

NPF Submissions  
Forward Planning Section  
Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government  
Custom House  
Dublin 1, D01 W6X0

16<sup>th</sup> March 2017

[Iarnród Éireann Submission to Ireland 2040 Our Plan – Issues and Choices](#)  
[\(National Planning Framework\)](#)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the initial public consultation phase of Ireland 2040 Our Plan the new National Planning Framework (NPF). Iarnród Éireann, as a key public transport operator and infrastructure manager of c.2400km of railway track throughout the country, welcomes the development of the NPF.

Iarnród Éireann was delighted to be invited to the formal launch of the NPF in NUI Maynooth on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February and we very much share the overriding sentiment expressed at the launch, that Ireland without a proper plan, is reliant on hope. As the moderator Mr. David McWilliams remarked at the official launch, ‘hope is not a strategy to take a modern Ireland forward’. We wholeheartedly agree. Iarnród Éireann is also in agreement with the view expressed that it is imperative that we collectively learn from the well documented mistakes of the NPF’s predecessor, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), to ensure that this new plan is fit for purpose, deliverable and can take Ireland forward to meet the challenges we face. Ireland simply cannot afford to repeat the planning mistakes of the past, particularly now that we have turned the corner on one of the most challenging economic periods in our history.

For the new NPF to do what other plans have previously failed to do, it must be more than just an advisory concept on paper. To that end we welcome and support the firm intention that the NPF will have the necessary statutory backing which was so lacking in the NSS. We agree with Minister Coveney’s assertion that the NPF, as a strategy, must also transcend politics to deliver for Ireland as a whole and for the collective betterment of society. It will require full multi-stakeholder buy-in if it is to succeed. We commend the Minister’s stated intent to deliver upon these objectives and consider this to be a very high priority if the NPF is to be a success in achieving one of its keys goals of being the overarching Strategic Plan for Ireland, to guide and advise all other planning across the State for the next two decades.

At the formal launch of the process to deliver the NPF in NUI Maynooth, both the Taoiseach and the Minister asked the very pertinent question – **‘what sort of place should Ireland be in 2040 and what do we need to achieve this’?** A key sub-question included in the NPF literature asks **‘what infrastructure is required and what are the national priorities’?**

It is Iarnród Éireann's understanding that submissions to the NPF are to be strategic in nature, and be of national significance with a spatial focus. In keeping with this request, Iarnród Éireann sets out in the appended submission herewith our strategic views to these key questions, from our perspective as the operator of heavy rail services throughout the country. As a key public transport operator in Ireland, our submission very much focuses on the need for Ireland by 2040 to have a balanced sustainable transport system in order that we develop our economy, protect our environment and strengthen our society.

The railway has a central role to play in delivering such a sustainable transport system for Ireland and this role must be reflected in the NPF, and complemented by supporting policy both within the NPF and any related off-shoot plans. Iarnród Éireann is committed to participating fully in the NPF process as the plan goes through the various stages of development. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss our submission with you, and if we can be of any further assistance during this process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

David Franks,  
Chief Executive  
Iarnród Éireann

# Iarnród Éireann submission to Ireland 2040 Our Plan – National Planning Framework (NPF)

## Key NPF Messages

Rail is a valuable national asset which contributes directly to;

- Enhanced Mobility and Reduced traffic congestion
- Regional / National Economic Development
- National Climate Change Targets

### **DART Expansion in the GDA**

- The full roll out of the DART Expansion Programme – including DART Underground - given its network-wide (local, regional and national) extensive benefits, should be the top transport priority project for the greater Dublin area. Without it, Dublin will continue to have a disjointed, and under capacity public transport system which will further undermine the prospect of a sustainable development strategy for the wider region.

### **Intercity Rail Development**

- More competitive InterCity journey times, increased service frequencies and network electrification are crucial features of a future InterCity rail service in order to contribute to the NPF objectives. The future viability of InterCity services and particularly certain regional routes is critically dependent on the settlement strategy emerging from the NPF along with a number of other wider modal shift policies.

### **Regional Rail Development**

- While rail can only play a relatively limited role in the provincial cities, the targeted development of rail services along with other wider initiatives could support a critical mass of population and economic activities in the provincial cities as a counter balance to the concentration of growth in the GDA. In particular, this could enhance commuter services to and from our major regional cities.

### **Freight**

Currently, the absence of State funding support, either capital or subvention, dictates a sharp commercial focus for rail freight, which limits its role to niche markets. Experience in other European jurisdictions clearly outlines the contribution of rail freight to an improved carbon footprint and reduced road congestion, which are key considerations of the NPF.

### **International Connectivity: Rosslare Europort and Dublin Airport**

- Rosslare Europort is an important economic engine to both the South-East regional and national economies. NPF policy support should be given to improved connectivity to the port (road and rail) and to maximising the post Brexit role and capacity of the port.
  
- In the context of rapidly increasing passenger throughput at Dublin Airport and unsustainable road congestion, the long-term strategic option should be retained within the NPF for a combination of local, regional, national and cross border heavy rail connections to Dublin airport, the key gateway to the island of Ireland, for inclusion in the successor to the current Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy. Easy international access for all parts of the island of Ireland will be even more important in the context of Brexit.

## Introduction

Iarnród Éireann is a wholly owned subsidiary of the CIÉ Group. The principal activity of the company is the provision of InterCity, Dublin Commuter (including DART), Cork Commuter and regional passenger rail services. A total of 42.8m passenger rail journeys were made across the network in 2016, approximately three quarters of which were within the Dublin commuter belt. Passenger levels are now returning to the levels achieved at the height of the last economic boom in 2007.

Iarnród Éireann Freight is a separate division of Iarnród Éireann providing a comprehensive range of rail freight services for the bulk freight, intermodal and freight forwarding markets. Rail currently carries around 1% of freight tonne kilometres in Ireland. There is significant potential for growth in both passenger and freight sectors subject to sustainable levels of investment and policy support.

Iarnród Éireann also owns and manages Rosslare Europort which serves the Southern UK corridor (Fishguard and Pembroke) and the Continental corridor to Cherbourg. Rosslare Europort currently handles c. 900,000 passengers and 2.3m tonnes of freight annually.

## The important role of transport

Transportation is the backbone of any economy and society as it allows the matching of goods and employment opportunities, as well as amenities and services, with potential customers. A competitive economy requires a balanced, integrated, reliable and efficient transport system that is affordable, and accessible, to all potential network users. When transport systems are efficient, they provide economic and social opportunities, and benefits, that impact throughout the economy. When transport systems are deficient, they can have an economic cost in terms of reduced or missed opportunities. Transport also has important social and environmental dimensions, which cannot be neglected.

It is widely acknowledged that transport investment, which forms a significant and necessary part of Government expenditure, is a vital driver of a strong economy, balanced regional development and a better quality of life for all. The rail network supports the economic and social development of the country as a whole by providing accessible transport to many key destinations.

## The key benefits of the Railway

Ireland is fortunate to have a legacy network of rail lines that have been in place for almost 150 years over which a significant number of rail services (c. 4,400 per week) are provided. The heavy rail network includes main lines, Dublin suburban and commuter passenger routes and Cork Suburban routes, together with freight operated routes. The majority of the network is comprised of radial lines focused on Dublin.

The rail network provides for inter-urban connections providing strategic transport links at a national level between the six key cities on the island, Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Belfast as well as linking to smaller cities and large towns which have strong regional functions in particular Drogheda, Dundalk, Ennis, Kilkenny, Athlone, Westport, Ballina, Sligo, Tralee, Killarney and Wexford.

It was notable in the National Planning Framework's (NPF) predecessor, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), that 16 of the 20 proposed growth hubs and gateways in that plan were actually served by rail. Whatever the outcome of the proposed settlement strategy in the new NPF, it is important that it reflects the fact that the railway is a key transport mode, given its wide geographic coverage and catchment in serving many of the main urban centres on the island.

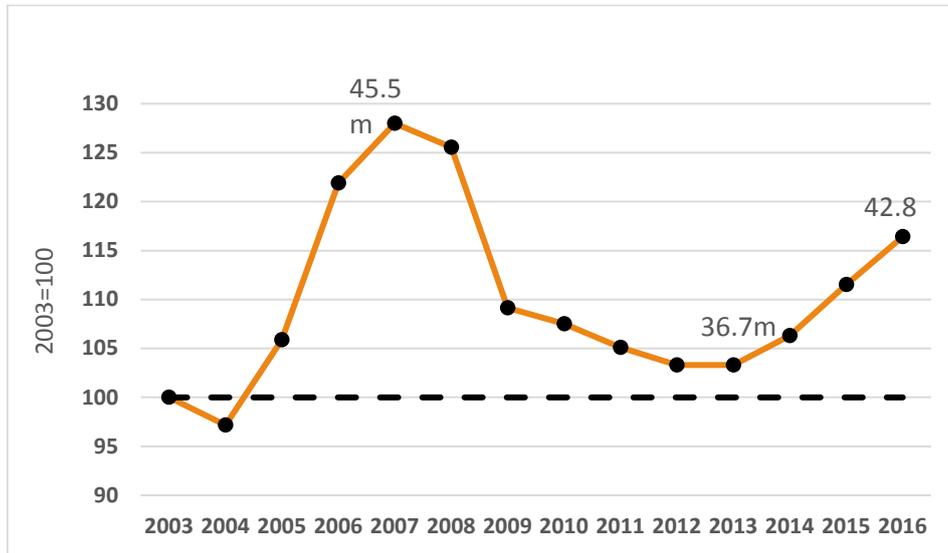
The key benefits of the railway in a national planning context are;

- **Rail is a key enabler of economic growth**
  - Road congestion already costs up to EUR 650m p.a. in the GDA alone
  - DART has alleviated GDA congestion by delivering over half a billion passenger journeys since opening in 1984
  - Daily commutes and commensurate road congestion are expected to grow by over one third by 2041
- **Rail is a fast and productive way to travel**
  - Journey times are typically comparable to car and faster than bus/coach
  - Almost half of passengers rail journeys involve productive work or study
- **Rail is the safest form of ground transport**
  - There were c.1,300 road fatalities in the RoI from 2010-16, with economic costs of over €2bn
  - Iarnród Éireann is amongst the safest rail operators in Europe
- **Rail enables mobility and is socially inclusive**
  - Almost 800,000 people benefit from the Free Travel Scheme
  - Free Travel Scheme journeys represent 11% of all passenger journeys
- **Rail is the most environmentally sustainable form of ground transport**
  - Iarnród Éireann's 2020 emission reduction target has already been surpassed
  - The average rail passenger km creates approximately 60g of greenhouse gases (GHGs) vs. 210g for road vehicles
  - Rail transport of freight uses 15-25% of the direct energy per tonne-kilometre than transport by road (INFRAS/IWW, 2000. SEI Aug 2004)
- **Rail supports growing Eco-tourism**
  - c. 260,000 overseas tourists and 770,000 domestic tourists use the rail network each year, notwithstanding the lack of rail connections to the national airport.
  - Belmond Grand Hibernian luxury sleeper train launched in 2016 – strong bookings recorded
- **Rail supports RoI and EU policy objectives**
  - Rail supports a number of important transport policies: Smarter Travel; NTA Transportation Strategy for the GDA; CASP (Cork) and EU TEN-T
  - Iarnród Éireann supports the delivery of these by providing services to a broad range of users: DART, Commuter, Intercity, Regional and Freight

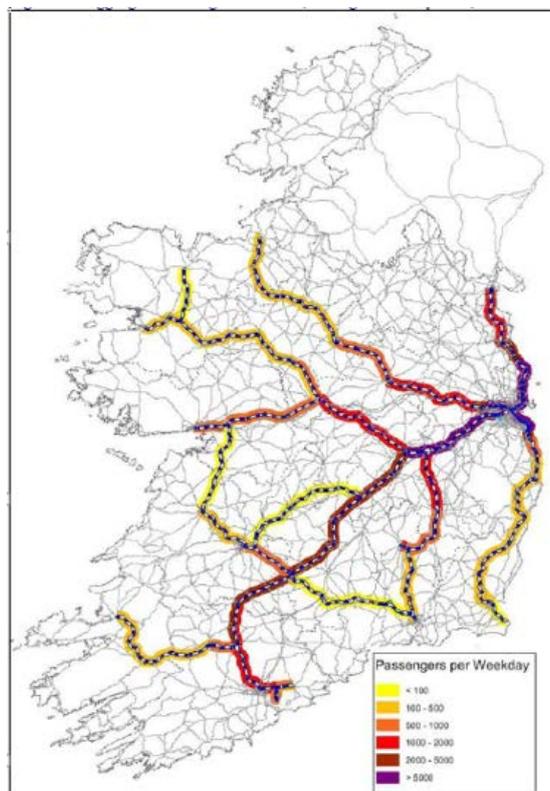
The railway has a very significant attraction across the travel market. A large volume of trips would be carried out using other modes (predominantly road based modes) in the absence of the railway in Ireland. Equally, rail has a key role to play in contributing to sustainable travel in Ireland now and into the future. This role needs to be acknowledged and reinforced in the new NPF.

### Current Railway Demand Profile in a National context

Demand for rail is growing strongly again with 42.8m rail journeys last year and is rapidly approaching the peak volume achieved in 2007 (c.45m), following a period of contraction due to the economic collapse. In 2016 rail demand grew by 8% nationally, with the strongest growth recorded in the greater Dublin area, and growth is forecast to continue as the economy and population continues to expand.



The current demand profile for rail across the rail network is illustrated below.



It highlights a number of key points;

- High demand on radial routes to Dublin and within the GDA
- Lower inter-regional demand but rail has an important regional connectivity role
- Low demand on slower non-radial branch / feeder routes

Market research has also shown that rail enjoys high market share on routes between key economic centres e.g. Westport-Dublin (40%), Cork-Dublin (39%), Sligo-Dublin (33%) and Limerick-Dublin (26%).

### Sustainable and integrated land-use development / transportation policy – learning from past policy failures

Ireland is suffering from its historic legacy of low density suburban development. Spatial planning, which has been largely developer-led, has contributed greatly to car dependency with development not closely aligned to transport planning and investment. Congestion levels, particularly in the Dublin region, are not sustainable and an under-developed public transport network is a key weakness. The Government's capital spending programme is inadequate for the country's needs, with public transport a key sector which is underfunded as a result.

The strong link between land-use spatial planning and transport is well acknowledged. However, proper integration between the two is a much bigger challenge. The developer-led planning of the last economic boom saw unsustainable urban sprawl with poor connection to public transport modes, as well as other important social infrastructure, an all too common feature. Increased car dependency was the inevitable outcome of allowing this disjointed approach.

The Ministerial intent that the new NPF will have a statutory footing is very much welcomed by Iarnród Éireann. This can help avoid the mistakes of the past and allow the NPF to set a standard for the integration of land-use, and its development, with sustainable transport modes. The NPF should set, as a key objective, a co-ordinated and integrated planning approach that involves moving people and goods in ways that reduce the impact on the environment, develops the economy, and strengthens society.

Rail as a mode of transport is uniquely placed to support NPF objectives relating to capacity, sustainability of transport and land-use development and climate change. Where possible compact, higher density non-car dependent development is required to achieve a more sustainable economy and transport network, with supporting high quality rail services which are attractive.

### Rail – A viable alternative to car dependency and congested roads

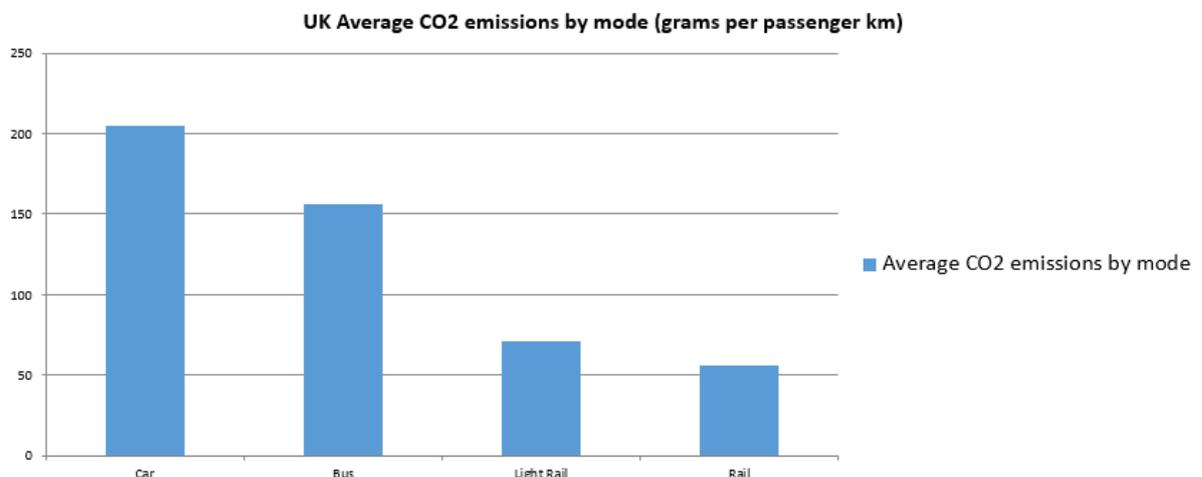
Despite Ireland's relatively small population, its principal cities are amongst the most congested in Europe, due to underinvestment in public transport systems, an over reliance on the car mode and poor planning. TomTom, the Dutch global leader in navigation and mapping, reported that Dublin is one of the most congested cities in Europe at peak times. Our cities simply do not have the space to accommodate further growth in private car traffic without exacerbating existing congestion levels. Congestion on the M50 and the approach roads is testimony to that.

The railway is a key mode of public transport providing high capacity local, regional and inter-urban rail services throughout the country. Rail provides significant user and non-user benefits and can assist in meeting national climate change targets. Rail has the greatest potential for attracting motorists from cars and contributing to more sustainable mode splits, a central objective in ‘Smarter Travel’.

It is well acknowledged how past policy failings have facilitated continued car dependency in Ireland. Given these policy failings and their consequences, it is vital that the NPF, as the overarching reference planning strategy for the country, addresses these failings and promotes a more sustainable balance to transport usage by helping to influence and encourage modal shift from the car to public transport modes. Rail has a very important role to play as it is one of the key public transport modes that has the capacity and attractiveness to encourage mode switch from the car.

### National climate change targets – Rail is one of the ‘greenest’ modes of transport

Ireland’s COP 21 emissions target is 20% below 2005 levels by 2020. The EPA projections indicate that emissions will only be 6-11% below 2005 levels by 2020. Ireland is therefore very unlikely to meet 2020 EU targets across a range of sectors including transport. In fact transport emissions are projected to show strong growth over the period to 2020 with a 10-16% increase on 2014 levels and excessive use of the private car is largely to blame for this. The EPA has stated that Ireland must follow a pathway to decarbonising a number of sectors including transport. The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural resources has stated that Ireland could be fined up to €150m p.a. for every 1% that Ireland misses the 2020 target.



**Source: Future Travel – Investigating Sustainable Travel UK**

Rail is one of the most environmentally sustainable forms of transport, particularly given its high capacity and relative usage. There is a need to invest in the integration and expansion of the existing rail network which can contribute to Ireland meeting its emissions targets and obligations. Iarnród Éireann has already surpassed the EU 2020 target (20% efficiency improvement) and the National Public Sector target for 2020 (33%). Achievement to date measured against train and passenger kms is a 35% improvement since 2006, and there is considerable scope for even further improvement over the NPF planning horizon.

## A strong railway in 2040 requires sustainable and predictable levels of funding / investment

A European Commission Annual Report for Ireland 2016 warns that the Government's capital spending programme is inadequate for the country's needs. It highlights public transport as a key weakness, particularly in the car-dependent Dublin region.

The rail network is a valuable national asset that the state has invested in over many decades. It is imperative that sufficient funding is provided to ensure the long term sustainability of the rail network for the future. The consequences of an under-funded rail network are a deteriorating network, increasing safety rules mitigated by slower services or cessation of services, subsequent reduction in passenger numbers resulting in further reduction in revenues to the company and a reduction in the benefit to the state of the investments already made in fleet and track.

## Maximising the potential of the Railway for a modern Ireland

Heavy rail is a key transport mode, both for inter-city journeys, where demand is sufficient to justify the investment, and for commuting to main city centres. No alternative transport system is capable of providing the same capacity, given the restrictions of creating new roads in urban areas, and the fact that even four-lane motorways provide only one-third the passenger carrying capacity of a twin-track, commuter rail system. It thus has a key role to play in encouraging modal shift and reducing carbon emissions.

It should be noted that a major Rail Review, as part of a broader land transport review, is currently under consideration by the NTA /DTTaS. A public consultation phase for this review which was led by the NTA has recently closed and currently all submissions are being assessed. The aim of the review is to determine a rail policy for the future sustainable development of the railway which reflects the appropriate scale and role of the railway in a modern Ireland. The outcome of the ongoing Rail Review process will be an important policy context for the new NPF being developed.

The Rail Review has been undertaken in the context of the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport's document 'Investing in Our Transport Future – Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport' which sets as its first funding priority the achievement of steady state maintenance of the land transport system prior to investing in new assets. Underpinning any future rail network development strategy arising is a critical requirement for an ongoing well-funded programme of support for fleet and infrastructure safety, maintenance and renewal.

Iarnród Éireann is committed to the sustainable growth and expansion of the railway to 2040 and beyond.

Behind this commitment it is our;

**Mission** - To provide and promote sustainable transport solutions that continually meet our customers' requirements and help drive Ireland's economic development.

**Vision** – To build a better future together by improving our services and growing our business.

The strategic priorities that inform our long term passenger rail network development strategy are:-

- To build on the infrastructure and rolling stock investments already made in order to deliver the maximum rail contribution;
- To provide a customer focused service offering (competitive journey times, increased frequencies, better integration and customer service improvements);
- To concentrate future investments and service improvements on the higher volume commuter and InterCity routes;
- To significantly improve rail access in the greater Dublin area including to the city centre, the airport and between suburbs. The DART Expansion Programme, including the DART Underground tunnel is the key missing link in an integrated rail network which will deliver very significant benefits across the suburban, regional and intercity rail network.

## Infrastructural enhancements and service level step changes required to the Railway



### Rail Development in the GDA – The DART Expansion Programme

The DART Expansion Programme is one of the single most important public transport infrastructure investments proposed in Ireland. The project is a key recommendation in the NTA Transport Strategy for the GDA to 2035 and key elements include;

- Maynooth line – electrification to Maynooth, resignalling and the removal of level crossings
- Northern line – electrification to Drogheda
- South-west (Kildare) line – four tracking between Heuston and Park West/Cherry Orchard and electrification to Hazelhatch
- DART Underground tunnel to link northern line with the Kildare line including a number of new city centre stations
- Expansion of fleet and depot facilities

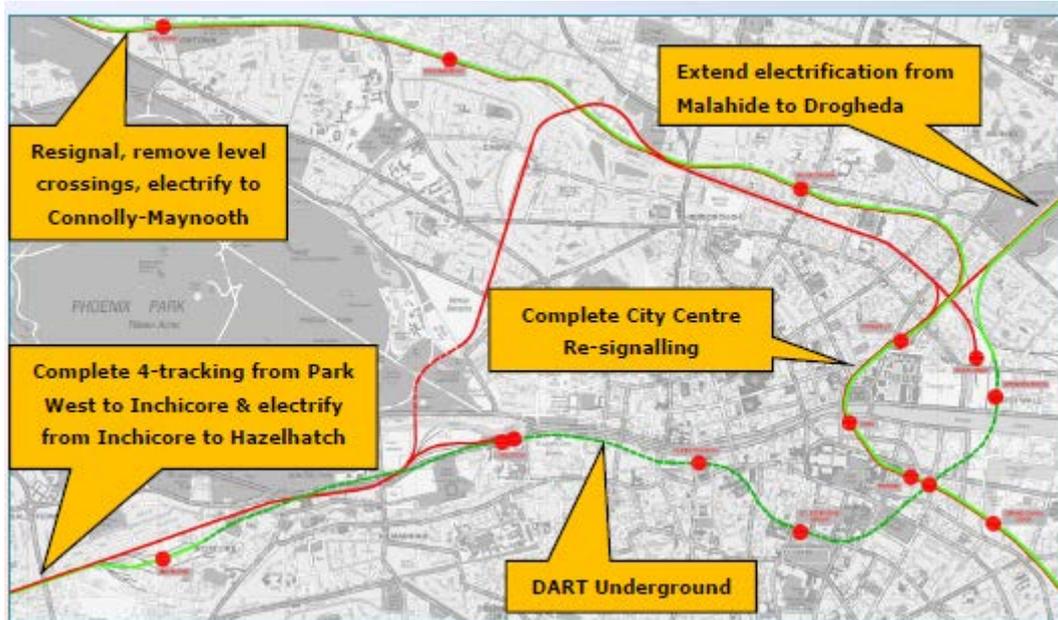
These elements can be delivered on a phased basis in line with funding. Iarnród Éireann's initial priority would be the upgrading of the Maynooth line to a DART standard.

In advance of the full DART Expansion Programme, Iarnród Éireann has recently extended Kildare line services to Grand Canal Dock via the Phoenix Park tunnel. This is now proving to be an attractive travel option for over 2,000 rail users per day, which is expected to grow as the service is expanded from peak only to off-peak and weekends.

The DART Expansion Programme will result in a high-capacity integrated rail network across the greater Dublin area which will meet the transport needs of our communities and our economy, and prevent chronic congestion which would damage both. The project will relieve congestion in Dublin city centre and will facilitate the operation of two twinned high-capacity high-frequency grade separated DART corridors, with new city centre rail stations including a major interchange at Pearse station. The project will have a transformative impact on rail provision both within the GDA and extending to surrounding regions.

The DART Expansion Programme will be the backbone of a mass public transport network in the GDA consisting of regional heavy rail, DART, Luas, Metro & bus services to give an integrated network of public transport services. It will overcome the legacy bottlenecks in the existing rail network allowing fast, high capacity / frequency rail services from the regions to Dublin city centre.

### **DART Expansion Programme – Transformational rail access improvements to/from the Capital**



Further electrification, as a result of the expansion of the DART network, will have major environmental benefits including significant reductions in GHG emissions.

Iarnród Éireann is currently engaged with the NTA in examining a number of options for a lower cost technical solution to the DART Underground tunnel.

Key Message: The full roll out of the DART expansion programme as described above, given its network wide (local, regional and national) wide ranging benefits should be the top transport priority project for the greater Dublin area. Without it Dublin will continue to have a disjointed, and under capacity public transport system which will further undermine the prospect of a sustainable development strategy for the wider region.

### **Rail Development of the Inter-urban Route Corridors (Intercity services)**

The inter-city rail network has been placed at a competitive disadvantage in terms of journey times by the lack of adequate infrastructure investment in the past to keep pace with the completion of the major inter-urban motorway network in 2010, including the upgrading of the M50 in Dublin. An investment programme for the delivery of more competitive journey times along the major rail corridors and increased service frequencies, as a counterbalance to road developments, is crucial for the railway to play its part in a sustainable and more balanced national transportation system.

This will require investment in track infrastructure and fleet, including improvements to the ballast and sub-ballast layers, along with alignment improvements. The delivery of an adequately funded, steady-state maintenance and renewal investment programme is critically important. It may also be necessary to consider track capacity on the approach to Dublin.

The Dublin to Belfast rail corridor is a key cross-border route on the European TEN-T Core network serving the crucially important Dublin – Belfast Economic corridor. Ultimately it should in the future have a modern, electrified service with one hour frequency. The route infrastructure needs to be upgraded to deliver a consistent journey speed of 100mph (160kms).

The future target journey times for inter-city routes to be delivered by fleet and infrastructure enhancements (including possible electrification in the longer term in line with fleet replacement schedules, with associated environmental benefits including significant reductions in GHG emissions, should be:

Dublin – Belfast	1.5 hours
Dublin to Cork:	2 hours
Dublin to other provincial cities:	less than 2 hours

Key Message: More competitive InterCity journey times, increased service frequencies and network electrification are crucial features of a future InterCity rail service in order to contribute to the NPF objectives. The future viability of InterCity services and particularly certain regional routes is critically dependent on the settlement strategy emerging from the NPF along with a number of other wider modal shift policies.

### **Rail Development in other Regions**

The viability of provincial city rail services is somewhat undermined by their low density nature and the limited rail networks available. However the contribution of these services can be significantly enhanced by the concentration of development within the railway catchments to support existing and new stations. The Cork local authorities have identified a number of new station options, linked to local development, and Iarnród Éireann is supportive of these subject to concentrated critical masses of local populations.

Other developments that are crucial to underpinning the role of commuter / regional rail in Limerick and Galway include addressing the east Clare flooding issue for continuity of services and additional track capacity between Athenry and Galway to facilitate increased service frequencies.

Key Message: While rail can only play a relatively limited role in the provincial cities, the targeted development of rail services along with other wider initiatives could support a critical mass of population and economic activities in the provincial cities as a counter balance to the concentration of growth in the GDA.

### **Rail Freight.**

Rail freight strategically offers several advantages over road transport. It generates less than a quarter of the emissions of road haulage, decongests the road network and provides a complementary and efficient route to market for business which is both reliable and cost effective. An increase in rail freight penetration requires a clear policy focus which considers options for supporting expansion of rail freight services based on the wider environmental benefits and road decongestion benefits similar to the experience of other European jurisdictions.

New business development opportunities in rail freight include biomass, mineral ore and pulpwood amongst other traffics.

Key Message: Currently, the absence of State funding support, either capital or subvention, dictates a sharp commercial focus for rail freight which limits its role to niche markets. Experience in other European jurisdictions clearly outlines the contribution of rail freight to an improved carbon footprint and road decongestion which are key considerations of the NPF.

### **Improving International Connectivity to the island of Ireland**

#### **Rosslare Europort**

Rosslare Europort is the nearest Irish Seaport to the Continental Mainland, as well as having the shortest crossing from the Republic of Ireland to the UK. Rosslare Europort is the second largest seaport in the country for unitised freight.

The south-east region is one of the poorest economic performing regions in the State with a 2016 recorded unemployment rate of 9.4%, the highest in the country. The ability to handle unitised freight is a major attraction for Foreign Direct Investment and to companies wanting to do business with Ireland. The Europort is a crucial economic engine for both the economy of the regional hinterland and the national economy.



Improving connectivity to Rosslare Europort will be a key priority over the NPF planning horizon, both in terms of connectivity to the port hinterland and international links to the UK and continental Europe. The implications of Brexit will make Rosslare Europort and its international connectivity become even more important. Improving road connectivity to the port (M11/N24/N25/N80), as well as the potential for developing rail freight, are key priorities.

The key strategic infrastructural development priorities for Rosslare Europort over the period of the NPF, that are necessary to enhance and maximise the potential of the port are;

- To deepen the port to accommodate modern larger high-capacity vessels

- To develop the port into a multi-modal facility including the development of a rail-freight interface (as the port has an existing rail link)

Both strategic priorities have the potential to deliver significant benefits to the regional / national economy and act a strong counter-weight to Dublin, which is increasingly congested.

Key Message: Rosslare Europort is an important economic engine to both the South-East regional and national economies. NPF policy support should be given to improved connectivity to the port (road and rail) and to maximising the post Brexit role and capacity of the port.

### **Dublin Airport**

The EU White Paper – ‘Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area’ sets as a key objective the connection of core EU airports to the TEN-T rail network which includes Belfast – Dublin - Cork. Dublin Airport is one of Europe’s major airports with a record 28m passengers handled in 2016 and is projected to grow to up to 40m passengers in the relatively near future. It was Europe’s fastest growing airport in 2016.

While not included in the current NTA strategy for the greater Dublin area to 2035, it is Iarnród Éireann’s view that the long-term strategic option of a heavy rail connection should be supported as a critical part of a wider NPF regional / national policy to serve both the business and leisure markets. Accordingly, to ensure the strategic option is available for the successor to the current GDA Transport strategy, an undeveloped alignment identified by Iarnród Éireann should be preserved to ultimately connect the Airport with the DART and the Dublin – Belfast Enterprise service at Clongriffin to facilitate connection to a wide range of local, regional, national and cross border services similar to that currently available at other major airports across Europe. This would complement the New Metro North proposal and could significantly reduce road congestion on the approaches to the airport and particularly along the congested M50 and its approach roads which are increasingly susceptible to daily incidents.

- Key Message:
- In the context of rapidly increasing passenger throughput at Dublin Airport and unsustainable road congestion, the long-term strategic option should be retained within the NPF for a combination of local, regional, national and cross border heavy rail connections to Dublin airport, the key gateway to the island of Ireland, for inclusion in the successor to the current Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy. Easy international access for all parts of the island of Ireland will be even more important in the context of Brexit.

Iarnród Éireann recommendations on key Rail Development Plan priorities for the NPF (Ireland 2040 Our Plan)

Rail Project / Programme	Rationale / Benefits
<b>GDA</b>	
DART Expansion Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcome legacy capacity bottlenecks and sub-optimum rail penetration to Dublin from surrounding regions</li> <li>• Transformational improvements to service capacity, frequency and destinations and attracts appropriate land-use development along rail corridors</li> <li>• Key element in a future sustainable transportation network that is less car dependent - delivers an integrated rail network with integration across all modes</li> <li>• Encourage business agglomeration and FDI</li> <li>• Significant journey time, environmental and economic benefits and savings</li> </ul>
<b>Intercity Corridors</b>	
Development of the Intercity rail corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better compete with an excellent motorway road network by making rail more attractive to car users and freight forwarders</li> <li>• Promote regional and inter-regional public transport accessibility and attract more rail tourism and discretionary rail travel</li> <li>• Significant journey time, environmental and economic benefits and savings</li> </ul>
<b>Other Regions</b>	
Rail infrastructure/ service developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to local development plans e.g. CASP by making rail more attractive to car users with increased capacity/ service reliability</li> <li>• Improve regional accessibility and economy</li> <li>• Encourage a more sustainable land-use development strategy and relieves pressure on the GDA by enhancing the attractiveness of the Provincial cities</li> <li>• Significant journey time, environmental and economic benefits and savings</li> </ul>
<b>Improve International Connectivity to the island of Ireland</b>	
Enhance role of Rosslare Europort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve international connectivity, particularly post Brexit with regional and national economic benefits</li> <li>• Stimulate a poorly performing economic region</li> <li>• Attract FDI</li> </ul>
Link Dublin Airport to the entire heavy rail network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent with EU Transportation policy and practice</li> <li>• Provide more sustainable modal split balance to the rapidly growing airport and alleviates ‘knife-edge’ congestion on key roads serving airport (M50 in particular)</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projected passenger levels of 40m necessitate heavy rail connection to complement New Metro North</li><li>• Like the North Runway long-term planning foresight is required and this should be planned for now as part of the NPF strategy</li><li>• Significant journey time, environmental and economic benefits and savings</li></ul> |
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