

Heather Cooke

From: Wylie Brian <Brian.Wylie@irishrail.ie>
Sent: 16 January 2019 10:25
To: RSES
Subject: Draft RSES for EMRA Public Consultation
Attachments: IE submission to Draft RSES_160119.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached a submission by Iarnród Éireann to the Public Consultation phase of the Draft RSES for the EMRA.

Regards,

Brian Wylie

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Iarnród Éireann Irish Rail, cuideachta ghníomhaíochta ainmnithe, faoi theorainn scaireanna, claraithe in Éirinn ag Stáisiún Uí Chonghaile, Baile Átha Cliath 1, Uir. 119571 Uir. CBL: IE 4812851 O
Iarnród Éireann Irish Rail, a designated activity company, limited by shares, registered in Ireland at Connolly Station, Dublin 1, No. 119571 VAT No. IE 4812851 O

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16th January 2019

**Iarnród Éireann submission to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly –
Draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation phase of the Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Regional Authority. Iarnród Éireann welcomes the Strategy which we have reviewed in detail.

The Eastern & Midland Region contains some of the fastest growing communities in the country, with increasing demand for housing, infrastructure and local services. Proposals for investment and expansion of heavy rail within the region, as highlighted in the Draft strategy, are very much welcomed. The strategy reflects the view that the Iarnród Éireann heavy rail network is a very valuable national asset with considerable potential to act as the backbone of an integrated public transport system for the region. Iarnród Éireann, as the national railway operator, is well positioned to play a key role in providing high capacity sustainable public transport solutions to cater for the expected increase in travel resulting from the anticipated future population and employment growth in the region, and nationally.

With economic recovery continuing and population growing we agree with the sentiment that traffic congestion in the GDA is a significant problem and is forecast to worsen considerably as identified in the Draft Strategy, if alternative measures are not taken. We welcome the acknowledgement in the strategy that high quality and frequent rail services can attract car users and deliver important decongestion and environmental benefits to the region. It is clear from a Transport Infrastructure Ireland 2018 report that the M50 in particular is operating on a knife-edge.

Iarnród Éireann welcomes the emphasis in the Draft Strategy that future population growth and development will be distributed across the region in a balanced and equitable manner and with a much greater focus on economic development and potential. In particular Iarnród Éireann supports the clustering and prioritisation of Strategic Development plans, based on accessibility to high quality rail based public transport, and we call on the Strategy to support Transport Oriented Development at rail nodes to promote sustainable transport and create vibrant communities.

We welcome the support in the Draft Strategy for the priority development of the heavy rail network, including the pivotal DART Expansion Programme (including city centre tunnel), commuter rail development, new stations and the development of a new National Train Control Centre and supporting systems.

The DART Expansion Programme is central to the Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 and is identified for investment focus in the National Development Plan 2018-2027. Given record levels of passenger numbers on the rail network currently, there is a pressing need to deliver this critical rail infrastructure as a high priority in support of compact development and sustainable public transport in the GDA, which will increase the public transport mode share and support the reduction of GHG emissions from transport. The DART Underground element; comprising a tunnel link beneath Dublin City Centre connecting the Cork Mainline to the Belfast Line; remains an integral element of the DART Expansion Programme to integrate all of the transport modes in the greater Dublin area (bus, commuter and regional heavy rail, LUAS and Metro). This element will be fully exploited in recognition of the very substantial local, regional and national access and environmental benefits that it will deliver.

The DART Expansion Programme could uniquely support high density developments at key locations throughout the GDA and provide sustainable transport options to link housing to jobs / education / services. The DART Expansion Programme will transform the rail network in the GDA by bringing it all together and forming the backbone to an integrated public transport network for the entire Region. Strong support for funding of the full DART Expansion Programme in the Draft Strategy is key to its delivery at the earliest possible timeframe, while noting that the delivery of the DART Underground is scheduled for post 2027.

It is clear that Ireland is out of step with many countries in terms of addressing climate change targets and we are locked into a pattern of rising CO₂ emissions; most notably in the transport sector. While the transport sector is clearly underperforming in terms of meeting GHG reductions, due primarily to the increased contributions from the road sector, it should be noted that the railway has exceeded its targets and can contribute even further with the appropriate level of investment. Railways are acknowledged internationally as one of the greenest forms of land transport, providing a mass transport option and negating the requirement for large land reservations for all day car parking. The promotion of integrated land-use and transport as an important climate change mitigation measure in the Draft strategy is also welcomed.

Section 8.5 'International Connectivity' refers to the important need to improve landside access to Dublin Airport and Iarnród Éireann welcomes the explicit references in the Draft Strategy to the provision of Metrolink and the development of buses and taxis serving the airport. Passenger growth at Dublin Airport has been phenomenal in recent times with c. 45% passenger growth reported by the daa in the last five year period alone. It is an EU TEN-T objective to link core EU airports (Dublin Airport being one) with the core national rail network, the Dublin-Belfast line forming part of this core rail network. We believe that section 8.5 of the Draft Strategy should also make reference to the Project Ireland 2040 (NPF) objective of consideration of a heavy rail connection to Dublin Airport in the future. This is critical to allow for the preservation of a future heavy rail alignment, even if the delivery of the project is in the longer term, as has been the case for the North Runway.

We look forward to actively participating in the delivery of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and we would welcome the opportunity to play active roles in the development of the various Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans and related spatial and economic strategies.

Yours sincerely,

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