

[REDACTED]

31st March 2017

Re: Submission on the National Planning Framework

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to firstly express my appreciation for the opportunity to engage in the public consultation process for the National Planning Framework, both through the outreach event held on campus in NUI Galway, and in the form of this written submission for further consideration. The points that I have outlined below encompass a number of the topics in the "Issues and Choices" document that was distributed in NUI Galway. In general, the issue I have focussed on is the manner in which we move on a daily basis, and our relationship with public transport and privately owned cars.

As a preliminary, it is imperative that the linkage between car sales and economic growth is decoupled. An increase in new car sales should no longer be used as a strong positive indicator by economists of a healthy Irish economy. Discussion should focus on other measures of consumer spending and income tax receipts. Following on from this point, it should be possible to lower the amount of cars per capita in line with previous levels. This could be effected by means of scrappage schemes where 2 or more cars can be scrapped against a single new low emission vehicle. Hence the national fleet would be reduced, at least temporarily, whilst also making consumers think about the necessity of multiple cars per household. The government must provide leadership on the issue of how we move from A to B on a daily basis.

As an example, the majority of journeys by car in Galway city are less than 2kms from start to end. It is crucial therefore, to reorganise rural and urban commuters to facilitate one another. The argument is often made that a car is a necessity for rural dwellers. As someone who was born and reared in a rural part of County Sligo, I am acutely aware of the truth of this statement. Therefore, I believe that in tandem with the upcoming road building projects in Galway and nationally, a separate programme of activities should be rolled out to encourage urban commuters to change their patterns, whether through greater use of public transport, or carpooling. This would enable better movement of rural commuters out of our cities and back to rural Ireland.

In the context of the ongoing issues with public transport in Ireland, public transport must no longer be seen by the state as something that must be reactively managed. It is important for Bus Eireann and the other companies of CIE to be seen as opportunities to change how people move, for the better.

As the National Planning Framework is a vision for the Island of Ireland towards 2040, in the longer term I believe that road networks should be modified to give greater priority for public transport outside of Dublin city in our other regional cities. With the apparent promise of autonomous cars between now and then, it is to be expected that the size of the national fleet will reduce naturally through increased car sharing. As a consequence, this might be expected to give greater space to public transport such as trams like the LUAS, outside of the capital. Public transport planning must focus on changing the coordinated movements of commuters in both existing and planned housing developments.

I also believe that an idea worth consideration is the provision of secure rural step down car parking facilities, which would encourage rural commuters to share cars on their commute. In addition, there could be a fine on cars with only one occupant at peak rush hour times to encourage people to car share. A complimentary idea to rural step down parking would be the provision of office blocks in a community setting with meeting rooms to encourage innovation and collaboration in rural Ireland.

I hope that my submission will be considered as part of the National Planning Framework towards 2040. Please don't hesitate to contact me my phone or email if you wish to tease out more of the detail of my letter.

Best regards,

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