

Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study

Final Report Information Note

National Transport Authority

October 2024

What is the Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study?

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has commenced the updating of the Galway Transport Strategy which was adopted in 2016. The updated strategy (GMATS) will provide a long-term strategic planning framework for the delivery of transport, and the integrated development of transport infrastructure and services in the Galway Metropolitan Area (GMA). The GMATS will align with the existing national, regional and local policy and guidance.

As part of this process, NTA identified the requirement for a Light Rail Feasibility Study (Feasibility Study) to better understand the general feasibility for light rail in the GMA, and to investigate potential indicative alignments.

The final report of this study has now been published for information and will form part of the analysis used to inform the development of the GMATS, alongside recommendations for active travel, bus services, rail, roads and demand management measures. Full environmental assessment will be undertaken as part of the overall GMATS process, which will also include a full public consultation.

The Light Rail Feasibility Study is not intended to specifically identify a preferred alignment of a light rail corridor in the city; instead the final report explores key issues and potential feasibility. Route options will need to be explored in more detail during any subsequent process of options assessment and development.

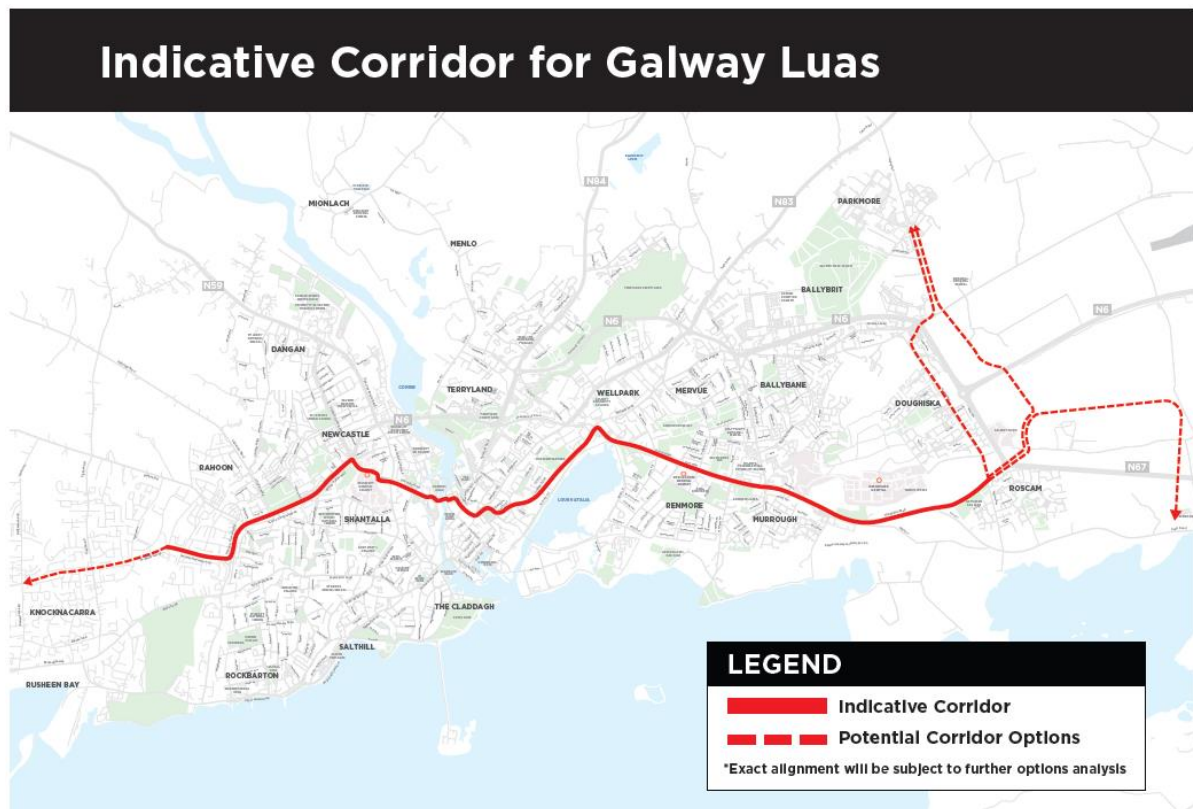
Light Rail Options Feasibility and Assessment

The Feasibility Study is only intended to explore key issues and technical feasibility for light rail in Galway. This process began with the identification of corridors with the greatest potential for light rail in the GMA. The approach used transport modelling tools to identify potential corridors where there could be sufficient potential demand for public transport to support the development of light rail.

This analysis, presented in the final report, identified an east-west corridor through the city, which would be likely to have the strongest potential for light rail. Further to this main corridor, a series of different options which could cater for the future development of the city were considered. These route options are preliminary, and indicative by design, and would need to be explored further in line with the appropriate transport scheme development and appraisal guidance, following any decision to further progress light rail for the city.

An indicative outline of the potential spine corridor and route options is presented in Map 1 below:

Map 1: Indicative Corridor for Galway Luas



In addition to examining potential alignment options, the Feasibility Study explored the technical parameters of light rail in terms of the capacity of different types of vehicles, typical dimensions, and infrastructure requirements. There are also emerging developments in the sector, including more innovative forms of Very Light Rail (vLRT); these emerging technologies were also considered in the final report.

Key Findings

The Feasibility Study has shown that there could, under the right conditions, be a case for developing a light rail system in Galway. There is a strong axis of east-west travel demand with the potential to shift to public transport. The assessments have shown that the focus should be on the corridor from Knocknacarra to Roscam, with potential longer-term onward connections.

The analysis indicates that annual demand of ~7.5 million passengers per annum could be achieved on this corridor in 2043, and when coupled with the introduction of policies to support the Climate Action Plan, for example demand management measures in Galway, which could have the potential to support further mode shift - this could potentially increase to up to ~13 million passengers per annum. This would increase revenues from fare-paying passengers and enhance the financial sustainability of the future public transport system in the city.

There may also be potential to justify a light rail system in the shorter term, notably if land use development follows the Compact Development / Transit Orientated Development (TOD) approach. By concentrating higher density development along public transport corridors and, ensuring that large scale development sites fully consider the potential to consolidate around a future light rail alignment, the case for expediting the delivery of light rail in Galway would be enhanced.

Additional Notes on the Feasibility Study Report

The Feasibility Study does not identify a preferred alignment for light rail in the study area and is only intended to explore issues and potential feasibility. The indicative route options presented in the final report would need to be explored further, following any decision to further progress light rail for the city.

The Feasibility Study is not a stand-alone document and has been published for information only. The Feasibility Study will form part of the evidence base used as an input into the development of the updated multi-modal Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS), which will be subject to full environmental assessment and open to public consultation in due course.