DTTaS Data Strategy 2017-2019:
External Consultation Report

1. Background

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Data Strategy was subject to a targeted external consultation process in November 2016. External bodies were selected for consultation on the basis of existing or likely future data linkages with the Department. Members of the Transport Statistics Liaison Group (TSLG) of which the Department is a member were consulted, along with a number of other selected bodies. TSLG members comprise the Central Statistics Office, Environmental Protection Agency, National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin. Other bodies consulted were Bus Éireann, Irish Rail, Dublin Bus, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Sport Ireland, Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Organisations were given three weeks to consider the draft Strategy and submit their views.

In total 15 organisations were asked for their views on the draft Data Strategy. Organisations were informed that the Department would welcome all suggestions and input, but was particularly interested in views in response to the following questions:

- Do you have any views on the scope of issues covered in the Data Strategy? Are there any other important issues we should be considering?
- Do you agree with the areas of improvement identified in the data assessment?
- Do you agree with the proposed action plan?
- Do you have any views on how the Department should prioritise the proposed actions?

2. Responses

In total, 5 responses were received – Dublin Bus, Irish Rail, CSO, NTA and TCD. A summary of each of the responses is set out below:

2.1 Dublin Bus

Dublin Bus welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Strategy. The submission notes that the impact of the Strategy on the company is unclear at this stage. It is noted that Dublin Bus are currently reviewing their existing data sources and uses and looking at the potential for new sources and improved data analysis. For example, depending on the success of beacon trials, the company will have more data and potentially some powerful insights into operations. The submission recommends the inclusion of an action to establish an ongoing process of determining data needs, identifying relevant sources, establishing data collection/reporting processes and integrating new datasets into an overall data repository. The submission also recommends the inclusion of an overall strategic vision and process for determining what data should be collected, identifying relevant sources and determining how this data may be made available (both internally and to the public). Dublin Bus points to the need for more detail to be included in relation to the identification of data that should be collected and what outputs would be served by this data. Furthermore, in terms of Section 3.2 (Areas for Improvement), Dublin Bus suggests that the suggested in-depth review of policy priorities and data needs should be a top priority action. Finally,

the submission comments that the Strategy focuses much on the use of existing data and new, unused data sources and collection methods should be considered.

Proposed Response: The Department appreciates the detailed comments and suggestions provided by Dublin Bus. The potential data arising from the beacon trials will be of great interest both from policy and data collection perspectives. The emphasis in the submission on the need for a strategic vision is noted and it is proposed to include some additional text in Section 2 emphasising the importance of a clear understanding at the outset of the data need, the process for determining what data should be collected and how to identify data sources. With regard to the priority of actions, it is proposed to rename the actions in order to reflect their classification as short-term and longer-term actions i.e. Action 1 would become Action S1, Action 2 would become S2, Action 8 L1, Action 9 L2, etc. This will make Action 8/L1 (Establish Methodology for Sectoral Data Reviews) the most prominent of the longer-term actions.

2.2 Irish Rail

Irish Rail welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Strategy and state that the document sets out a comprehensive approach of generating and using data to achieve strategic objectives across the Department. The submission is supportive of the scope of the document and the action plan. The importance of achieving short term actions to ensure ongoing support for the Strategy is emphasised.

Proposed Response: It is not proposed to make any changes to the document on foot of these comments. Irish Rail's support for the Strategy is noted and welcomed.

2.3 Central Statistics Office

The CSO response is provided by Paul Crowley, Head of Agriculture, Transport and Tourism Statistics. The Strategy is warmly welcomed by the CSO and it is noted in the submission that the exercise being carried out by the Department is a valuable one and will help to promote the better use of data in the decision making process. The comments provided by the CSO are of a detailed nature relating to specific sections of the document:

3.1 Overview: In relation to maritime passenger data, CSO points out that the data published by Eurostat is collected by the CSO and sent to them. CSO also points to the table on the number of non-cruise ship passengers which is contained in the Transport Omnibus publication, along with a range of tables relating to vehicle traffic on ferries (supplied by CSO) which could be included in the Maritime release in the future. With regard to improvements to the international comparability of origin/destination of freight data, CSO refers to a recent discussion of the issue following a recent Transport Statistics Liaison Group regarding differing data provided by the Survey of Ports and Harbours and the Road Freight Survey. The submission notes that the surveys have different objectives and are therefore not comparable. It is suggested that the Department selects one survey as its definitive source.

3.2.2 Data Quality/Availability: With regard to the issue of comparability of aviation statistics, where there is a variance between the IAA and CSO reporting of annual commercial flights, the submission makes some observations. It is noted that the data on commercial flights is collected by the CSO to meet the requirements of Eurostat as part of a wider harmonised approach to EU statistics on aviation. IAA data on the other hand likely relates to the specific needs of that

organisation. The CSO in their submission have expressed their willingness to examine IAA statistics and to examine the issue further through the TSLG.

3.2.5 Timeliness: Issues of timeliness and frequency of data can be traced back to the requirements of Eurostat in terms of the transmission of the data to Eurostat and then its publication. CSO suggests discussing specific issues via the TSLG and through a direct person in the Department.

4.1 Short Term Actions: CSO indicates its willingness to engage in a review of the operation of the TSLG and highlights the importance of effective engagement of participants.

Top of Page 14: There is a reference to the CSO's Employee Attitudinal Survey and it is requested that CSO be deleted from this reference as it is not the CSO's survey.

Finally, the submission notes that while the CSO is conducting the National Travel Survey in 2016, it cannot commit to undertaking the survey on an annual basis.

Proposed Response: The CSO's comprehensive response to the Draft Strategy is welcomed and will be of great assistance in finalising the document. Many of the issues raised by the CSO provide clarification and context to particular issues highlighted in the document (comparability of data, timeliness of data) and therefore it is not necessary to make significant changes to the document on foot of these comments. However, it is proposed to include some additional text in the document in Section 3 emphasising the role of the TSLG in resolving particular data issues around topics such as comparability and timeliness of data. Finally the reference to the CSO's Employee Attitudinal Survey will be corrected.

2.4 National Transport Authority

The NTA response is provided by Barry Colleary, Head of Transport Modelling at the Authority. The Authority is broadly supportive of the general thrust of the Strategy. The Authority highlights the danger of collecting data for data's sake and considering only what is currently measured. In terms of the Data Principles, the Authority recommends the inclusion of a stronger reference to the need that gives rise to data requirements and the overall purpose/objective of data. The need to separate issues relating to data and modelling robustness is noted in the context of the different techniques that apply. NTA also comments on each of the individual actions in the Proposed Action Plan in Chapter 4.

- Action 1: NTA notes that with greater clarity of requirements, there is scope for improved cooperation between agencies
- Action 2: The possibility of greater sharing of data through DTTaS establishing a more formal data sharing/clearing house process
- Action 3: Again the identification of data gaps/needs is emphasised in the initial stages of policy/programme/project development
- Action 4: NTA support this action
- Action 5: NTA suggest that this action should have a wider focus than just the NHTS.
- Action 6: The importance of including sectoral access in the development of any data management system or processes is highlighted
- Action 7: The importance of co-ordination of efforts is flagged and the NTA points to the potential value of creating a single database of documents relevant to the Department

- Action 8: Defining the objectives/policies and resourcing of any actions that emerge are highlighted as important by the NTA
- Action 9: Making the data hub available to relevant stakeholders is considered an important feature of the process
- Action 10: The NTA welcomes the opportunity to be involved in a National Transport Research Forum and suggests it could be modelled on the research programme of the EPA
- Action 11: NTA notes that improving the level of performance measurement should be captured through the appraisal process and policy formulation process
- Action 12: NTA agree with this action

Proposed Response: The comments and observations of the NTA on the draft Strategy are noted and welcomed. The NTA places particular emphasis on the need to include a stronger reference on the purpose/objective of the data. It is proposed to include some short additional text in Section 2 emphasising the importance of an understanding at the outset of what the purpose of the data is or should be. Also, Action S5 will be edited to apply generally to other surveys and datasets that could potentially be better coordinated to maximise the sectoral benefit, rather than applying primarily to the National Household Travel Survey alone.

2.5 Trinity College Dublin

The TCD response is provided by Dr. Brian Caulfield of the Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering. Dr. Caulfield welcomes the Strategy and acknowledges that much of the content of the document pertains to Departmental use of data. He points to the potential for the inclusion of evidence and case studies within the document and highlights data protection and security considerations.

Proposed Response: Dr. Caulfield's comments regarding evidence and case studies are noted. However, given that the Strategy is intended to be a strategic corporate document, the inclusion of case studies is not considered to be appropriate to the high level nature of the document.