

James Browne TD,
Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
Custom House,
Dublin 1,
D01 W6X0

Reference: **Concerns of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly regarding the National Development Plan Review 2025 Sectoral Investment Plan for Transport**

Dear Minister Browne,

At the December meeting of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, it was agreed to write to you to express concern regarding the National Development Plan (NDP) Review 2025 Sectoral Investment Plan for Transport (the Transport Sectoral Plan).

We strongly welcome the commitment of unprecedented capital investment under the NDP. Notwithstanding, it is the view of the Regional Assembly that the Transport Sectoral Plan will require revision to ensure that the statutory goals of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the overarching aims of Project Ireland 2040 are realised, and to ensure the achievement of mandatory national targets for housing delivery, climate action, and regional equity. Specifically:

- 1. The impact that delays to regionally important light and heavy rail projects will have on meeting both housing-delivery and emissions-reduction targets.**

We are concerned that delays in the delivery of key rail projects may compromise the fundamental NPF goals of Compact Growth (National Strategic Outcome 1) and the Transition to a Carbon Neutral and Climate Resilient Society (National Strategic Outcome 8).

The Accelerating Infrastructure Report and Action Plan (AIRAP) explicitly notes that inadequate transport infrastructure is a factor that impedes the ability to deliver housing, leading to planning permissions being refused for new housing due to insufficient transport capacity. Projects such as the Luas Expansion, MetroLink and the DART+ Programme strongly support the National Planning Objective 10 mandate to deliver Transport Orientated Development (TOD) at scale. The Assembly also specifically advocates for the expedited delivery of the Navan Rail line to provide sustainable transport options necessary to enable compact and sustainable growth in the Eastern Region.

As supported by the final report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR), rail can play a role as the "stronger backbone" of the public transport system to support decarbonisation efforts. However, current gaps are highlighted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which projects that, even with current policy measures, the transport sector is likely to achieve only a 21% reduction in 2018 emissions by 2030, well short of the legally binding 50% target. Furthermore, the European Commission Country Report for Ireland and the Climate Change Advisory Council's Transport Sectoral Review both highlight critical gaps in delivery, especially in metropolitan rail, which are contributing to rising transport emissions and missed climate targets. Implementing the

recommendations of the AISRR could accelerate the transition to a net zero economy by enabling a doubling of rail's modal share.

2. The impact that insufficient funding for walking and cycling infrastructure will have on public safety and health, as well as on traffic congestion.

Sufficient and secure funding for active travel infrastructure is key to the achievement of National Strategic Outcome 5 (Sustainable Mobility) across the region and supports National Planning Objective 37, which requires prioritising walking and cycling accessibility in community design.

The Assembly stresses the importance of expanding and improving safe walking and cycling infrastructure in towns and cities, backed by dedicated investment streams for local authorities. Appropriate investment can encourage modal shift, thereby reducing severe traffic congestion. As noted in the Accelerating Infrastructure Report and Action Plan (AIRAP), Dublin drivers, for example, lose an estimated 81 hours annually due to congestion, illustrating the negative real-world consequences of infrastructure deficit. Insufficient infrastructure makes the environment less safe for vulnerable road users and therefore unappealing, despite the key Climate Action Plan target of achieving a 50% increase in daily active travel journeys by 2030.

3. To emphasise the importance of addressing the safety risks and poor public transport service on the N81 corridor.

The Assembly considers that investment along the N81 corridor in West Wicklow is urgently required to support the NPF's commitment to spatially balanced development and to address intra-regional disparities in transport infrastructure provision within the Eastern and Midland Region.

The N81 corridor functions as the principal transport artery for West Wicklow but is the only national primary route serving the capital that has not undergone significant upgrades in over 80 years and has a long-documented history as a serious road safety hazard. The Assembly advocates for reform to adopt a multi-criteria, spatially aware investment model, which prioritises capital expenditure based on factors such as legacy underinvestment, road safety, and spatial equity.

West Wicklow is severely underserved by public transport, leading to high car dependency, which runs contrary to National Strategic Outcome 5 (Sustainable Mobility). Although the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042 includes "Safety, alignment and bus priority enhancements to the N81" as an objective, the necessary funding has not been allocated to pursue this crucial improvement.

Conclusion

We, the elected members of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly formally request that the investment decisions contained within the National Development Plan Review 2025 Sectoral Investment Plan for Transport are reviewed and amended to address these concerns and ensure full alignment with the core strategic objectives of the National Planning Framework and the regional



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needs of the Eastern and Midland Region as articulated in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031, thus fulfilling the mandate of Project Ireland 2040.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. David Healy
Cathaoirleach
Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

22nd December 2025