



**An Roinn Iompair**  
Department of Transport

Project Ireland 2040

# National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland

Background Paper 1: National Planning Framework

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**Disclaimer**

This Background Paper has been prepared as part of the supporting analysis for the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland. It reflects the latest data and information available to the author at the time of writing. The views presented in this paper do not represent the official views of the Department of Transport or the Minister for Transport.

## Contents

List of Figures .....	2
List of Tables .....	2
1. Introduction .....	3
2. Overview .....	4
3. Effective Regional Development .....	6
4. Making Stronger Urban Places.....	8
5. Planning for Diverse Rural Areas.....	10
6. Other Relevant Issues.....	11
7. Conclusions.....	13
8. References.....	14

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Interurban National Development Plan Projects and Programmes .....	7
Figure 4.1: High-level transport needs to enable growth in Ireland's cities .....	9

## List of Tables

Table 3.1: National Policy Objectives and population growth targets by region .....	6
Table 4.1: NPF 2040 population targets by city and suburbs .....	8

## Summary

- The National Planning Framework is the Government's plan to cater for the extra one million people that are projected to be living in Ireland by 2040.
- Transport planning is a key facilitator of spatial planning. In order to facilitate the delivery of Project Ireland 2040, significant transport investment will need to be identified and prioritised.
- NIFTI will need to prioritise projects which ensure urban growth is enabled, while also ensuring rural development and interurban connectivity are appropriately incorporated.

## 1. Introduction

As part of the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI), five major themes with the potential to substantially alter how and where transport takes place have been identified. These are:

1. The National Planning Framework;
2. Economic and Fiscal Context;
3. Climate Change;
4. Brexit; and,
5. Technology.

This paper considers the first of these themes, the National Planning Framework.

## 2. Overview

On 16 February 2018, Government published the National Planning Framework (NPF) (Government of Ireland, 2018b). The NPF is the “Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040”. As such, it is a “framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities, and to protect and enhance our environment”. The NPF estimates that there will be around one million extra people living in Ireland by 2040.

The NPF developed its objectives while focusing on the following National Strategic Outcomes:

1. Compact Growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities
4. Sustainable Mobility
5. A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High-Quality International Connectivity
7. Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services

This paper discusses the resulting challenges which the land transport sector will have to address in order to achieve the NPF’s objectives.

On the same day, the Government also published its National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP) which sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the successful implementation of the NPF during its first decade (Government of Ireland, 2018a). The NDP commits an estimated €116 billion to this goal.

### 2.1. Why is land transport planning important for achieving spatial planning objectives?

The NPF notes that the 2002 National Spatial Strategy was weakened by lack of integration with wider Government policy, and that “national investment didn’t follow the plan, and so it was difficult for Government policy to follow it also”. To ensure the success of the NPF and Project Ireland 2040, investment, including in land transport, will need to be appropriately planned and delivered to support it.

In large urban areas, without appropriate transport planning and investment, increasing populations will lead to higher levels of congestion. In the short term, this will negatively impact quality of life and the economic viability of towns and cities. In the long term, it will make these urban areas less attractive to locate in, limiting their growth prospects. In 2017, the Department of Transport published a report on congestion in the Greater Dublin Area which projected that congestion costs would increase by more than a factor of five from 2012 to 2033, in the absence of further transport investment or other interventions (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2017).

In smaller towns and rural areas, it is necessary to ensure access to employment and services. In these locations, transport access and direct routes to nearby urban centres are very important in ensuring that less densely populated areas are economically and socially viable.

Finally, businesses, industry and people will locate to wherever is most attractive in terms of accessibility and connectivity. This means that if transport investment is not prioritised to deliver the objectives of spatial strategies, those objectives are unlikely to be realised.

### 3. Effective Regional Development

Table 3.1 details the regional breakdown of Ireland’s population and employment in 2040 as targeted by the NPF.

Table 3.1: National Policy Objectives and population growth targets by region

National Policy Objective	Eastern and Midland	Southern	Northern and Western
1. Growing Our Regions	490,000-540,000 people (2.85m total)	340,000-380,000 people (2m total)	160,000-180,000 people (1m total)
	320,000 in employment (1.34m total)	225,000 in employment (880,000 total)	115,000 in employment (450,000 total)
2. Building Stronger Regions: Accessible Centres of Scale	Dublin City and Suburbs: 235,000-290,000 (at least 1.41m total)	Cork City and Suburbs: 105,000-125,000 people (at least 315,000 total)	Galway City and Suburbs: 40,000-45,000 people (at least 120,000)
	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to set out a strategic development framework for the Region, leading with the key role of Athlone and the Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry cross-border network	Limerick City and Suburbs: 50,000-55,000 people (at least 145,000 total)	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to set out a strategic development framework for the Region, leading with the key role of Sligo in the North-West, Athlone in the Midlands and the Letterkenny-Derry cross-border network
3. Compact, Smart, Sustainable Growth	50% of new city housing within existing Dublin City and suburbs footprint	50% new city housing within existing Cork, Limerick and Waterford Cities and suburbs footprints	50% of new city housing within existing Galway City and suburbs footprint
	30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints	30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints	30% all new housing elsewhere, within existing urban footprints

The NPF aims to build stronger regions, which it identifies as a more sustainable approach than business as usual projections which see the highest growth rates in Dublin and its surrounding areas. This is planned to be achieved through developing “accessible centres of scale”. The NPF identifies two elements of strategy required to address this:

1. Building strong cities and towns; and,
2. Addressing issues of accessibility, between centres of scale other than Dublin, along the Atlantic Economic Corridor and improved accessibility and connectivity from surrounding regions.

### 3.1 Implications for Transport Planning

Although it notes some of the major transport projects to be delivered under the NDP, the NPF is not prescriptive on the specific transport investments that will be required to enable its regional development objectives. Instead, these will be identified by the transport agencies and in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and mediated through NIFTI. The NDP has identified a number of specific interurban projects and programmes for investment or pre-appraisal out to 2027 as set out in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Interurban National Development Plan Projects and Programmes



The following sections of the **national road network** will be progressed through pre-appraisal and early planning during 2018 to prioritise projects which are proceeding to construction in the National Development Plan.

- N2 Clontibret to the Border
- N2 Rath Roundabout to Kilmoon Cross
- N2 Ardee to south of Castleblaney
- N3 Virginia Bypass
- M4 Maynooth to Leixlip
- N4 Mullingar to Longford
- N4 Carrick on Shannon
- M11 from Jn 4 M50 to Kilmacanogue
- N11 Oilgate to Rosslare
- N13 Ballybofey Stranorlar Bypass
- N13/N14/N56 Letterkenny Bypass and Dual Carriageway to Manorcunningham
- N14 Manorcunningham to Lifford
- N17 Knock to Collooney
- N21 Newcastle West Bypass
- N21 Abbeyfeale
- N24 Cahir to Limerick Junction
- N24 Waterford to Cahir
- N25 Waterford to Glenmore
- N25 Carrigtohill to Middleton
- N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan
- N3 Clonee to M50
- M50 Dublin Port south access

## 4. Making Stronger Urban Places

The National Strategic Outcomes of Compact Growth and Sustainable Mobility rely, in large part, on growing our towns and cities. At least half of future population and jobs growth will be focused on the five cities—Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford—and their immediately adjoining suburbs. In addition, Athlone, Sligo, Letterkenny and the Letterkenny-Derry and Dundalk-Newry cross border networks will be supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs). Finally, accessibility from the North-West of Ireland and the centres of scale will be significantly improved.

Table 4.1 shows a breakdown of the targeted population increases in each of Ireland's five cities.

Table 4.1: NPF 2040 population targets by city and suburbs

	2016 Population	Increase	Target Population 2040
Dublin	1,173,000	235,000 – 293,000	1,408,000
Cork	209,000	105,000 – 125,000	314,000
Limerick	94,000	47,000 – 56,000	141,000
Galway	80,000	40,000 – 48,000	120,000
Waterford	54,000	27,000 – 32,000	81,000

### 4.1 Implications for Transport Planning

In order to achieve population and employment growth in Ireland's cities of the scale envisaged, each city will need to be equipped with efficient and comfortable transport links between the suburbs and the city, and within the city region.

Figure 4.1 sets out some of the key transport enablers identified as part of Project Ireland 2040 for each city. One of the primary tasks in NIFTI will be to conduct detailed transport needs analysis to identify in more detail the scale of investment needed to realise the NPF's objectives.

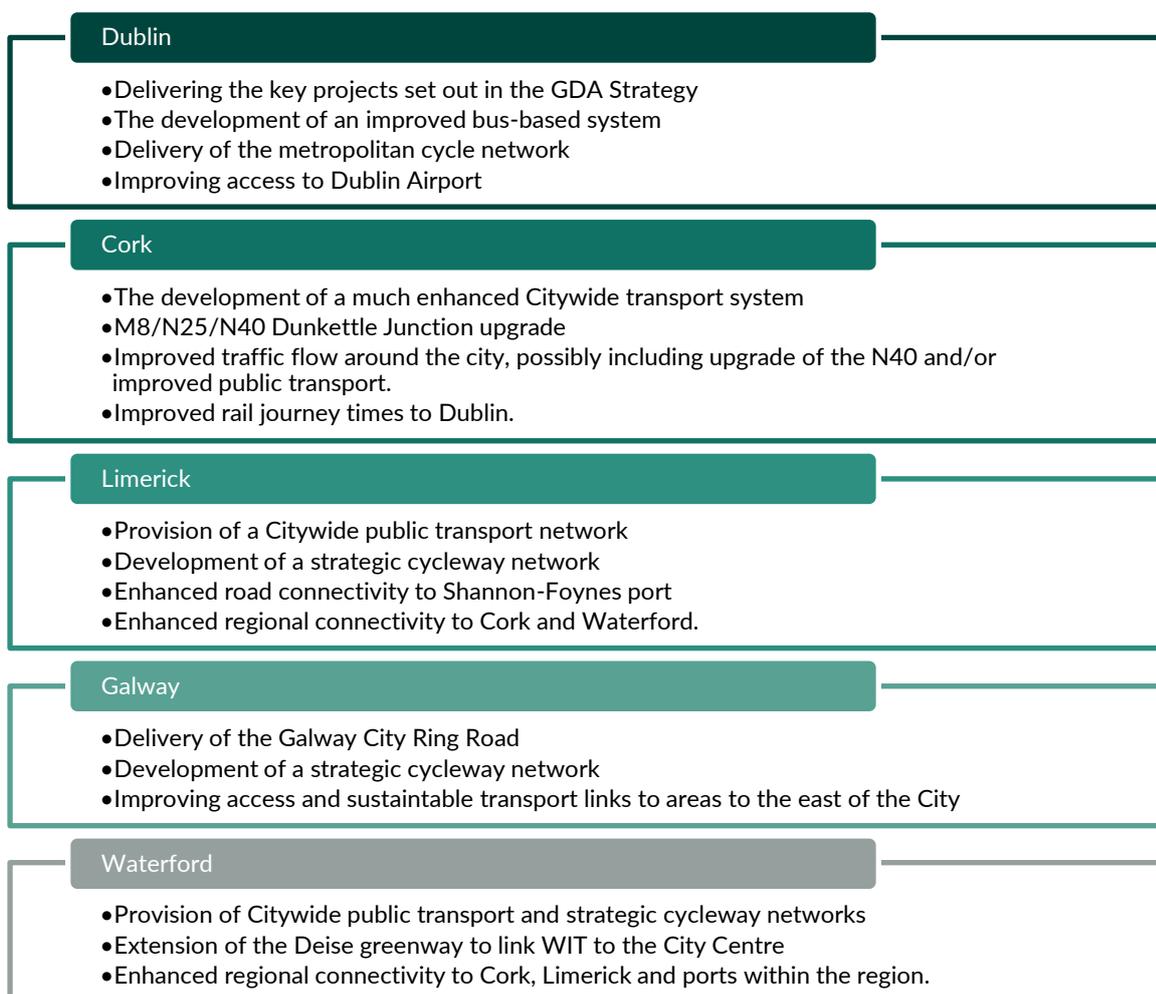
A number of the transport needs listed below have been approved in principle, or are in the planning stages. Beyond this, a number of transport projects are identified in the NDP, such as those set out in Figure 3.1. Part of the purpose of NIFTI will be to help identify the scale and cost of additional transport investment required, both in the period up to 2027 and for the period from 2027 to 2040 after the current capital plan.

FObjective 11 of the NPF states that "There will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people, jobs and activity within existing urban areas..." It is crucial that transport investment supports this objective. A 2018 Economic and Social Research Institute paper stated that "If the aim is to increase the scale of second tier cities then this needs to be facilitated by appropriate infrastructure development in the cities rather than between cities, so that the growth can be accommodated in the cities." The paper goes on to assert that "the development pattern needs to be compact and sprawl which is facilitated by infrastructure development between cities should be avoided" (Morgenroth, 2018). This presents three key challenges for the development of future transport infrastructure:

1. There is a need to identify the transport investments required to enable the urban growth envisaged;

2. Significant population increases in our cities will necessarily require improved connectivity between some urban areas (such as Limerick, Cork and Waterford), as well as increased capacity on some existing interurban routes;
3. Careful consideration will need to be given to the 'sequencing' of transport investment, in order to encourage urban consolidation and limit sprawl. This may require some investments in urban transport taking place in advance of investments in interurban and regional connectivity. However, given the importance of regional and interurban connectivity, as also identified in the NPF, careful consideration will need to be given as to which complementary measures might be required to balance these two objectives.

Figure 4.1: High-level transport needs to enable growth in Ireland's cities



## 5. Planning for Diverse Rural Areas

As well as strengthening Ireland's cities and towns, the NPF sees the strengthening of Ireland's rural fabric as of key importance. The NPF seeks to encourage a focus on "planning for the future growth and development of rural areas". The following objectives are specifically relevant to transport:

- **Objective 18a:** to "support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns"; and,
- **Objective 18b:** to "develop a programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages'

### 5.1 Implications for Transport Planning

A significant population increase in Ireland's small towns and rural areas would be expected to lead to an increase in the amounts of journeys made on Ireland's rural roads. It is therefore necessary to ensure that our road infrastructure is equipped to facilitate appropriate access to employment, education and services in all areas of the country.

This will require identifying areas of 'transport deprivation' where the level of accessibility is below an acceptable standard. There is also a need to identify and prioritise the roads in Ireland that require upgrading, to efficiently and safely cope with an increase in traffic levels. It will also be necessary to account for the impact of increased traffic levels on the required levels of protection and renewal investment. Protection and renewal expenditure is, in part, a function of wear and tear on roads as a result of traffic, so higher amounts of traffic will increase these costs.

## 6. Other Relevant Issues

The NPF notes that Ireland is “an island nation with sovereign rights over one of the largest marine areas in Europe” and that our “marine environment is a national asset”. With that in mind, the following transport-relevant objective was identified:

- **Objective 40:** Ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports are considered and addressed as part of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, metropolitan area and city/county development plans to ensure the effective growth and sustainable development of the city regions and rural areas.

The NPF also notes that, “as a result of climate change, sea levels and patterns of accretion and erosion are key issues for planning and flood risk assessment”. The following transport-related objective was identified:

- **Objective 41b:** In line with the collective aims of national policy regarding climate adaptation, to address the effects of sea level changes and coastal flooding and erosion and to support the implementation of adaptation.

The NPF also highlights the importance of ‘working with our neighbours’, in particular the 28% of people on the island of Ireland who live in Northern Ireland. The following transport-related objectives were identified:

- **Objective 43:** Work with the relevant Departments in Northern Ireland for mutual advantage in areas such as spatial planning, economic development and promotion, co-ordination of social and physical infrastructure provision and environmental protection and management;
- **Objective 44:** In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, to further support and promote the economic potential of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor and in particular the core Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry network and to promote and enhance its international visibility;
- **Objective 45:** In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, support and promote the development of the North West City Region as interlinked areas of strategic importance in the North-West of Ireland, through collaborative structures and a joined-up approach to spatial planning; and,
- **Objective 46:** In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, enhanced transport connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to include cross-border road and rail, cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways, greenways and peatways.

Finally, the NPF notes that some key environmental challenges will face the country in the coming decades, including “the need to accelerate action on climate change” and “dealing with air quality problems in urban areas”.

The following objectives were identified:

- **Objective 53:** Support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land management, greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development; and,
- **Objective 56:** Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse emissions.

## 6.1 Implications for Transport Planning

In terms of planning future transport investment, it is important to ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports are appropriately considered. This may require increased investment in the land transport links to the ports in order to provide the adequate capacity needed to cope with increased port traffic levels. Currently, Cork County Council are in the planning stages of an M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Scheme which is designed to accommodate increased demand associated with proposed development in the area, including development of the port. In addition, the Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme, sponsored by Limerick County Council, is in the planning stages and has a primary objective of enhanced connectivity to and from Foynes Port. The objectives of the NPF, as well as possible impacts from external issues such as Brexit, which is considered in more detail in NIFTI Background Paper 4, mean it is important that we continue to evaluate the adequacy of connectivity with our ports, both now and out to 2040.

Adapting to future climate-related risks, including coastal flooding, will include consideration both of investment required to reduce the impacts of these risks as well identifying locations which may be unsuitable for future development. These issues are considered in more detail in NIFTI Background Paper 9.

With respect to enhancing North-South connectivity, enhancing transport links between Dublin and Belfast, in particular public transport links, is a key objective of the NPF. Aside from assessing the extent of the investment required to enhance these links to accommodate the anticipated population growth, it will be important that careful consideration is given to the preference for urban consolidation as opposed to sprawl.

Finally, reducing the transport sector's carbon footprint is discussed further in NIFTI Background Paper 3, while the objective of trying to avoid urban sprawl is compatible with those climate-related objectives.

## 7. Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to summarise the key issues arising from the NPF which need to be considered when developing a land transport investment framework for Ireland. The NPF and its objectives provide a roadmap with which we can identify transport priorities out to 2040. Transport planning, and in particular infrastructure investment, takes many years from the point of identifying investment needs to the point of final project delivery. It is therefore necessary, as a next step, to identify the scale, location and type of transport investment required to achieve and NPF's objectives. It will also be necessary to carefully consider the potential issues around sequencing of investment, and of climate change, Brexit, and technological developments, which are discussed in other NIFTI background papers.

## 8. References

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