



**SUBMISSION TO NATIONAL TRANSPORT  
AUTHORITY**

**CORK METROPOLITAN AREA DRAFT  
TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2040**

**JUNE 2019**



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## **1. Introduction**

People Before Profit in Cork have prepared this submission in respect of the Draft Cork Metropolitan Area Draft Transport Strategy (CMATS) 2040 Plan published by the National Transport Authority. This submission is being made in relation to the transport crisis evident in Cork City and Cork County and is based on concern for the lack of action being taken to increase the provision of affordable and viable transport alternatives to car transport. In the long term, existing political policy (which consists of little to no investment in public transport) will have disastrous effects on communities in Cork City and County. Existing policies and political attitudes do not lend themselves towards allowing communities to develop and thrive in a sustainable way.

Ireland's public transport infrastructure needs to be expanded with urgency if Ireland is to tackle climate change. Now that Dáil Eireann and a number of councils (including Cork City Council) have declared climate emergencies, transport needs to be viewed as a sector in which reducing emissions is both possible and crucial.

The following report outlines the items we wish to see included as part of the final CMATS strategy.

## **2. Climate change and the need to cut emissions**

We note that the Draft CMATS plan makes reference to climate change once only. This is a reference to the National Policy Framework item NSO 8, which is to do with energy emissions CO<sub>2</sub> and not transport CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. No reference is made elsewhere in the report about the urgency of the need to transition away from individual car use and towards greater use of mass public transit systems. Transport accounts for approximately one third of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Ireland and the urgency to cut emissions does not need further discussion as part of this submission document. Cork fared particularly poorly in the latest Census, which showed that just 8% Cork of commuters travelled by public transport, which is well below the national average.

We wish to see a greater political acknowledgement in the CMATS plan of the scale of the climate crisis that lies ahead if nothing is done to curb transport emissions, coupled with action on public transport investment to tackle this. Those responsible for Irish public transport have a direct responsibility to take the action necessary to cut emissions. Emergency funding should be made available by the Irish government to finance such initiatives.



### **3. Cork light-rail system**

The Cork branch of People Before Profit launched a campaign for a Cork light-rail system in 2018. We have argued that it is crucial, if Cork is to develop sustainably, and if Ireland is to reduce carbon emissions, that light rail is implemented in Ireland's regional cities as a priority. In light of this, we are pleased to see the CMATS plan include a light-rail system. However, we wish to see a greater expansion of such a system to other outer suburbs, as well as Cork Airport. We acknowledge that the topography of Cork and the road width presents challenges in this regard, and as such a light-rail scheme should be coupled with a major overhaul of traffic priorities and main arterial routes in Cork.

We are concerned at the lack of detail on how the Light Rail line is to be planned given the existence of green belt areas on the outer edges of the old Western city boundary. The Light Rail route cannot be developed purely to facilitate the needs of private developers, and should not be developed based on future development in the area, which would not provide the certainty needed by public transport operators. Where possible the Light Rail route should be routed through existing urban areas and not around them.

Until 1931, Cork had a tram system connecting the city centre with the towns of Douglas, Blackrock, Tivoli and Sunday's Well. These routes, as well as numerous railway lines and stations in Cork were also closed during the 1900s to make way for private cars. Today, transport in Cork City is largely dependent on car journeys. The city centre and suburbs suffer visibly from heavy congestion.

Many European cities of a similar size to Cork benefit from Light-rail systems, removing many cars from the city centre and providing fast and efficient connectivity between commercial and residential areas. The Cork City and suburbs area has grown by over 10,000 people in five years, and significant future growth is predicted. Redevelopment is proposed in a number of areas in and around Cork, including Cork's southern docklands and Tivoli. With the recent expansion of the Cork City boundary, it is crucial that future development of the expanded city is centered around sustainable transport.

A 2017 publication by Transport Infrastructure Ireland has shown that many National Roads around Cork are currently operating above their design capacity. In order to move towards a green future, radical changes will be required in the way that public transport is provided. Given the success of light rail in Dublin, similar schemes should be implemented in Ireland's regional cities.

Importantly, we call for Cork's light-rail system to be implemented as a matter of urgency and we call for the construction and operation of such a system to be publicly carried out.



We argue that the state needs to be at the forefront of developing housing that meets the needs of all our citizens. It is also in the position to have a much greater influence on how the transport infrastructure develops. The Light Rail route should not be planned around the needs of private developers.

#### **4. Private sector outsourcing is unsustainable**

We strongly oppose the outsourcing of services within the public transport sector. Public Transport systems should be run by public bodies and not outsourced to companies on a for-profit basis. Too often in Irish public discourse, we hear about existing public transport systems 'running at a loss' as though this is justification for them to be neglected or closed down. However, public transport systems can only be loss-making in the same way that a public education or public healthcare system might be considered loss-making if the public benefit is not considered. Public transport services bring huge economic and social benefits to society and, most importantly, reduce the number of cars on the road. Public transport services get people to their place of work or education. City and town centres thrive and benefit because people can access their local shops and businesses using bus and train networks. To neglect and limit public transport connections in Ireland would damage communities severely.

Too often we hear about whether public transport systems are 'viable' or not, and this is generally a measure of whether they are profitable or not. We wish to see acknowledgement that public transport systems bring a major benefit to people and to society and that public transport should be safeguarded in Cork, regardless of its profitability.

The fiascos that we have seen around the Children's Hospital, Rural Broadband and the Cork Events Centre are all examples of why public services and infrastructure should be built and run publicly. A Cork light-rail system should be built and run by the public sector. Transdev, who operate Dublin's LUAS, extract huge profits from what should be run as a public service. If Dublin's light-rail system were publicly run, these monies could instead be spent improving and expanding the network.

The final CMATS plan should acknowledge that private sector outsourcing is a failed model and that the focus must be on public investment in publicly-run transport systems.

#### **5. Implementation of CMATS plan**

We understand that if people are going to use public transport instead of cars, the public transport alternatives need to be made viable. This means that services need to be both more reliable and affordable.



In the short term, we wish to see the following:

- All existing bus routes in Cork to run with a frequency of no less than every 15 minutes from 06:00 to 00:00 and a minimum of every hour from 00:00 to 06:00;
- All existing suburban rail routes to run with a frequency of no less than every 30 minutes from 06:00 to 01:00;
- Public transport fares to be abolished entirely on all Cork bus and suburban rail, following in the example of a number of other European cities;
- Greater moves to remove traffic from Cork City Centre. We commend the efforts to remove cars from Patrick Street and would like to see further restrictions and bans on driving in the city centre. This however can only be implemented if people have viable alternatives in the form of improved public transport to and around the city centre. This will improve journey times for public transport, improve the air quality and generally enhance the shared environment of the city centre;
- The implementation of a local link bus service for satellite towns and villages in the Cork Metropolitan area such as Ballincollig, Blarney, Douglas and Glanmire. The housing sprawl in these areas is based on a model of car transportation. We would instead like to see the introduction of a local bus link that would serve people wishing to shop or do business in their local village or connect with the wider public transport network. This service would also contribute greatly to reducing the reliance on cars for small trips and accommodate the needs of elderly people and those with mobility issues.

Public services that do not run on 24-hour timetables present difficulties for workers in Cork's economy. It is for this reason that we wish to see public transport expanded to include night-time transit.

We are also calling for public transport to be made free as a greater incentive to use it. Currently, rail fares are not an attractive option for commuters or those who travel irregularly from Cork's suburbs to the City Centre.

Interchanges also need to be improved in the short term and more bus routes need to be routed past Kent Railway Station. Changing between bus and rail in Cork City is currently not simple, particularly for the disabled or elderly, and if people are going to use alternative modes of transport, smooth interchanges are crucial. This needs to be reviewed in the short term, and, with the implementation of a light-rail system, interchanges with bus and rail need to be thought out well in advance.



There is no point improving one element of public transport and not investing elsewhere. Rail, light rail and bus systems all need investment in Cork, and the system as a whole needs to encourage interconnectivity.

We wish to see the final CMATS plan outline a greater urgency with regards to planning and implementation of a light-rail system in Cork, upgrading of existing bus and rail transport and improvement of interchange possibilities between all modes of transport.

## **6. Summary & conclusion**

In summary, the proposals presented for Cork in the CMATS plan are strong. We believe that issues will arise with the implementation of these, and we wish to see a commitment of funding and timescales for these projects in order to help the fight against climate change. In summary we wish to see the following:

- The prompt implementation of a Light Rail system in Cork;
- Serious improvements in the frequency of rail and bus routes;
- Better interconnectivity between various forms of transport;
- The abolition of public transport fares;
- Local Link bus services serving housing areas towns and villages in the Cork Metropolitan area, which would allow for connections with the wider public transport network;
- The expansion of bans and restrictions on vehicular traffic except for public transport in Cork City Centre.

Members of People Before Profit in the area addressed by the CMATS plan would like to see the Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Irish Rail and Bus Eireann take more responsibility for providing the transport needs of society. We ask for Cork City and County Councils to utilise one of the many mechanisms available to it to provide adequate and immediate investment in transport.

We look forward to receiving a response to this submission.

## **7. Contact details**

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