

The Gluas Project

Light Rail for Galway City

We should welcome the fact that Galway has been designated as one of the four key regional cities and this is also important in the 'city-region' context.

The 50% growth target for Galway by 2040 is also significant and it is noted that this is twice the existing level of growth. This of course brings a major challenge for a city such as Galway and it will require a step-change in the vision and the manner in which the city approaches its planning and development

Galway has a severe traffic problem that is negatively impacting the environment, our quality of life and our economy. Our traffic problem has been caused by a planning process that prioritises the building of car-dependent suburban estates (with large multiples) on the outskirts of the city. In order to change our course of development with the purpose of reducing traffic, and our carbon footprint we are asking that the National Planning Framework highlight the need for a sustainable masterplan for Galway that integrates land-use and transportation planning.

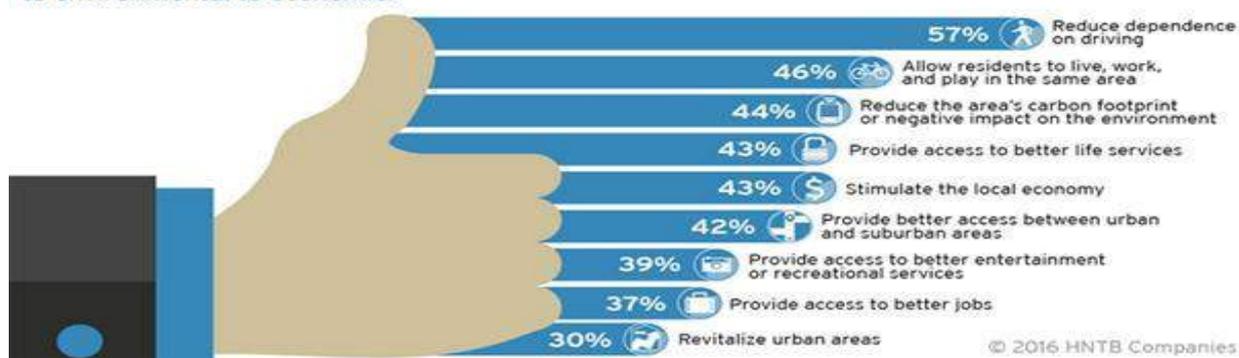
Instead of building car-dependent suburban sprawl, Galway should focus more upon alternative models such as Transit-Oriented Development. The notion is that Galway would build a tram system (Gluas) and that new, walkable, village-like communities would be planned and developed along each individual stop. Successfully implemented, Gluas would provide a much needed alternative form of public transport for residents but it would also be a sustainable growth enabler for the city and future residents. We envision each of these new communities or village stops to have their own sense of place where residents could walk to attain their daily needs or socialise locally and travel to the city centre and other locations without the need for a car. Properly designed these new villages could become an international model for sustainable, healthy, community building.

But we need help. The current planning system in Galway needs innovative ideas and supports if it is to change. Otherwise we are destined to continue to develop the way we have for the last 25 years. Along with quality infill development in the city, we feel Transit-Oriented Development is a model that should be explored and encouraged for Galway. And it is far from radical. The current plan for Cherrywood (<http://www.cherrywooddublin.com/>) on Dublin's Luas Green line is an example of TOD, which Galway could adopt and improve upon.

Transit Oriented Development is the exciting fast growing trend in creating vibrant, liveable, sustainable communities. Also known as TOD, it's the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centred around high quality train systems. (<http://www.tod.org/>)

BENEFITS OF TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Americans believe transit oriented development provides an array of benefits ranging from lifestyle to environmental to economic.



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