

# Connecting Ireland Insights

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## ➤ Over 140 new or enhanced services have been introduced since 2022 as a part of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan.

More people than ever have access to reliable and frequent public transport services connecting towns and townlands across rural Ireland. This is due in large part to the rollout of the new or enhanced bus services under the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan.



The Transport for Ireland (TFI) bus network in rural Ireland has grown since the launch of the Plan in January 2022. Since then, over 140 new or enhanced bus services have been introduced. These frequent, affordable bus services offer freedom for people in communities to travel and use sustainable transport connections in areas outside of our major towns and cities.

As part of our five-year Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan, we continue to strive to deliver the following benefits:

- Over 70% of those living outside of cities will have access to public transport services that provide at least three return trips each weekday to a nearby town.
- Improved mobility options for those in remote areas with the provision of Smart Demand Responsive Transport (SDRT) and other innovative transport services.
- Over 100 new local centre connections from rural settlements in the hinterlands.
- Over 100 new county town connections from all types of settlements around county towns. Over 60 new regional centre/city connections from all types of settlements around these centres/cities



## ➤ **Services in Action – People now using TFI Local Link services 100,000 times a day in rural Ireland.**

Since the rollout of Connecting Ireland in January 2022, there has been a five-fold increase in customers. Journey numbers have reached a new record high with people now using TFI Local Link bus services more than 100,000 times a week in rural Ireland.

These services are provided for the National Transport Authority (NTA) by 15 TFI Local Link offices around the country.

There were 105,986 passenger journeys on TFI Local Link services in week ending 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2024. This represents a more-than five-fold increase compared to January 2022 when weekly numbers were at 19,982. Passenger journey numbers have been increasing consistently for over three years now. The weekly national average was 16,745 in 2021; 36,664 in 2022; and 78,892 in 2023.

This dramatic increase in numbers coincides with the rollout of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan. Since then, over 140 new and enhanced TFI Local Link routes have been introduced under the Plan, covering every county. 2024 is the third year of the five-year Plan with some 60 per cent of the proposed services are now in place with the remainder to be introduced in the remainder of the Plan.

The new and enhanced services are proving to be very attractive to a new set of customers in rural Ireland who are choosing TFI Local Link to get to work, education, healthcare and social activities.

**Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan** acknowledged the milestone and the efforts behind the scenes, stating:

*"We have seen a transformation in public transport across rural Ireland and going by the numbers, people really like it. Reaching this milestone of 100,000 passengers a week is incredible, but I'd like to think of it as just the beginning. We need to have buses criss-crossing this country and reaching into towns and villages everywhere. This is only the beginning. I want to extend my thanks to the TFI Local Link offices, operators, and passengers who have made this achievement possible. The exponential growth we're seeing – up four or five-fold in just four years in many places – highlights the importance of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan in delivering improved access and inclusion for rural Ireland. We are building not just a better-connected Ireland, but a more sustainable, equitable, and vibrant one—thanks to the hard work of everyone involved."*

**Anne Graham, CEO of the National Transport Authority (NTA)**, expressed her gratitude for the collective effort:

*"This achievement is a direct result of the dedication and hard work by a whole range of people and the continued support from passengers who have embraced the service. Reaching 100,000 passengers per week would not have been possible without the incredible commitment of the TCU's and their staff as well as the drivers and the local bus operators, and I'd like to thank everyone who is involved. I was always optimistic that Connecting Ireland would prove to be a transformative programme for rural communities, but honestly, I'm completely blown away by the success story that it has become across the country. And we're not finished yet!"*







## New Services in Action – Route 186 Cavan to Baile Ghib via Kells

As part of the Connecting Ireland Plan, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan identified a requirement for a new bus service to improve connectivity and mobility for the communities of Baile Ghib, Kells, Moynalty, Mullagh, Virginia, Ballyjamesduff, Moynehall, Cross Keys and Cavan. The implementation of a new bus services in these areas would greatly improve access to essential services and resources for residents living in these areas.

The new route 186, launched in October 2024, operates six daily return services to Kells, including three return trips from Monday to Thursday that extend to Baile Ghib. On Fridays and Saturdays, the route operates eight daily return services, with four of those extending to Baile Ghib. Additionally, on Sundays and Public Holidays, the route operates three daily return services, all of which extend to Baile Ghib.

The new route improves connectivity to the towns and villages of Kells, Moynalty, Mullagh, Virginia, Ballyjamesduff and Cross Keys and offers peak-time and evening services for passengers and connectivity to Cavan Town, Cavan Bus Station and regional bus services. The new route also connects Baile Ghib and Cross Keys to the public transport network for the first time and offers a new direct route from Ballyjamesduff and Mullagh to Cavan. In its first week Route 186 carried over 800 passengers and continues to carry over a 1,000 passenger a week.

Speaking on the success of Route 186, **TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan General Manager, Padraic Smyth** said *“Whilst we knew the 186 route had a demand the uptake of passengers in such a short space of time has been incredible. The implementation of the 186 service has been transformative for communities along the route and we envisage continued growth in the coming year.”*



## New or Enhanced Services implemented in 2024 so far

Route Number	Route Name/ Description	Operator	Implementation Date
292	Donegal – Ballyshannon	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	04/01/2024
831	Rathdowney – Portlaoise	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	06/01/2024
189	Enfield – Navan	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	29/01/2024
880	Naas – Carlow	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	29/01/2024
192	Balbriggan – Swords	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	19/02/2024
163	Brú na Bóinne – Drogheda	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	26/02/2024
800/885	Baltinglass – Sallins	TFI Local Link Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow	11/03/2024
170	Cavan – Dundalk	Bus Éireann	24/03/2024
884	Wexford – Gorey	Commercial Bus Operator	12/04/2024
359	Enniscorthy – New Ross	TFI Local Link Wexford	15/04/2024
892	Dunlavin/Kilcullen – Newbridge	TFI Local Link Kildare South Dublin	07/05/2024
280	Waterville – Killarney	TFI Local Link Kerry	01/06/2024
276	Castlemaine – Dingle/Daingean Uí Chúis	TFI Local Link Kerry	03/06/2024
273	Brandon – Tralee	TFI Local Link Kerry	24/06/2024
100	Dundalk – Drogheda	Bus Éireann	30/06/2024
354	Carrick-on-Suir – Dunmore East	Bus Éireann	30/06/2024
278	Fenit – Tralee	TFI Local Link Kerry	01/07/2024
274	Tarbert – Tralee	TFI Local Link Kerry	08/07/2024
523	Mitchelstown – Mallow	TFI Local Link Cork	28/07/2024
367	Dungarvan – Tramore	TFI Local Link Waterford	19/08/2024
316	Sixmilebridge – Shannon	Bus Éireann	25/08/2024
317	Limerick – Ennis	Bus Éireann	25/08/2024
330	Limerick – Shannon	Bus Éireann	25/08/2024
343	Ennis – Shannon – Limerick	Bus Éireann	25/08/2024
567	Carrick-on-Shannon – Manorhamilton	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	26/08/2024

Route Number	Route Name/ Description	Operator	Implementation Date
934	Gort – Loughrea	TFI Local Link Galway	16/09/2024
973	Cionn Fhánada – Letterkenny	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	07/10/2024
953	Greencastle – Letterkenny	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	14/10/2024
971	Ailt an Chorráin – Letterkenny	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	14/10/2024
186	Cavan – Baile Ghib via Kells	TFI Local Link Cavan Monaghan	21/10/2024
952	Carndonagh – Derry	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	21/10/2024
954	Malin Head – Carndonagh	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	21/10/2024
957	Greencastle – Derry	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	21/10/2024
959	Greencastle – Letterkenny via Buncrana	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	21/10/2024
966	An Fál Carrach – An Clochán Liath	TFI Local Link Donegal Sligo Leitrim	21/10/2024
187	Virginia – Kells	Bus Éireann	27/10/2024
109B	Athboy via Kildalkey	Bus Éireann	27/10/2024
265	Skibbereen – Mizen Head	TFI Local Link Cork	28/10/2024
815	Athlone – Tullamore	TFI Local Link Laois Offaly	02/12/2024
177	Kells – Ardee	TFI Local Link Louth Meath Fingal	09/12/2024
266	Baltimore – Union Hall – Castletownsend	TFI Local Link Cork	16/12/2024

## New or Enhanced Services to be implemented in 2024

Route Number	Route Name/ Description	Operator	Implementation Date
818	Collinstown – Mullingar via Castlepollard	TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon	Q4
439	Gort – Loughrea	TFI Local Link Galway	Q4
282	Kenmare – Castletownbere	TFI Local Link Kerry	Q4