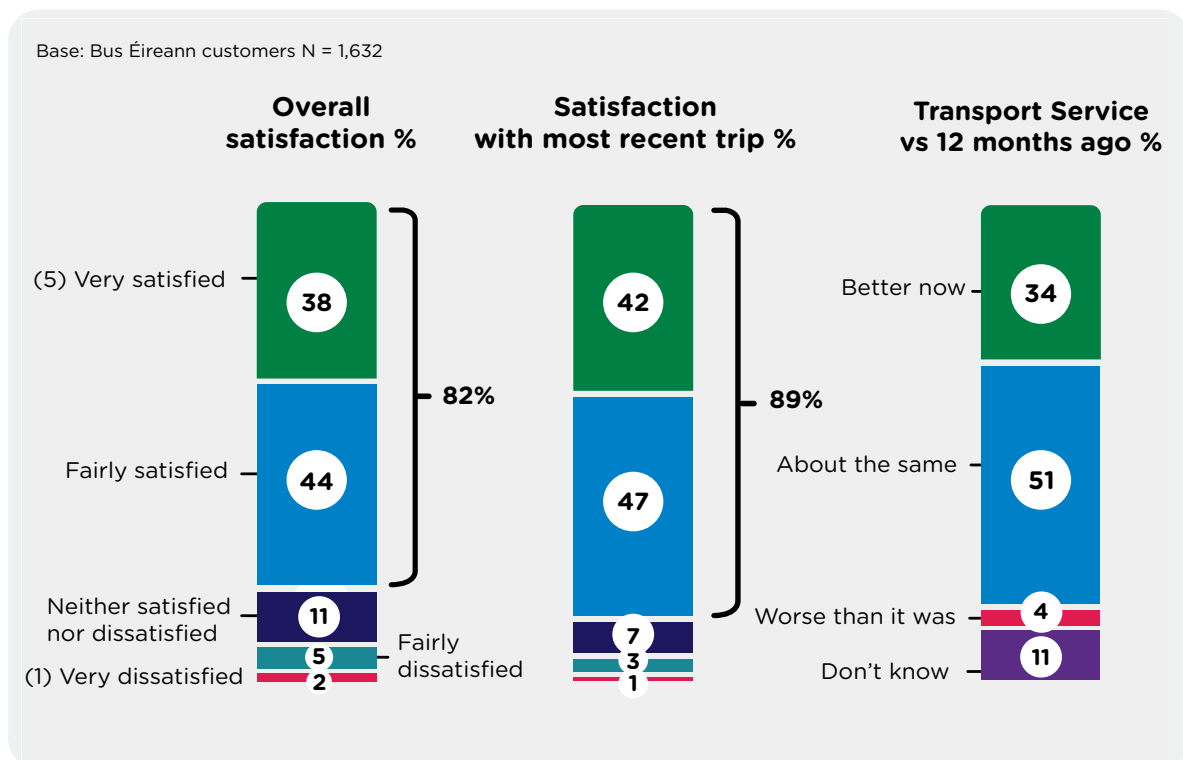


Figure 18: Overall Sentiment towards Bus Éireann

Base: Bus Éireann customers N = 1,632

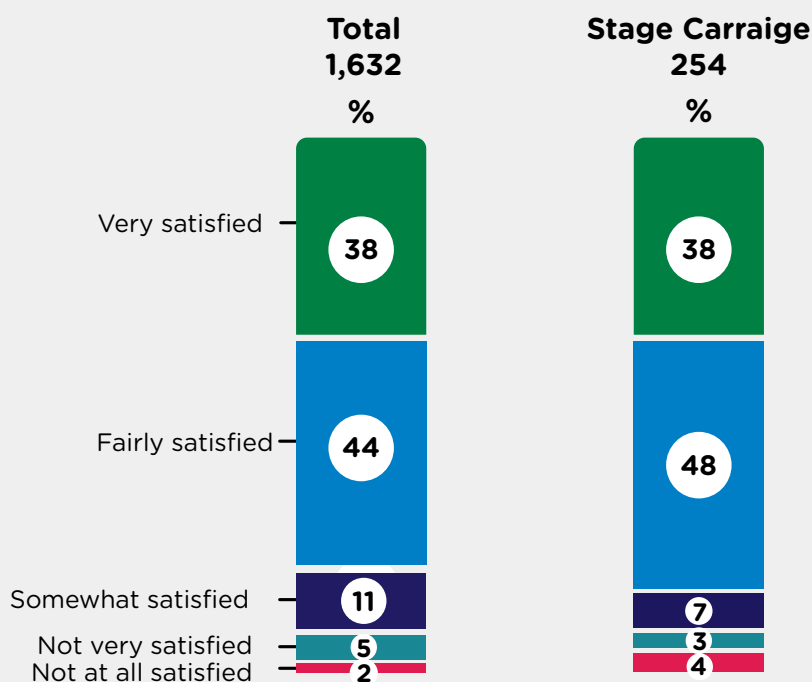
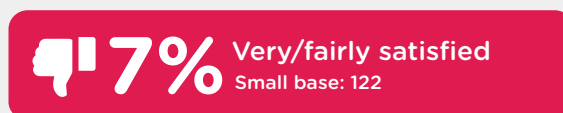
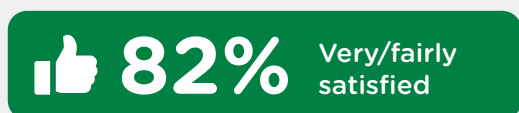
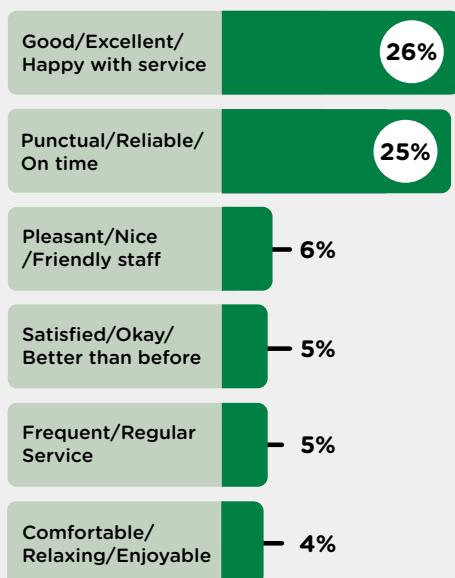


Figure 19: Satisfaction with Bus Éireann by area

Base: Bus Éireann customers N = 1,632



Key reasons for satisfaction %



Key reasons for dissatisfaction %

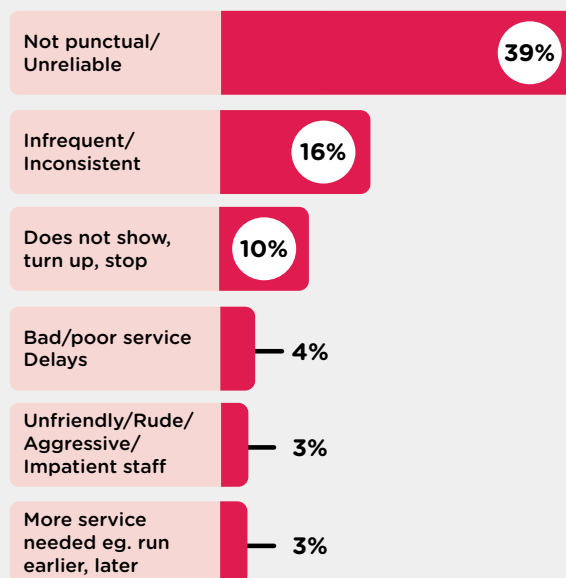


Figure 20: Key Reasons for Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction with Bus Éireann

Look Ahead

Electric Vehicle

Route 277 is an upcoming route due to be enhanced under Phase 2 of Connecting Ireland. The NTA are running a pilot study over the next year and a half to assess the performance of a fully battery electric bus in the rural conditions of the Dingle/Daingean Uí Chúis peninsula, this will be the first rural fully battery electric bus service in the State. Two 31-seat buses will be arriving for the trial in the spring of 2023 and will be running on TFI Local Link Kerry Route 277 and other local routes. The buses will be fully wheelchair accessible and equipped with LED destination displays. The NTA will be assessing the impact of weather conditions and driving style on battery performance, with 24-hour performance monitoring in place. The results of the trial will inform the roll out of fully battery electric buses on more rural routes in the years to come. The trial will be based in the Bus Éireann depot in Dingle/Daingean Uí Chúis where the NTA have arranged a partnership between Bus Éireann and TFI Local Link to upgrade the yard and bring in new charging infrastructure.

Smart Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Pilot

Smart Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) allows the passenger through an App to request in next to real time that a bus diverts from their normal route to pick them up either at their door or at a suitable location nearby and take them to another agreed location. Typically these Smart DRT routes are bounded within agreed geographical areas and by using real time algorithms the routes are adjusted to make as close a match as possible to the customer's choice. There are estimated to be c.350,000 people living in areas not suited to fixed route public transport services. These areas are typically highly remote, sparsely populated and may not have roads that can accommodate bus services. TFI local link currently provides over 1,000 DRT services, connecting remote areas to local towns and villages. The Authority will implement a pilot Smart DRT service as part of the Connecting Ireland programme. The Smart DRT service will be app. enabled and will provide both local trips and integrated 'first and last mile' connections to fixed route bus and rail services. It is anticipated that by using smart booking and trip allocation and routing technology, it will be possible to offer a more efficient comprehensive and flexible DRT service within a large rural area.

Lessons Learned

To mark the first anniversary of the launch of the NTA's Connecting Ireland Plan, a delivery team lessons learned workshop was undertaken on February 28th 2023 to explore the impact of the initial roll-out of this multi-year rural mobility plan. Representatives from the NTA, TFI Local Link and Bus Éireann were present and the workshop was opened by NTA CEO Anne Graham. The Connecting Ireland Lessons Learned Workshop aimed to evaluate the progress of the Plan in its first year of implementation and to pinpoint the achievements to date, identify challenges that have been encountered and look at ways to improve the implementation of Connecting Ireland going forward.

The outputs from the workshop will help to enhance and evolve the implementation of the rural mobility plan in 2023 and beyond.



Phase 2 Implementation Plan

The below table outlines the Implementation Plan for Phase 2 routes to be rolled out in 2023;

Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
897	897	Kilkenny - Castlecomer - Carlow - Athy	01/01/2023
163	188	Athboy - Navan - Duleek - Drogheda	16/01/2023
384	384	Enniscorthy - Bree - Killurin - Wexford	13/02/2023
A62	887	Carlow - Bagenalstown - Graiguenamanagh - New Ross	Q1
236A	232	Allihies - Dursey Sound - Castletownbere - Bantry - Kilcrohane	Q1
B53	438	Tuam - Headford - Corrundulla - Menlo - Galway	Q1
276	276	Castlemaine - Annascaul - Dingle/ Daingean Uí Chúis	Q1
277	277	Dingle/Daingean Uí Chúis - Ceann Trá - Baile an Fheirtéaraigh - Dhún Chaoin	Q1
40	426	Longford - Knockanboy - Killashee - Ballyleague - Roscommon	Q1
978	978	Béal An Mhuirthead - Bangor Erris - Mulranny - Castlebar	Q1

Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
A59	356	Dungarvan - Ballymacarbry - Clonmel	Q1
387	387	Wexford Town - Rosslare Strand - Kilrane - Rosslare Harbour	Q1
272	272	Enhancement of existing route Tralee - Listowel - Ballybunion	Q2
279	279	Extension to route Tralee - Castlemaine - Milltown - Killorglin - Killarney	Q2
423	423	Revision to existing route Clifden - Letterfrack - Leenaun - Westport	Q2
139	139	Naas - Sallins - Clane - Maynooth - Leixlip - Blanchardstown	Q2
166A	171	Shercock - Carrickmacross - Inniskeen - Dundalk	Q2
547	547	Portumna - Ballycrossaun - Eyrecourt - Ballinure - Ballinasloe	Q2
274	274	New route Tarbert - Ballybunion - Ballyheigue - Ardfert - Tralee	Q2
280N	280	New route Waterville - Caherciveen - Killorglin - Killarney	Q2
280S	281	New route Waterville - Sneem - Kenmare	Q2



Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
287A	TBC	Enhancement of existing route Caherciveen - Portmagee - Chapelstown - Knightstown	Q2
129	129	Withdrawn CBO operating as emergency contract Kilcullen - Athgarvan - Newbridge	Q2
884	885	Sallins - Naas - Blessington - Ballymore Eustace - Baltinglass	Q2
834	834	Variation; additional evening services Roscrea - Mountrath - Portlaoise	Q2
850	850	Roscrea - Templemore - Roscrea - Birr - Banagher - Cloghan - Athlone	Q2
339	TBC	Kilrush - Loophead - Kilkee - Kilrush	Q2



Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
547A	344	New route Ennis - Clooney - Tulla - Feakle - Scarriff - Mountshannon - Whitegate	Q2
A81	819	Mullingar - Castletown - Geoghegan - Athlone	Q2
115D	189	Enfield - Longwood - Ballivor - Kildalkey - Trim - Dunderry - Robinstown - Navan	Q2
454	454	New route Ballina - Crossmolina - Lahardane - Pontoon - Turlough - Castlebar	Q2
322	322	New route Portumna - Terryglass - Ballinderry - Drominer - Ballycommon - Nenagh	Q2

Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
854	854	Enhancement of existing route. Silvermines - Nenagh - Toomevara - Moneygall - Cloughjordan - Shinrone - Roscrea - Ballybrophy	Q2
357	357	New route Youghal - Clashmore - Agllish - Villerstown - Whitechurch - Dungarvan	Q2
361	361	New route Youghal - Ardmore - Dungarvan	Q2
388	388	Variation Wexford - Barntown - Foulksmills - Wellingtonbridge - Duncormick - Bridgetown	Q2
243	243	Enhancement of existing route Newmarket - Kanturk - Mallow - Cork	Q2
424	424	Leitir Mealláin - An Ceathrú Rua - Costelloe - An Spidéal - Bearna - Galway	Q2
B1	331	Ballyvaughan - Lisdoonvarna - Ennistymon - Ennis	Q2
329	329	Enhancement of existing route Limerick - Ballyneety - Bruff - Kilmallock - Kilfinane	Q2
2A	270	Skibbereen - Bantry - Kenmare - Killarney	Q2
30	170	Cavan - Bailieborough - Kingscourt - Carrickmacross - Dundalk	Q2
354	354	Variation of existing route Carrick-on-Suir - Portlaw - Waterford - Dunmore East	Q2

Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
132	132	Enhancement of existing route Bunclody - Tullow - Baltinglass - Blessington - Dublin	Q3
233	TBC	Macroom - Coachford - Dripsey - Cork	Q3
333	333	Kilkee - Miltown Malbay - Ennistymon - Ennis	Q3
350	TBC	Alteration of existing route Ennis - Ennistymon - Lisdoonvarna - Galway	Q3
360	360	Variation on existing route Tramore - Waterford	Q3
370	TBC	Variation of existing route Wexford - Wellingtonbridge - Ramsgrange - Campile - New Ross - Waterford	Q3
440	TBC	Westport - Castlebar - Swinford - Claremorris - Ballyhaunis - Roscommon - Athlone	Q3
108a	TBC	Extension of existing route Kells - Bailieboro - Cootehill	Q3
425A	TBC	Enhancement of existing route Galway - Monivea - Caltra - Mountbellew	Q3
187	TBC	New route Cavan - Kells - Gibbstown (Baile Ghib)	Q3



Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
108b	TBC	New route Cootehill - Shercock - Bailieboro - Virginia	Q3
A74	TBC	New route Clones - Ballybay - Castleblayney - Newry	Q3
9	TBC	Mallow - Fermoy - Lismore - Dungarvan	Q3
572	TBC	New route Sligo - Riverstown - Drumshanbo - Ballinamore - Cavan	Q3

Proposal ID	Route Number	Description	Estimated Operational Timescales*
954	TBC	Derry - Carndonagh - Malin Head	Q3
955	TBC	Carndonagh - Clonmany - Dumfries - Buncrana	Q3
273	TBC	New route Brandon - Castlegregory - Aughacasla - Blennerville - Tralee - Fenit	Q3
888	888	Athy - Rathangan - Kildare	Q3
822	TBC	New route Mountrath - Abbeyleix - Carlow	Q3
72	TBC	Athlone - Cloghan - Nenagh - Limerick	Q4
239	TBC	Cork - Bandon - Butlerstown	Q4
323	TBC	Nenagh - Castleconnell - Limerick	Q4
446	446	Variation of existing route An Fód Dubh - Bangor Erris - Crossmolina - Ballina	Q4
237B	TBC	Baltimore - Skibbereen - Union Hall - Castletownshend	Q4

Table 5: Phase 2 Implementation Plan (As of 13/02/2023)

The estimated implementation dates are indicative and may change for a number of reasons:

- The duration of the planning and design process, involving liaison with Local Authorities, TFI Local Link Offices, representatives, lobby groups, passengers and transport service providers to provide enhanced levels of service in response to growth and changes in demand for transport;
- Discussions with operators where licensed services and proposed PSO services co-exist on the same corridor; and availability of service providers and drivers in particular following the impacts of Covid19 and macro-economic factors brought about by the conflict in Ukraine on the industry.

Given the rapidly changing environment, it is important that the Connecting Ireland team is able to be agile and flexible in its management of the Plan, so that where progress is impacted, other plans can be advanced instead. This update reflects the Authority's intention as of today, but is likely to change to respond to changing circumstances.

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