Report of Round Table Discussion with Stakeholders

21st May 2018

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Introduction

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD, hosted a Round Table discussion on public transport policy on 21 May 2018 in the Round Room of the Mansion House. The event was chaired by Professor Alan Barrett, Director of the Economic and Social Research Institute, and was attended by a broad range of organisations and individuals closely connected with the public transport sector. These stakeholders included: passenger and consumer interests; providers of bus, rail and taxi services; providers of transport infrastructure; trade unions with members working in public transport; cyclist advocacy groups; disability representatives; business groups; environmental interests; local authorities; regulators; legislators; policy-makers; and analysts and academics who focus on public transport. The press was in attendance to report on discussions.

In opening the event, the Minister explained that the purpose of the day was to allow for an exchange of views among stakeholders to inform his Department's work in reviewing public transport policy and developing a policy statement for the sector. This task arises from a Programme for Government commitment to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy.

In the days before the event, a background paper was circulated by the Department as a contribution to the day's discussions and to give a high-level description of Ireland's public transport system. The paper set out the current factual situation with some supporting data and graphics and it suggested some questions for consideration by participants preparing for the Round Table. Delegates were asked to consider the high-level policy issues and challenges for public transport and the day was divided into the following plenary discussions followed by a panel discussion:

1. Ireland's public transport context and challenges
2. Delivering public transport infrastructure and services
3. Future direction of public transport

Speaking slots at the three plenary discussions were limited to three minutes in duration.

Reports of the three plenary discussions and the panel discussion have been prepared by Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) rapporteurs.

Issues discussed

Following the Minister's opening remarks, the first plenary discussion took place around Ireland's public transport context and challenges. An introductory overview was provided by Niall Cussen from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on Project Ireland 2040. In general, Project Ireland 2040 was welcomed by delegates particularly the 50% brownfield development target for cities, the focus on compact growth and the alignment of spatial planning and investment. There was broad agreement that densification of the cities is required to address congestion. A frequent issue raised during the day was the role of the bus system in tackling congestion particularly in the context of the planned BusConnects programme. The need to link

park and ride facilities to the bus network under the BusConnects programme was called for by a number of delegates. On the subject of BusConnects, a number of delegates commented throughout the day that there was a need for information to be provided on what exactly the BusConnects programme involved.

There was some discussion around the public transport investment committed to under the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027. This included the issue of whether we can continue to make big investments with an economy near full employment; considering our position in the economic cycle; where taxation and public expenditure policy seeks to stabilise growth while meeting key priorities and addressing capacity constraints in a manner which does not overheat the economy. Delegates noted that there does not appear to be the same overheating pressures that occurred previously and there is a need to address public transport capacity problems. It was also noted that attracting skills and talent to Ireland can avoid overheating pressures.

A number of recurring themes were raised by delegates throughout the three discussions. This included the importance of quality of life and well-being and public transport's impact on this. Another key issue was accessibility to public transport for people with disabilities and the continuing challenges in this area. This included the point that many people with disabilities are reliant on good access to public transport to seek and retain employment. An important point made by a number of delegates was the need for staff training and awareness around the provision of services for people with disabilities.

Throughout the day, there was discussion around the challenges of getting people out of their cars and using other sustainable forms of transport. This included the role that active travel, particularly cycling, can play, not only in public transport policy, but also recognising the health benefits that this brings. There were a number of calls for the appointment of a traffic 'mayor' to address congestion in Dublin. Many delegates considered that public transport needs to be delivered in a more joined-up way to address challenges. There was also a lot of commentary on the important role that technology could play in public transport, however, this was high-level and did not go into any great specifics. On rural transport, the role of the Local Link programme both in rural areas and how lessons from the programme could be applied in urban areas was raised. A key question emerging throughout all the discussions is how the incentive structure can be altered to encourage a modal shift to public transport and that quality of service, journey time, predictability, comfort and innovation all matter in making this modal shift.

Industrial relations was another recurring theme throughout the day with issues around pay, pensions, privatisation, quality of life for workers and State subvention for public transport all being referenced. It was noted that the Department and the National Transport Authority (NTA) do not get involved in industrial disputes as the State has invested in industrial relations institutions and mechanisms to facilitate discussions between employers and employees. Having said that, there were calls for on-going dialogue with stakeholders including workers.

The second plenary discussion on delivering public transport infrastructure and services began with a presentation from Anne Graham from the NTA. One of the most surprising statistics highlighted in her presentation was that 60% of school children are being driven to school. The NTA's view was that there are a number of reasons for this high percentage: a perception of safety; the distance from home to school may not be as local as in the past; and a higher proportion of mothers in employment who drop children to school on the way to work. The view from delegates was that the reason for the high number of school children being driven to school could be related to factors such as distance, poor planning, a lack of adequate transport, and road safety issues.

Climate action was also raised during this discussion. While noting the public transport contribution relative to the transport sector and to overall emission levels, an interesting point was made that biomethane gas output from the agriculture sector as a key contributor to overall emission levels offers an opportunity to fuel public transport. The view was that this was economically feasible and that transport is the ideal sector to use biomethane as Ireland has, on a per capita basis, the highest potential for increased biomethane use in the EU.

The third plenary discussion focused on future direction and the challenges in meeting future transport needs. John McCarthy from Arup Ireland gave an overview of new and upcoming developments in transport including intelligent mobility; connected and autonomous vehicles; and mobility as a service. It was clear from the presentation that measures can come on stream quicker than anticipated, so the public transport sector needs to be ready, though stakeholders may have concerns about regulation, digitisation and use of artificial intelligence technologies in transport.

There were a number of points made around decoupling transport demand and the economy. It was considered that, while there have been small signs of change in Ireland in recent years, we have not managed to achieve this and how other countries have achieved this through investment, land planning and active travel should be investigated further. Delegates noted that while this limited decoupling of the economy and transport demand was partly due to the internet age facilitating teleworking, the biggest part is behaviour. This includes younger generations choosing to live in cities and use shared mobility rather than reliance on the traditional private car ownership model. Related to the issue of shared mobility, while cars can be rented hourly, it may be that some people possess cars as status symbols and are not worried about the asset losing money by not being used through sitting in driveways.

On discussion around the number of cars travelling into Dublin city centre and resulting congestion, delegates did not consider banning cars in the city centre as a viable option. The view was that other methods should be used to incentivise people out of their cars and provide attractive alternatives rather than banning cars. It was considered that it was more a question of more efficient use of road space.   An example was given that, within the canal areas in Dublin, public transport use has increased particularly along the North Quays since new bus lanes were introduced in advance of Luas Cross City and the road space available to cars was restricted.

Following the three plenary discussions, there was a panel discussion with eight delegates from across the transport sector to sum up the wide range of topics raised over the course of the day and the themes emerging. Each participant was given three minutes to share their reflections on the day's proceedings. The panel discussion reiterated many of the key points raised during the day including new technology, accessibility, connectivity, quality, traffic management, BusConnects, Local Link, active travel, investment, capacity and industrial relations. An interesting point raised was that the existing public transport system does not have the capacity to cope with a significant increase in passengers, if people were to switch from travelling by private car to public transport and that investment outlined in the NDP must be followed through.

Overall reflections

The Round Table discussion was a key step point for the Department's policy review and development of a policy statement for the sector. The day worked well and there was open discussion and respectful engagement by all delegates. The following key themes emerged during the day:

- Concept of well-being and quality of life as a benefit of public transport
- Appropriate and continued investment in public transport
- Integration of policy thinking
- Integration of services
- Technology in use already and the need to be more far-sighted
- Accessibility and how can we design our public transport system so that everybody is connected into Irish life
- Industrial relations issues were aired and there is no doubt that these issues will be ever present.

Rapporteur Reports from Round Table Discussions

The following reports of discussions at the three Plenary Discussions and the closing Panel Discussion have been prepared by DTTAS rapporteurs and should not be perceived or understood as an agreed document.

1st Plenary Discussion: Ireland's public transport context and challenges

Discussion about Project Ireland 2040 incorporating the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan; fiscal and budgetary parameters enabling delivery of infrastructure and funding of services; and national challenges around balanced and sustainable development, congestion, Brexit, climate action etc.

Introductory Overview

The session started with an overview of Project Ireland 2040 by Niall Cussen from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Project Ireland 2040 sets out the Government's long-term spatial vision under the National Planning Framework and the investment priorities over the next ten years to underpin this under the National Development Plan 2018-2027. The following were the key points of the presentation:

- Ireland is the fastest growing country in the European Union. The scale of challenges involved in accommodating an additional one million people living in Ireland by 2040 and an ageing population is not to be underestimated.

- The spatial pattern of population change between 1991 and 2016 shows growth in suburbs and decline in city centre areas and presents challenges particularly for public transport.

- There is a divergence of where growth is happening and where public transport's richest infrastructure is located.

- Ireland's climate, transport and planning challenges are interwoven. The transport sector accounts for 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.

- Brexit is an important challenge that must also be considered. For public transport, continuity of service and interoperability is essential, especially for cross border services.

- Four of the ten National Strategic Outcomes in the National Planning Framework are relevant to the public transport sector. The National Strategic Outcomes aim to achieve compact growth, sustainable mobility, connectivity and a transition to low carbon and a climate resilient society.

- The National Planning Framework tries to ensure a broad balance of growth across the country with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland region; and the Southern and Northern and Western regions combined, and at least a 50% growth target for the five cities.

- There is a commitment for the first time for brownfield/infill development with a 50% target for cities, 30% elsewhere, and 40% overall.

- There is a package of measures for investment in, and planning for, rural regeneration.

1st Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
Project Ireland 2040	- Government should hold back some funding in preparation for the next economic downturn. - Project Ireland 2040 provides an opportunity to deliver planning more effectively and address issues in an integrated way. - Densification of cities is required to reduce congestion and the National Planning Framework target for 50% development on brownfield sites in the cities is welcome. - Planning proposals that are serviceable by public transport and other services should get more weight in planning assessments. - The growth target for regional cities requires a plan which looks at employment opportunities, healthcare, education, public transport, and quality of life implications. - Project Ireland 2040 provides an opportunity to develop regional communities. There is a need to design transport systems in rural areas that are flexible and demand led.
Congestion	- Consideration should be given to appointing a traffic 'mayor' for Dublin to drive solutions to traffic problems. - The BusConnects programme offers potential. The development of more segregated bus corridors will be important, as will the improvement of park and ride facilities. - Electric cars, while a welcome development, will not alleviate congestion. There is a need to continue to incentivise people onto public transport.
Cycling	- There should be increased funding for cycling, which plays a public health role in reducing obesity levels and increases catchment areas for transport.
Taxis	- The taxi industry can make an important contribution to public transport particularly in rural areas.
Quality of Life	- Ireland is falling down on the day-to-day aspects of housing, transport and childcare, and the country's international reputation is being damaged as a result.

1st Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
	- Quality of life is a very important priority for public transport policy - the focus of public transport should be the passenger.
Climate Action	- Ireland's unique selling point is its clean, green image and this needs to be demonstrated by climate action.
Technology	- There is huge intellectual capacity that can influence public transport policy and there is room for innovation and new technology.
Disability access	- Many people with disabilities are prevented from working due to lack of access to transport.
Integration	- There is a need to deliver public transport in a more joined-up way.
Industrial Relations	- Industrial relations are central to public transport policy and how it is planned. Workers' views should be listened to when deciding policy. - Privatisation of public transport routes often creates low paid jobs.

Discussion

While the investment committed to under Project Ireland 2040 and the alignment of spatial planning and investment was welcomed by contributors, there was a view that the Government should hold back some funding for the next economic downturn. Despite the economic recovery, a point was made that the diaspora are not returning to Ireland, notwithstanding the employment opportunities and other amenities. It was considered that Ireland is falling down on the day-to-day aspects of housing, transport and childcare and the country's international reputation is being damaged as a result. There was some discussion on whether we can continue to make big investments with an economy near full employment; considering our position in the economic cycle; where taxation and public expenditure policy seeks to stabilise growth while meeting key priorities and addressing capacity constraints in a manner which does not overheat the economy. The view from delegates was that there does not appear to be the same overheating pressures as in the last downturn and that public transport capacity issues need to be addressed. A point was also made that there is a need to attract people back to Ireland and use this intellectual capacity to avoid overheating pressures.

It was considered that Project Ireland 2040 provides an opportunity to deliver planning in a more effective and integrated way and that the current planning system is not fit for purpose. A number of contributors agreed that densification of cities is required and the compact development commitment in the National Planning Framework was welcomed. While there was agreement that there is a need to encourage people to live in cities and reduce congestion, it was noted that commercial rates and property tax impose bigger costs on people living centrally. There was also a view expressed that densification needs to be respectful of the city's current skyline.

The National Planning Framework target for 50% development on brownfield sites in the cities was also welcomed. However, a point was made that it is much easier to develop a greenfield site rather than a brownfield site. The example of Cork city was given where a lot of housing is 19th century which is difficult to develop. One contributor raised concern as to how the other 50% development will be progressed and the role of An Bord Pleanála and the local planning authorities. There was a view that there needs to be focus on how to address public transport challenges with housing and that regional and local structures need to address issues in an integrated way. Another point made was that proposals that are already serviceable by public transport and other services should get more weight in planning assessments.

There was also a view expressed that there is a need to fast track planning of public transport projects to alleviate congestion and long commuting times. On the issue of congestion, it was suggested that consideration be given to appointing a traffic 'mayor' for Dublin to drive solutions to traffic problems. Another suggestion was that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport should establish a small team to focus on traffic congestion in the short-term. The benefits of cycling were highlighted, including that cycling has a public health role in reducing obesity levels and increasing catchment areas for transport. There was a call for increased funding for cycling and walking and that 20% of the total transport budget should be allocated for active travel programmes and facilities.

It was considered that the BusConnects programme offers potential but an increase in segregated bus corridors would be important, as would improved park and ride facilities. There was also a view expressed that public transport policy should look at international experience, including consideration of high speed rail. Related to the bus system, a point was made that the time restrictions for bus lanes needs to be reviewed. This was made in the context of the large volume of business people coming into Dublin airport on a daily basis and the difficulties and delays faced by taxis in accessing the city. It was also considered that the taxi industry's contribution to public transport needs to be acknowledged, particularly the contribution taxis can make in rural areas.

A recurring theme raised by contributors was the importance of quality of life. It was felt that a priority for public transport policy needs to be the impact that public transport could have on people's quality of life. It was considered that the focus of public transport should be the passenger, and that policy needs to work around this. A point was made that, on issues around transport, there is an acceptance of a 30 minute commute and anything over this time is considered to impact negatively on quality of life.

Related to this was the view that Project Ireland 2040's growth target for the other cities, apart from Dublin, requires a plan which considers employment opportunities, healthcare, education, public transport, and quality of life implications. This was considered necessary in order to encourage people to migrate to these areas to live and work. While there was acknowledgement that building communities is very important, there was a view that there needs to be well-paid jobs to attract people to live in areas. Otherwise, it was considered that people will continue to commute long distances to Dublin, causing further congestion on the M50.

A point was made that Project Ireland 2040 also provides an opportunity to develop regional communities and that there is a need to design transport systems in rural areas that are flexible and demand-led. It was recognised that a big challenge facing regional and rural transport design is climate change, as there is greater car dependency outside of the cities. Another point was made that, as we move into a knowledge economy, where people work matters less and this could be a draw towards rural areas, particularly in the context of implementation of the National Broadband Plan.

On the issue of climate change, it was considered that Ireland's unique selling point is the country's clean, green image and this needs to be demonstrated by climate action. The importance of spatial planning's impact on quality of life and air pollutants was noted. While the focus on electric cars was welcomed, it was stressed that this will not alleviate congestion and there is a need to continue to incentivise people onto public transport. Disappointment was expressed in the continued investment in diesel buses. There was reference to increasing energy demand and to the need to consider workable alternatives to cars and a modal shift to shared journeys and public transport use. The Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce was noted as a good initiative in driving change.

A number of issues were raised around public transport access for people with disabilities. It was pointed out that there is a high number of people with disabilities who want to work but are prevented from doing so due to lack of access to transport. While recent accessibility improvements were welcomed, there was concern expressed on the timeframe to make all bus stops wheelchair accessible.

It was noted that by 2040 there will be an additional 600,000 users for public transport and that transport providers are fractured. A number of contributors expressed the view that there is a need to deliver public transport in a more joined-up way. It was also considered that transport logistics need to be designed in a way that is sympathetic to everyone. There were also a number of points made about the important role that technology can play in public transport – for example, real time access to traffic information - and that new technology should be harnessed.

Finally, the issue of industrial relations was also raised. It was noted that the trade union movement had long campaigned for a forum with all stakeholders having a role to play but the day's event was not exactly what had been asked for. It was recognised that, while the event was not the place to solve industrial relations problems, unions wished to note that they were frustrated with the lack of influence on public transport policy and that workers' views should be listened to when deciding policy. The view was also expressed that privatisation of public transport routes often creates low paid jobs.

2nd Plenary Discussion: Delivering public transport infrastructure and services

Discussion about the trends and projections that will likely shape transport infrastructure and service developments; capital and public services obligation funding; direct award and market access and how to achieve balance in choices and prioritisation; integration; and value for money.

Introductory Overview

The second plenary session commenced with a presentation from Anne Graham from the National Transport Authority (NTA) who provided an overview of what the NTA does in the areas of public transport services, licensing, integration/ticketing, planning and personal travel choices. The presentation included the following key issues:

- An outline of current transport policy under Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020 which set ambitious targets for mode share. While targets could be achieved in city regions with significant investment, sustainable transport in rural areas is more difficult to achieve.

- The policy objectives that have been achieved including closer alignment between land-use and transport planning; new public transport infrastructure; integrated ticketing and real-time passenger information; service improvements; bike schemes and cycling infrastructure.

- How people travel to work/education including how children/students travel to primary school/college and why people travel.

- Statistics of growing transport demand and congestion with proposed solutions such as better integration of land-use and transport planning; demand management measures; and encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transport.

- Public transport proposals under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 including BusConnects, park and ride, cycling/walking infrastructure, DART expansion, MetroLink, lower emission fleet, ticketing improvements and journey time improvements on intercity rail services.

- Taxi regulation including statistics on the reduction in vehicles and drivers from 2008 to 2017.

- Smarter Travel programmes in schools, third level colleges and workplaces to get more people on public transport and walking/cycling.

One of the statistics highlighted in the presentation was that 60% of school children were being driven to school in 2016 compared to 24% in 1986. The NTA's view was that there are a number of reasons for this increase: a perception of safety; the distance from home to school may not be as local as in the past; and there is a higher proportion of mothers in employment who drop children to school on the way to work. A number of contributors commented on this statistic

throughout the discussion. One view expressed was that the reason for the high number is distance, poor planning and lack of public transport and road safety issues and that people feel the only option is to drive their children to school.

2nd Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
Cycling and Walking	- The high number of school children being driven to school is due to distance, poor planning and lack of public transport and road safety issues.
	- There is lack of advancement of key cycling projects. The core of any future transport plan needs to be around walking and cycling to school. 10% of funding should be for cycling infrastructure and there should be a National Cycle Office.
Rural Transport	- The perception of rural transport is changing from a service for older people to one catering also for young people/students and there is a need for flexibility around the provision of routes.
	- The Local Link programme should be considered as part of mainstream public transport policy and lessons from the programme can be usefully applied in large urban areas.
Industrial Relations	- Pay cuts/stagnation for CIÉ workers over the last decade have led to industrial disputes and the CIÉ pension schemes are developing into a crisis which needs to be addressed.
	- The DTTAS/NTA current position on industrial disputes needs to change and they need to become more involved.
	- A monthly stakeholder forum should be established in order to alleviate further industrial action which impacts on the public, workers, visitors and users of public transport.
Public Transport services	- Little progress has been made on more funding for the Free Travel Scheme and it should be obligatory for all operators to carry those with free travel passes.
	- Public transport is a service that needs to be provided in the same way that health services and schools are provided by Government and it should not be privatised.
	- Value for money should not be about the cheapest option but about a long-term policy to provide quality, affordable, safe, accessible public transport.
	- Quality of life for workers, as well as for passengers, is important and there is a direct correlation between economic development and quality of life.

2nd Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
	- There is a huge change in how people are interacting with the cities and there is a need to think about day and night time public transport use.
Climate Action	- There is an opportunity to fuel public transport from biomethane gas to help decarbonise the bus fleet. - There should be an overarching policy on providing infrastructure for alternative fuels and the policy should not be to wait another twelve months to stop purchasing diesel buses.
Technology and future direction	- It is important to further consider use of technology to assist with demand and response driven public transport. - The whole aspect of transport as a service and autonomous vehicles should be considered as part of public transport policy.
Disability access	- There is a lack of quality for people with disabilities travelling by public transport and it is important to provide clear communication on how to link journeys. - It is important to have specialised staff training/awareness of providing a service for people with disabilities as well as for older people using public transport. - The design process for public transport should involve engagement with key users of the services. - Some recent public transport infrastructure improvements have resulted in reduced accessibility for people with disabilities.
BusConnects programme/ transport infrastructure	- It is not clear what exactly is involved under the BusConnects programme. - Park and ride facilities should be a key component of the BusConnects programme. - Congestion is not just in the cities but also in larger towns and to address this not only requires a new bus system but vital road infrastructure projects. - A lot of progress has been made in overall thinking around how to improve public transport in Dublin through the NTA's 'Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035'. - The DART Underground is a key missing piece of public transport infrastructure. - The Luas should be further developed as the capacity of one tram equals that of five buses.

2nd Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
Modal shift to public transport	- An integrated public transport system which is reliable, frequent and affordable is required to generate a shift away from cars to public transport. - The beginning of the policy debate should be around getting people out of private cars in Dublin city.
Planning and integration	- Ireland is decades behind other countries on public transport infrastructure, provision and connectivity due to gross underinvestment, poor planning and lack of joined up thinking. - It is important to look at what can be done now to address issues as well as the future. This includes providing real-time information to people who are using services and maintaining existing public transport infrastructure. - There is a need to consider why CIÉ landholdings, in close proximity to infrastructure and towns, are not being used to develop housing. - There should be more coordination and cooperation on how stakeholders agree. Consideration should be given to a directly elected mayor for Dublin.

Discussion

A number of contributors spoke about the importance of cycling as part of public transport policy. A point was made that the core of any future transport plan needs to be around children walking and cycling to school. In this context, it was considered key to allocate 10% of transport funding to cycling infrastructure and the establishment of a National Cycle Office with cycling officers in local authorities. There was disappointment expressed in relation to the decrease in funding for cycling despite the huge increase in cyclists and the point was made that cycling can help reduce congestion. There was also disappointment in the lack of advancement of key cycling projects and the proposed Statutory Instrument for a minimum passing distance for motorists overtaking cyclists.

There were a number of points raised in relation to the Local Link programme and rural transport. It was considered that the perception of rural transport is changing from a service for older people to one catering also for young people and students and that there is a need for flexibility in rural transport around the provision of routes. A point was also made that the Local Link programme is an innovative initiative that wants to be part of the public transport policy solution and should be considered as part of mainstream policy, for example, in relation to electric vehicles, ticketing and technology. There was also a view that, in the context of future transport, lessons learnt from the Local Link programme can be useful in large urban areas as a local response to transport issues. The pilot project for evening and night-time Local Link services was welcomed with the view expressed that this reflects the reality that not everyone works from 9 to

5 and that people wish to travel for leisure. It was also pointed out that the pilot project is supported by the tourism sector.

Industrial relations were raised by a number of contributors. There was disappointment expressed that proposed legislation to amend the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 was not in place. It was pointed out that pay cuts and pay stagnation for CIÉ workers over the last decade had led to industrial disputes in recent years and that the CIÉ pension schemes were developing into a crisis and will lead to more industrial unrest unless addressed. There was reference to the 2016 Rail Review Report recommendation for over €100 million additional investment in Iarnród Éireann which has not been acted upon and which led to two days industrial dispute in autumn 2017. A comment was made that workers will not subsidise underfunding.

Another comment was that industrial disputes need to be managed better and that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's and the NTA's current position needs to change and they need to become more involved in any industrial dispute as they provide funding. It was also pointed out that uncertainty for those working in the bus and rail sectors is an issue including uncertainty around the NTA's announcement on the 2019 direct awards. There was a call for the establishment of a monthly stakeholder forum in order to alleviate further industrial action which impacts on the public, workers, visitors and users of public transport.

There was a view that there has been little progress on more funding being allocated for the Free Travel Scheme and that there was a need to make it obligatory for all operators to carry those with free travel passes. On the issue of overall public transport provision, a number of contributors made the point that the objective of public transport should not be to make money. They considered that public transport is a service that needs to be provided to citizens of the country in the same way that health services and schools are provided by Government. The point was made that there is a need to move away from the focus on the cost of services and that value for money should not be about the cheapest option but about a long-term policy to provide quality, affordable, safe, accessible public transport. It was also considered that continuing to tender for public transport services will make public transport a cost-driven service and this will negatively impact on workers' terms and conditions.

Another point made was that it appears to be Government policy that the only way to achieve greater efficiency is through privatisation. Reference was made to other countries where publicly owned companies are delivering for passengers. The view was that public transport is a public service which connects rural and urban areas and serves communities and privatising is not the answer. In this context, a view was expressed that there is a need to learn from mistakes made in London.

The issue of quality of life for workers was also raised and that it is important to consider quality of life for workers as well as for passengers. Another point made regarding quality of life was that there is a direct correlation between economic development and quality of life and if workers want to work in an area – quality of life will follow.

On the area of climate action, there was a view that there is an opportunity to fuel public transport from biomethane gas from the agriculture sector to help decarbonise the bus fleet. It was noted that Ireland has huge potential to increase its biomethane production. The view was that this was economically feasible and that transport is the ideal sector to use biomethane. It was pointed out that Ireland has on a per capita basis the highest potential for increased biomethane use in the EU. It was also considered that there is a need for an overarching policy on providing infrastructure for the provision of alternative fuels. Related to this, another point was made as to why a policy decision had been made to wait another twelve months to stop purchasing diesel buses.

A number of contributors raised issues relating to public transport services for people with disabilities and the lack of quality for people with disabilities when they attempt to travel by public transport. The importance of accessible public transport infrastructure was noted. Another key issue raised was specialised training for staff and staff awareness of providing a service for people with disabilities (which may not be a visible disability) and older people using public transport. It was pointed out that the existing manual for the driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training includes unacceptable references to people with autism. Another point made was the importance of providing clear communication on how to link journeys, for example, accessibility for train to bus connections.

An initiative in Northern Ireland called the JAM (Just a Minute) card was referred to. People with learning disabilities/difficulties can carry and use this card to alert staff to be patient when interacting with them. Another Northern Ireland approach noted was Translink's process for introducing new buses for wheelchair use whereby a prototype bus was used to fit wheelchairs before placing orders. A point was also made that the design process for public transport should involve consultation and engagement with key stakeholders who use the services to allow buy-in. On a related issue, it was pointed out that some recent public transport infrastructure improvements have resulted in reduced accessibility for people with disabilities. An example was given relating to the recent moving of a bus stop in Kent Station in Cork. It was stated that passengers now have to use three lifts to access one of the platforms where no lift was required previously. There was surprise expressed that the NTA's proposed full audit of bus stops throughout the country has not been done before.

A number of contributors referred to the BusConnects programme and there were a number of comments that it was not clear what exactly was involved under the programme. There was a call for the programme to have clear goals with timelines as to how it will be achieved. There was a comment that the costs of the BusConnects programmes was close to the costs of MetroLink and another view was expressed that the BusConnects programme was a misuse of public money. A recurring theme raised by contributors in the context of the BusConnects programme was the need to link the bus system into park and ride facilities to reduce congestion. It was considered that congestion in Dublin would be resolved by having park and ride hubs at entrances to the city

and on orbital routes. The view was that there is no point in having park and ride facilities too close the city but not too far out that people will continue to drive into the city.

There were a number of views expressed on the impact of planning and underinvestment on the public transport system. These included that Ireland is decades behind other countries with regard to public transport infrastructure and provision due to gross underinvestment, poor planning and lack of joined up thinking. It was considered that this has hindered progress and lack of connectivity in public transport with radial routes. Another point was made that this has resulted in the commuter belts grinding to a halt with heavy overcrowding on motorways and rail services and there is no evidence of plans to alleviate this. It was noted that congestion is not just in the cities but also in larger towns and addressing this not only requires a new bus system, but vital road infrastructure projects also need to be funded and put in place. The need to look at what can be done now to address issues, as well as looking to the future, was raised. This included providing real-time information to people who are using services. There were also a number of points made on the need to maintain existing public transport infrastructure. On the issue of planning, another point was made as to why CIÉ landholdings, which are in close proximity to infrastructure and towns, are not being used to develop housing.

It was noted that the needs of customers and trends are changing rapidly and that the broad remit of the NTA was welcome in this regard as it allowed one agency to capture the wide and varied public transport needs and challenges. Another view was that a lot of progress has been made in the overall thinking around how to improve public transport in Dublin through the NTA's 'Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area '2016-2035'. The view was that the MetroLink is needed and there were a number of calls to move on the DART Underground which was considered a key missing piece of public transport infrastructure. The opening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel was referenced as an example of good public transport connectivity that passengers have responded to. Reference was also made to the positive engagement between the NTA, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and stakeholders during the construction of Luas Cross City and that other countries were envious of how well the project was developed with minimal disruption. There was a view that there is a lot right with public transport proposals and it is important to progress these and deliver projects. There was also a call for further development of the Luas as the capacity of one tram equals that of five buses.

A point was made that there is a huge change with how people are interacting with the cities and there is a need to consider day and night-time public transport use as more people are coming into the cities at night. Introducing Wi-Fi on all public transport and allowing access to engage in social media use were suggested to make it more attractive for passengers to use public transport rather than drive. The importance of technology to assist with demand and response driven public transport was also raised by a number of contributors. Another point was made that, along with electric vehicles, the whole aspect of transport as a service and autonomous vehicles are issues that need to be considered as part of public transport policy.

The importance of an integrated public transport system which is reliable, frequent and affordable was highlighted in order to generate a shift away from cars to public transport. There was a view expressed that the root cause of the public transport challenge is that 70% of people are using cars and the beginning of the debate on public transport policy should be around the extreme reduction of private cars in Dublin city. It was considered that it is important to develop housing with public transport in mind and planning for housing should not include spaces for cars. Reference was made to Stockholm, which is a similar size to Dublin, where there is a toll system whereby people pay a high fee if they do not use public transport and it is more complicated to park. It was also pointed out that in Stockholm, there is a government subsidy for electric bikes so it is almost free to buy an electric bike to reduce congestion. Finally, it was considered that there should be more coordination and cooperation on how stakeholders agree and perhaps it is time to consider if there is a need for a directly elected mayor for Dublin.

3rd Plenary Discussion: Future direction

Discussion about how the long term vision and planning of public transport might respond to the challenges of meeting future transport, active travel (including cycling and walking), mobility and accessibility needs and policy objectives including reducing congestion and contributing to climate change targets.

Introductory Overview

The third plenary session commenced with a presentation from John McCarthy from Arup Ireland. The key points from the presentation were as follows:

- The rate of change around new developments in transport is staggering and collaboration and leadership is important.

- Intelligent mobility is the future and this poses a number of questions for Irish policy including what is Ireland's position on intelligent mobility and on autonomous vehicles. Other countries will have autonomous vehicles on the road by 2021 and we need to consider if we are going to be a leader or a follower.

- Over 90% of accidents involving vehicles are caused by people making wrong decisions at the wrong time and this can be reduced through the exploitation of technology.

- Mobility as a service (MaaS) brings all transport choices together in a unified environment to reduce the amount of vehicles on the road. Most private cars are not being used 90% of time. MaaS offers possibilities for managing congestion, rural demand etc. through demand responsive solutions.

- The impact of flying drones for postal movements has been deployed and tested and it is becoming a reality.

- The biggest challenge is getting the constituent parts of the network working together in order to declutter our cities, ensure journey time reliability, and bring it all together. There is a desire for this but it is being done in a silo way and there may be a need for a 'Transport Tzar' to take action in all of these areas.

- Autonomous, Connected, Electric and Shared (ACES) vehicles are viewed as a silver bullet but they will bring as many problems as they solve unless introduced in a cohesive manner.

- There is a need to consider how we can exploit our natural resources (wind, water) to power the network.

- Cyber security is an important issue. Data needs to be considered not just from a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) perspective but from a transport mobility point of view and there is a need to see how we can exploit data to learn about, and change, services.

- Ireland has a great knowledge base in information technology and it is important to ensure safety is at the heart of both how our network operates and the customer experience.

- Autonomous or connected vehicles mean there are vast amount of data floating around. People want information in real time, that is relevant and that meets their needs.

- There are also bigger questions around governance, risk and compliance.

- There is a need to change people's mind-sets. Transport and mobility is driven by services and this should be exploited.

3rd Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
Behavioural change	- The biggest challenge is getting people out of their cars and onto public transport, and gridlock is not enough of an incentive – there is a need for quick, efficient, cheap and regular public transport. - Congestion occurs at peak periods but leisure and shopping users tend to travel in off peak periods and this should be taken into account when considering car access to the city centre. - 31% of retail spend comes from people travelling by cars, so banning cars would have significant economic impact. - In the short to medium term, collaboration and cooperation will provide a bigger return rather than the investments under the National Development Plan 2018-2027.
Technology	- There is a huge amount of technology available but it is not brought together in a systematic way. - There has been huge investment in education and innovation and there is a need to make use of this innovation at home and not send it abroad. - The trade union movement has embraced lots of changes over the years and will continue to be open to future technologies. - Dublin already has approximately 1,000 connected vehicles in the Dublin Bus fleet with data being sent and received every 20 seconds. The mobile communications on the buses are linked to the Dublin City Council Traffic Control Centre. - The NTA is working on Next Generation Ticketing with operators. - It was considered that there is an opportunity for Ireland to demonstrate energy efficient, sustainable solutions through better collaboration around transport provision.

3rd Plenary Discussion - Summary of points made by contributors	
Shared mobility	- The success of the public bike scheme has shown that people are prepared to use a shared mobility system and are willing to use a vehicle that is not their own. - Big public transport projects take up to ten years to deliver and existing resources should be used more efficiently and provide real car share incentives, for example, car-pooling lanes. - Many of the 140,000 vehicles travelling on the M50 every day have spare capacity and this additional capacity could be harnessed.
Transport demand	- Decoupling transport demand and the economy can be achieved through investment, land planning and active travel. - Demand for travel is increasing and investment in land-use and transport planning, active travel and healthy cities yields the best returns.
Taxis	- The Electric Vehicle grant scheme for taxis is for plug-ins but there is no grant for a hybrid and this is needed to encourage taxi drivers to move over to these vehicles. - The reduction in the number of taxis is due to the increase in the cost of the licence fee.
Buses	- There is a need for automated bus lane enforcement as more car-drivers are using the lanes and this should be addressed. - The discontinuity in bus lanes should be addressed under the BusConnects programme. - Buses are the workhorse of public transport in Dublin. There is a need for reliable, consistent times and customers must be able to follow predictable timetables. - If more investment was made in reducing fares, bus lane technology and traffic light priorities, it might encourage more people out of cars.
Congestion/traffic management	- Autonomous vehicles do not reduce congestion and will lead to another form of gridlock. To avoid this, active travel (i.e. cycling and walking) should be promoted. - Between 20%-30% of taxi journeys are cancelled in the mornings as taxis cannot get to customers on time to pick them up, due to the current structure in the city. - There is a need for cameras or the Gardaí to enforce traffic rules in the city, particularly on bus lanes.

Discussion

The point was made that the biggest challenge for the future is getting people out of their cars onto public transport and that gridlock is not enough of an incentive – there is a need for quick, efficient, cheap and regular public transport. It was stated that the profit of public transport is the social value it creates. There was reference to other cities policies, for example, Madrid, where it was stated that passengers can travel any distance on a metro for €1.50. Other international policies were also referenced including free travel for children under sixteen. The view was that the cost of transport matters to a lot of the population, particularly low paid workers.

On the issue of workers, there was a call for a Sectoral Employment Order to guarantee pay for transport workers and create a level playing field across the sector. A comment was also made that low pay should not be the means to subsidise public transport.

Another view expressed was that there is a huge amount of technology available but it is not brought together in a systematic way. It was pointed out that data analysis, technological inputs and engineering services are being provided to other countries from Ireland and that we need to harness the technological opportunity we have here to build a cohesive ecosystem for public transport. The comment was made that, in an Irish context, it is important to bring the key players together and bring the technological revolution to Ireland. It was noted there has been huge investment in education and innovation and it is important to make use of this innovation at home as opposed to sending it away.

It was pointed out that the trade union movement has embraced lots of changes over the years, for example automating the on-board conductor's role. It was stated that the trade union movement will continue to be open to future technologies.

A comment was made that the success of the public bike scheme has shown that people are prepared to use a shared mobility system and are willing to use a vehicle that is not their own. On the quality of life issue, a point was made that active travel should be promoted, rather than investing in having people sitting on a bus with Wi-Fi.

There was a view expressed that big public transport projects take up to ten years to deliver and there is a need to look at using existing resources more efficiently and providing real car share incentives. An example suggested was car-pooling lanes with perhaps a sticker system. On the issue of car-sharing, it was noted that 140,000 vehicles travel on the M50 every day which is above its designed limits. The point was made that a lot of these cars often have at least three spare seats and this additional capacity could be harnessed.

It was considered that in the short to medium term, it is collaboration and cooperation that will provide a bigger return rather than the investments under the National Development Plan. This view was supported by another point that collaboration is important and people talking and working together might help to develop integrated public transport. The budgetary constraints

were noted and it was recognised that other projects may need to be deferred in order to achieve integration.

A number of points were made in relation to the decoupling of the economy and transport demand. It was stated that most developed economies have managed this in recent years and Ireland is an exception. While it was acknowledged that there have been small signs of change in Ireland in recent years, the view was that there is a need to look at how other countries have achieved this through investment, land planning and active travel. There was reference to a recent report in the UK on demand for travel. It was noted that demand for travel here is increasing and investment in land-use and transport planning, active travel and healthy cities yields the best returns. There was agreement that, while the limited decoupling of Ireland's economy and transport demand is partly due to the internet age facilitating teleworking, the main reason is behaviour and that younger people are choosing to live in cities and use shared mobility.

There was a reference to reports that millennials are not driving because they are choosing to travel by public transport. It was argued that the real reason that millennials are not driving is the cost of driving i.e. learning to drive including theory test, lessons and exams and also that learner drivers need to have someone with them at all times. A point was also made that people renting have high rents to pay and it may be too expensive to also have a car.

It was noted that Dublin already has approximately 1,000 connected vehicles in the Dublin Bus fleet with data being sent and received every 20 seconds and the mobile communications on the buses are linked to the Dublin City Council traffic control centre. It was pointed out that the recent changes on the north and south quays were driven by the data available from these buses. In the future, it is hoped to get more information from cars and increase the scope for getting information from bus services.

It was considered that there is a need for automated bus lane enforcement as more people are using the lanes, and this should be addressed. It was stated that motorists used to be more compliant of bus lane restrictions but, from observations, this has declined over recent years. It was also considered that there is a need to address the discontinuity in bus lanes and this is required under the BusConnects programme. The point was also made that the buses are the workhorse of public transport in Dublin and it is key that there is reliable, consistent times and customers must be able to follow predictable timetables. The view was that if more investment was made in reducing fares, bus lane technology and traffic light priorities, it might encourage more people out of cars.

In general, delegates did not consider that cars should be banned in the city centre but that there should be more efficient use of road space. It was noted that, within the canal areas in Dublin, public transport use has increased especially along the quays where there are new bus lanes and the road space for cars is restricted. Another view was that it was not a question of banning cars but looking at who works/lives in cities, considering where they go, and providing them with a positive choice. The view was that there was no need to penalise people because where

alternatives exist, they are usually used. It was considered that over the coming decades, there is unlikely to be the high car dependency there currently is.

Another point made was that 31% of retail spending comes from people travelling by cars, so banning cars would have a significant economic impact. It was also pointed out that congestion occurs at peak periods but leisure and shopping users tend to travel in off peak periods, so there is a need to take this into account when considering car access to the city centre.

In relation to the Electric Vehicle grant scheme for taxis, a comment was made that the grant is for plug-ins but there was no grant for a hybrid and this was needed to encourage taxi drivers to move over to these vehicles. It was also pointed out that the taxi industry is not yet confident of electric vehicles. There was a call for a consultation with taxi drivers to see what they want in relation to grants. A view was expressed that the reduction in taxis, referred to in Anne Graham's presentation at the second plenary discussion, was linked to the increase in the cost of the licence fee.

On the use of taxis in the city, it was noted that with the current structure in the city, between 20%-30% of taxi journeys are cancelled in the mornings as taxis cannot get to customers on time to pick them up. It was also pointed out that at peak periods, passengers turn off their app based products due to congestion and there was a need for cameras or the Gardaí to enforce traffic rules in the city, particularly on bus lanes. Related to this, it was stated that autonomous vehicles do not reduce congestion and there was concern expressed that autonomous vehicles will lead to another form of gridlock and active travel of cycling and walking needs to be looked at.

It was noted that currently over 80% of fare payments in Dublin are made by Leap Card with rollout continuing and that the NTA is working with operators on the successor to the Leap Card - 'Next Generation Ticketing'. This will provide new equipment to support the use of other means of payments in addition to Leap Cards, free travel passes and cash. This would include contactless bank cards and mobile phones. The NTA wants to be in the "fast follower" camp regarding new technologies and is looking at next generation technology systems being rolled out in New York and Boston.

A point was made that the three aspects of energy systems – heat, transport and electricity – are starting to overlap, for example, electric vehicle battery being used to power a home. It was considered that there is an opportunity for Ireland to demonstrate energy efficient, sustainable solutions by working together around transport provision. There was also reference to a project backed by the Finnish government around transport as a service.

Panel Discussion

Panel discussion reflecting the wide range of topics discussed over the course of the day.

The following were the main points made by the panellists:

- The "State of Ireland 2017" report by Engineers Ireland spotlighted transport and graded transport as a "C" for capacity, maintenance, accessibility and connectivity.

- Ireland has a significant opportunity to be a world leader in 'Infratech' with the skills necessary to deliver on new technologies in transport.

- Mobility, place making and accessibility should be to the frontline of public transport policy.

- There is a need to tackle the issue of traffic management as, while the percentage of cars entering the city has fallen, the total number of cars has not decreased.

- Traffic volumes coming in to the city should be examined and more people should be encouraged to take up public transport at certain points through park and ride.

- Bus lane enforcement and priority at junctions should be considered to improve efficiency and speed up journey times.

- To make the BusConnects programme work, it is important to make sure no groups are excluded.

- Delivering the BusConnects programme will be challenging but it will transform the public transport experience for customers.

- Barcelona has achieved a huge shift to bus and the city is only halfway through its bus programme.

- The Mayor of London's recently published Transport Strategy has a focus on investment in 'healthy streets'.

- Local Link in urban areas is a great idea.

- The highest returns on investment are walking, cycling and public transport in that order.

- Trade unions have always been facilitators for transformation.

- Social dialogue is good but might not suit all groups and there is a need to consider the best structure for different stakeholders.

- The measurement of the trade union movement is less disputes and trade unions would prefer to be in an environment where they have an influence on public transport policy. What drives disputes in the transport sector is expectation and privatisation.

- Public Service Obligation (PSO) subvention levels on the back of delivery of efficiencies reduced from 2008 to 2018.

- Central to all plans is investment and there is a need for investment in transport companies.

- It is important that wage competition is not part of the tendering of the bus sector.

- There has to be a higher push on quality and less on price. The public transport sector in Ireland needs to be developed so that public requirements come first regardless of whether it is a public or private company offering the service.

- The importance of safety should be remembered and that people operating and driving buses do so in a safe way and passengers are delivered safely.

- A big challenge is increasing capacity on public transport to encourage people to move from private cars to public transport. The existing public transport system could not cope with an increase of 20% in passengers and more needs to be done to provide quality public transport to make it feasible for more people to get out of cars.

- The technology exists to do a lot of enhancements now rather than waiting for new projects to come along.

- To influence change of behaviour, there is a need to look at the customer and what he/she wants. Public transport has to be value for money, safe and cut journey times.

- The linkages between public transport providers need to be addressed in terms of connectivity and duplication of services going forward.

- Local Authorities are key delivery agents for public transport and it is important to get support from the elected members.

- Challenge provides opportunities and the development of the public transport system has to be in different levels. Bus, Luas and Metro have to provide good services.

- People are buying into public transport as well as active modes of travel and this is a change over recent years.

- There is more work to do for those with mobility impairment and other disabilities.

- It would be helpful to have some insight into what the funding for PSO services might be over the next few years similar to the multi-annual capital budget in place for public transport.