

Chapter 02

Need for the Proposed Scheme

Contents

	Page
Contents	1
2 Need for the Scheme	1
2.1 Introduction	1
2.2 Policy Context	1
2.2.1 International Policy	2
2.2.2 European Policy	3
2.2.3 National Policy	4
2.2.4 Regional Policy	23
2.2.5 Local Policy	27
2.3 Transport Need	31
2.3.1 Current Issues Affecting the Transport Network	32
2.3.2 The Pedestrian Network	32
2.3.3 The Cycle Network	33
2.3.4 The Bus Network	36
2.4 Benefits of the Proposed Scheme	40
2.5 References	43

2 Need for the Scheme

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) outlines the need for the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road) (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Scheme).

Our sustainable future relies on a built environment consisting of spaces and places that connects people and creates inclusive societies that are characterised by social cohesion. Sustainable transport infrastructure assists in creating more sustainable communities and healthier places, while also stimulating our economic development. It contributes to enhanced health and well-being when delivered effectively.

Traffic congestion in Galway has been an issue for decades. Congestion impacts on quality of life, the urban environment, safety of all road users and the economic performance of Galway City as the Gateway and economic driver of the West of Ireland Region. Its impact extends far beyond the city into the wider county and region, due to the large commuter population reliant on the city for employment and education.

The targeted population growth for Galway City is 50-60% (40,000-50,000 more people) by 2040 (as outlined in the National Planning Framework adopted 2018) (Government of Ireland, 2018). The growth of the city is already evident in the development of key sites including Bonham Quay and Crown Square, with other sites such as Sandy Road and Dyke Road earmarked for future investment and regeneration.

Responding to these challenges is supported by an extensive policy framework of International, European, National, Regional and Local policy, planning strategies and plans. The key policy and planning documents are described in Section 2.2, along with a summary of how the Proposed Scheme responds to the relevant objectives. Section 2.3 identifies the need to respond to current deficiencies in our transport system and how those deficiencies have shaped the development of the Proposed Scheme. The benefits from the provision of the Proposed Scheme are presented in Section 2.4.

2.2 Policy Context

The Proposed Scheme is supported by an extensive framework of International, European, National, Regional and Local policy, planning strategies and plans. This framework has strongly informed and influenced the aims and objectives for the Proposed Scheme as set out in EIAR Chapter 1 (Introduction).

The Proposed Scheme is a key measure that delivers on commitments within the National Development Plan (2021-2030), Galway Transport Strategy (2016) and the Climate Action Plan 2021.

For each policy, the following sections outline the key policy documents which the Proposed Scheme supports and how the Proposed Scheme responds to the relevant policy objectives.

Further information on the planning and policy context for the Proposed Scheme is provided in the Planning Compliance Report which is included in the planning application documentation.

2.2.1 International Policy

2.2.1.1 United Nations 2030 Agenda

In September 2015, Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all 193 Members States of the United Nations (UN, 2015) (hereafter ‘UN’s 2030 Agenda’). The UN’s 2030 Agenda aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the entire world, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. This framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Diagram 2.1) which cover the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.



Diagram 2.1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are integrated, recognising that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

SDGs 3, 8, 9, 11 and 13 and the associated targets are relevant to the Proposed Scheme as presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Sustainable Development Goals and targets relevant to Proposed Scheme

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG Target
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.	Target 3.9: By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG Target
Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	Target 9.1: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human wellbeing, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.	Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

In Ireland, the SDGs are being implemented through the National Implementation Plan 2018-2020¹ (DCCA, 2018), which is in direct response to the UN's 2030 Agenda. More information on the National Implementation Plan is presented in Section 2.2.3.11.

The Proposed Scheme supports the SDG goals and targets set out in the relevant SDGs. It will provide for enhanced walking, cycling and bus infrastructure, which will subsequently enable more efficient, safe and integrated sustainable transport movement in Galway City.

2.2.2 European Policy

2.2.2.1 Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (European Commission, 2020) sets out a number of goals as to how people will move within and between cities in the future. It has identified 82 initiatives which have been categorised into 10 'flagships.'

The flagship of most relevance to the Proposed Scheme is 'Flagship 3 – Making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthy'. It states that:

¹ A revised National Implementation Plan is due to be published in 2021. See Section 2.2.3.11.

‘Increasing the modal shares of collective transport, walking and cycling, as well as automated, connected and multimodal mobility will significantly lower pollution and congestion from transport, especially in cities and improve the health and well-being of people. Cities are and should therefore remain at the forefront of the transition towards greater sustainability.’

A target of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy relevant to the Proposed Scheme is to double the number of safe cycle lanes in cities within the European Union to 5,000km in the next decade.

The Proposed Scheme supports the objectives of the EU’s Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy through significant investment in bus priority, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the route of the Proposed Scheme, thereby supporting and encouraging growth in active travel and public transport usage.

2.2.2.2 European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019

The EU Green Deal (European Commission, 2019) sets out one of the most ambitious road maps for an entire continent to transition to a low carbon economy, as committed to in the Paris Agreement 2015². It sets out key policies aimed at cutting emissions and preserving the natural environment. It commits the EU to becoming climate neutral by 2050, with a reduction of between 50 to 55% by 2030 when compared to 1990 emission levels. By focusing on transport, buildings, and energy, the EU Green Deal is setting out a process to help everybody work together and try and move in the same direction.

A key component of the EU Green Deal roadmap to transforming the EU’s economy for a sustainable future is *‘accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility’*. It seeks to reduce the transport sectors greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050. *‘The EU transport system and infrastructure will be made fit to support new sustainable mobility services that can reduce congestion and pollution, especially in urban areas’*. It is noted that pollution is concentrated in cities and that a combination of measures are required such as *‘improving public transport and promoting active modes of transport such as walking and cycling.’*

The Proposed Scheme supports the objectives of the EU Green Deal through investment in cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, in addition to bus priority, along the route of the Proposed Scheme, thereby supporting and encouraging growth in active travel and sustainable public transport usage.

2.2.3 National Policy

2.2.3.1 Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP)

The Project Ireland 2040 is the government’s long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people.

² <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

The National Planning Framework (hereafter referred to as the NPF) (Government of Ireland, 2018) and the National Development Plan (hereafter referred to as the NDP) (Government of Ireland, 2021) combine to form Project Ireland 2040. The NDP and the NPF, were adopted in May 2018 and an update to the NDP was published on 04 October 2021.

The NDP is the national capital investment strategy plan. It sets out the framework of expenditure commitments to secure the Strategic Investment Priorities to the year 2030 and support the delivery of the 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) identified in the NPF. The NSOs directly related to the Proposed Scheme are described in Section 2.2.3.3 Table 2.2.

The NDP sets out a programme of investment that includes indicative capital expenditure allocations. Although the NDP does not specifically allocate funding to the Proposed Scheme, there are a number of funding avenues within the NDP that are relevant to the Proposed Scheme, including:

- €360 million per annum national active travel budget up to 2025; and
- €35 billion allocated to transport-related requirements detailed in the NDP.

This is supplemented by the October 2021 budget announcement allocating approximately €1.8 billion in 2022 for sustainable mobility, including active travel. In addition, almost €50 million of provisional funding under the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund has been specifically allocated to a Galway City Council Transport Connectivity Project and a Public Space and Street project in Galway City.

Under the heading ‘Major investments in this NDP’ the NDP sets out a selection of national infrastructure projects and ‘BusConnects for Ireland’s Cities’ is highlighted under the heading ‘NSO 4 - Sustainable Mobility’.

The NDP states under:

NSO4 ‘Sustainable Mobility’ that:

‘This NDP provides for significant investment in active travel, bus and rail infrastructure over the next ten years in terms of expanding sustainable mobility options in our cities, towns and villages, supporting our ambition for compact growth and seeking to develop our regional cities as centres of scale in line with the NPF targets. In the previous NDP, the Transport sector had an allocation of approximately €21 billion for the period 2018-2027. The revised NDP sets out further ambitious plans to enhance public transport, active travel options and the connectivity of communities throughout Ireland. Transport projects by their nature are delivered over a multi-year horizon. The scale of the Transport-related requirements under the revised NDP amounts to c. €35 billion in total over 2021-2030.’

‘The Climate Action Plan (CAP) recognises that Ireland must achieve a significant modal shift from car to active travel and public transport if we are to achieve our target of a 51% reduction in Green House Gas emissions by 2030 and ultimately net zero by 2050.’

CAP sets a target for 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 and investment planned under this NDP will be directed toward achieving that challenging target.'

It also highlights, with specific regard to BusConnects:

'Transformed active travel and bus infrastructure and services in all five of Ireland's major cities (including Galway City) is fundamental to achieving the overarching target of 500,000 additional active travel and public transport journeys by 2030.'

It continues:

'BusConnects will overhaul the current bus system in all five cities by implementing a network of 'next generation' bus corridors (including segregated cycling facilities) on the busiest routes to make journeys faster, predictable and reliable. BusConnects will enhance the capacity and potential of the public transport system by increasing and replacing the bus fleets with low emission vehicles.'

It further states that:

'Increasing the attractiveness of the bus systems in the cities will encourage modal shift away from private car use, leading to a reduction in congestion and associated costs in the major urban areas'.

NSO8 'Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society' identifies BusConnects under the Strategic Investment Priorities (Transport) and the need to shift away from carbon intensive transport systems. The NDP identifies specific measures including:

- *'Delivering priority public transport programmes including BusConnects, DART+ Expansion Programme and Metrolink so that increased transport demand is met by greener public transport;*
- *Replacing existing diesel public buses with lower emitting alternatives under the BusConnects programme, while promoting commercial bus services and small public service vehicle industry to use low-emission fleet;*
- *Encouraging a significant modal shift through greater levels of investment and further development of meaningful alternatives to private car uses under the following three major environmentally sustainable mobility schemes:*
 - *additional cycling and walking infrastructure which will provide additional sustainable mobility options to complement increased capacity and faster, higher quality public transport in our main cities;*
 - *travel demand management measures in the five cities; and*
 - *pilot initiatives for low emitting technologies in the transport sector.'*

The Proposed Scheme forming part of the overall BusConnects Programme is therefore identified as a 'Strategic Investment Priority' project, with an associated investment commitment, which has been determined as central to the delivery of the NPF vision.

The Proposed Scheme is an integral part of Ireland's efforts to reduce carbon by providing the infrastructure necessary to deliver a sustainable transport network.

The Proposed Scheme will facilitate targeted population growth in Galway City by meeting existing and future travel demand through investment in a sustainable transport network and services. As required in the NDP, the Proposed Scheme will provide the infrastructure needed to help facilitate a modal shift from private car to public transport, cycling and walking. It will also bring to fruition a key investment priority of the NDP to help deliver the full ‘BusConnects programme’.

2.2.3.2 Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023

The Statement of Strategy (Department of Transport, 2021) sets out objectives, goals and an action based strategic approach which are designed to support continuing economic recovery, fiscal consolidation, job creation and social development. It notes that:

‘Aligned with the National Planning Framework and the National Economic Plan we will maintain and develop high quality sustainable road, public transport and active travel networks to enable economic activity, essential services and social connections between and within our cities, regions and communities. Ireland's land transport system – comprising our road and rail networks, together with bus, rail and taxi services – is of fundamental importance to both societal and economic wellbeing.’

The Statement of Strategy includes an action commitment to ‘support any necessary adaptation of our critical transport infrastructure and services in response to Ireland’s changing climate appropriate public spending and investment in efficient, sustainable, integrated and accessible land transport networks and services.’

The Statement of Strategy mission is the implementation of the National Cycling Policy Framework 2009 – 2020 (see Section 2.2.3.6) and the Road Safety Strategy 2013 – 2020 (see Section 2.2.3.7):

‘To deliver an accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households and businesses’.

The need for the Proposed Scheme is supported by Statement of Strategy mission to deliver an accessible and efficient transport system. The Proposed Scheme will contribute towards the Statement of Strategy mission by improving both bus and cycle infrastructure allowing for greater modal choices in Galway City.

2.2.3.3 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF is a 20-year planning framework which combines with the NDP to form Project Ireland 2040 which is the government’s long-term overarching national planning strategy.

It aims to guide population and jobs growth over the next 20 years across all parts of Ireland, supported by a flexible and sustainable planning framework. The NPF informs all other planning policy documents including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (see Section 2.2.4.1) and the Galway County Council Development Plan (see Section 2.2.5.2) and Galway City Development Plan (see Section 2.2.5.3).

The NPF's ambition is to create a single vision and a shared set of goals for each community to shape the growth and development of Ireland by providing a framework up to the year 2040. These goals are expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO), shared benefits which the NPF will deliver if implemented according to the objectives of the NPF. Some of the NPF NSO's relevant for the Proposed Scheme are set out in Table 2.2 with a corresponding statement on how the Proposed Scheme meets each respective NSO objective.

Table 2.2: Strategic Outcomes of the NPF

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Scheme meets the NSO Objective?
<p>NSO1 Compact Growth:</p> <p><i>‘Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. All our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development, is a top priority.’</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme will bring greater accessibility to the city centre and improve connectivity between communities and locations along its route facilitating access to housing, jobs, amenities and services.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme will enhance the capacity of the sustainable transport network, and as a consequence will help to achieve greater land use densities that will encourage compact growth in compliance with the objectives of NSO1.</p>
<p>NSO4 Sustainable Mobility:</p> <p><i>‘In line with Ireland’s Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets, such that by 2040 our cities and towns will enjoy a cleaner, quieter environment free of combustion engine driven transport systems.’</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme will provide infrastructure to support a sustainable transport network that will facilitate a modal shift from private car usage to sustainable transport. It will reduce journey times and increase journey time reliability and increase the attractiveness of active travel and public transport for travel, which will in turn reduce fossil fuel usage in private travel.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme will support integrated sustainable transport usage through infrastructure improvements for active travel (both walking and cycling), and the provision of enhanced bus priority measures for existing (both public and private) and all future services who will use the Proposed Scheme.</p>

National Strategic Outcome (NSO)	How the Proposed Scheme meets the NSO Objective?
<p>NSO5 A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills:</p> <p><i>‘This will depend on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy, to leverage the potential of places. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth.’</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Scheme is a high-quality development that will provide the infrastructure required to facilitate sustainable transport options which will service the current and future transport needs of Galway City and surrounding areas.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme represents a significant investment in transport infrastructure that will improve accessibility to Galway City, a city of regional significance, and land uses associated with the city, including economic, educational, amenity and social uses, for example.</p>

Specifically, with regard to the Galway City and Metropolitan Area, the NPF states that:

‘The Galway Metropolitan area shares many of the challenges arising from growth and economic success with much larger cities. In common with Dublin, Galway needs to accommodate a greater proportion of the growth it generates within its metropolitan boundaries. Challenges to be addressed include housing choice and affordability, transport/ mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area.’

Under the heading ‘Key future growth enablers for Galway include’ it highlights that:

‘Provision of a Citywide public transport network, with enhanced accessibility between existing and proposed residential areas and the City Centre, third level institutions and the employment areas to the east of the city.’

‘Public realm and urban amenity projects, focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in support of an extended city centre area and where residential and employment areas can be linked to pedestrian routes’.

NSO 4 notes that:

‘major urban areas are too heavily dependent on road and private, mainly car based, transport with the result that our roads are becoming more and more congested. The National Development Plan makes provision for investment in public transport and sustainable mobility solutions to progressively put in place a more sustainable alternative’.

BusConnects is referenced as a sustainable mobility solution, and the Proposed Scheme involves the implementation of this sustainable mobility solution through facilitating greater bus, cycle and pedestrian accessibility into, within and across Galway City.

At the core of the NPF is sustainability and more environmentally friendly development, which is implemented through the National Strategic Objectives (NSOs), Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) and accompanying National Policy Objectives (NPOs). In addition to the NSOs referenced above, there are a number of NPOs pertaining to the Proposed Scheme such as:

- *NPO 27 – “Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments”*
- *NPO 52 – “The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital”*
- *NPO 64 – “Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car”*
- *NPO 75 – “Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA and AA as appropriate”*

The NPF also highlights the importance of the public realm and improving access to public transport in order to improve the ‘liveability’ of urban areas. The Proposed Scheme includes public realm improvements, to allow for greater access to public transport and to improve the liveability of the city. Further information on compliance with local policy on public realm is provided in Section 2.2.5.4.

2.2.3.4 National Sustainability Mobility Policy

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy (Department of Transport 2022) sets a framework for active travel and public transport to support the 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The vision for the policy is: ‘To connect people and places with sustainable mobility that is safe, green, accessible and efficient.’

The Policy includes three key principles, as follows:

1. Safe and Green Mobility;
2. People Focused Mobility; and
3. Better Integrated Mobility.

The principles are supported by 10 ‘high level goals’ and those considered relevant to the Proposed Scheme are set out further below.

The foreword of the policy document comments, as follows:

‘Increased funding under the National Development Plan will allow us to improve and expand walking, cycling and public transport options across the country to enable access to education, health care, work, cultural and public life by sustainable modes of travel. This will include commencing delivery of BusConnects programmes in our five cities, DART+ and Metrolink in Dublin along with increased investment in the inter-urban and regional rail network.’

In regard to walking and cycling infrastructure the Introduction section states:

‘The design of walking and cycling infrastructure, as well as areas in the vicinity of public transport services, are important safety factors. Well-designed, well-maintained, appropriately-lit, continuous and better integrated infrastructure can help people feel safe and encourage them to choose these options over the private car.....Expanding walking and cycling options to promote greater use of active travel can support our climate targets to reduce emissions as well as improving fitness levels and public health, and reducing congestion and private car use. Diverting short car trips to active modes will have a particular benefit in reducing air pollution’

It further comments:

‘There is a need to rebalance transport movement in metropolitan areas and other urban centres away from the private car and towards active travel and public transport. This will require a greater allocation of available road/street space to be given to sustainable mobility. In addition, a rebalancing of traffic light signalling at junctions to better facilitate walking, cycling and public transport is required. The overarching objective in urban centres should be to focus more on the movement of people rather than the movement of the private car.’

Under the heading ‘Implementation, monitoring and review’ it sets out that:

‘The Leadership Group will report to the Minister for Transport on a quarterly basis and progress on implementation of the Policy will be overseen In order to measure progress’. It further outlines that part of the reporting will include (inter alia):

- *‘Kilometres of active travel infrastructure developed annually; and*
- *Kilometres of bus lanes/bus priority developed annually.’*

The Policy supports ‘Safe and Green Mobility’ by (inter alia):

‘Expanding bus capacity and services through the BusConnects Programmes in the five cities of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford; improved town bus services; and the Connecting Ireland programme in rural areas’.

Under the heading ‘Expand availability of sustainable mobility’ it comments, as follows:

‘Improving active travel infrastructure in both urban and rural areas together with improved and expanded public transport services across the country is needed to reduce car dependency. Increased investment in walking and cycling infrastructure will provide a safe and connected network to those who wish to

travel by active means. Implementation of public transport projects such as (inter alia): BusConnects.'

Projects such as BusConnects are identified as key priorities to deliver an improved and expanded bus service. It sets out under Goal 3 'Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas' the following:

'BusConnects programmes comprise a number of different elements including the network redesign of bus services and the development of core bus corridors infrastructure, including segregated cycling facilities, on the busiest routes to make journeys'.

It also outlines that:

'Our bus system carries by far the greatest number of passengers across the public transport system and improvements to it are vital in the context of improving people's accessibility and increasing modal shift. Improved and expanded bus services and infrastructure are a key priority, and in the five metropolitan areas, these improvements and expansions will be delivered through BusConnects programmes in each.'

It also comments that:

'BusConnects will enhance the capacity and potential of the public transport system by increasing and replacing the bus fleets with low emission vehicles and introducing a new system of Next Generation Ticketing and cashless payments.'

Table 2.3 sets out how the Proposed Scheme meets the Principles and Goals of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy.

Table 2.3: National Sustainability Mobility Policy Principles and Goal

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Scheme Response
Safe and Green Mobility	<i>'Improve mobility safety.'</i>	<i>'Goal 1 aims to improve the safety of all mobility options including active travel, road and rail to prioritise the safety and security of those working on / travelling by sustainable mobility.'</i>	Signage and road markings will be provided along the extents of the Proposed Scheme to clearly communicate information, regulatory and safety messages to the road users. The Proposed Scheme will also generally include segregated cycling and enhanced at grade junctions improving overall safety along the corridor.
	<i>'Decarbonise public Transport.'</i>	<i>'Goal 2 aims to reduce emissions by transitioning the bus, rail and small public service vehicle (SPSV) fleet across the country to low/zero emission vehicles in line with available technology. The actions under this goal are aligned with the actions in the Climate Action'</i>	The Proposed Scheme aligns with the goal as it will make public transport and active travel a key component to the solution. The Proposed Scheme will comprise transport infrastructure that supports the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service.

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Scheme Response
		<i>Plan 2021 to reduce emissions in the sustainable mobility sector.'</i>	
	<i>'Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas.'</i>	<i>'Goal 3 aims to expand the capacity and availability of sustainable mobility in our five cities (Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford). This will be done through improved walking, cycling, bus and rail infrastructure, improved transport interchange and expanded public transport services. Transformed active travel and bus infrastructure and services in all five cities is fundamental to achieving the targets of 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys and a 10% reduction in kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars by 2030.'</i>	The Proposed Scheme aligns with the goal as BusConnects Galway – Cross City Link Infrastructure Works is the GCC's programme to greatly improve bus services in the Galway, of which the Proposed Scheme is part. The Proposed Scheme will provide the advantage of segregated cycling facilities along the preferred route in both directions, where possible. These high-quality cycle lanes will help to reduce dependency on private car use for short journeys. The design of each junction has given priority to pedestrian, cycle and bus movements, where possible. Junctions have been designed to ensure a high level of comfort and priority for sustainable modes of travel (e.g., walking, cycling and public transport) by prioritising the space and time allocated to these modes within the operation of a junction. Along the Proposed Scheme route, improvements and enhancements will be made to footpaths, walkways and pedestrian crossings.
	<i>'Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas.'</i>	<i>'Goal 4 aims to expand the capacity and availability of sustainable mobility in a regional and rural context. This will be done through the delivery of improved active travel infrastructure, expansion of regional bus and rail services and local bus networks, and improved connectivity between different transport modes.'</i>	The Proposed Scheme aligns with the goal as it will expand the capacity of the public transport network within Galway. The Proposed Scheme will also enhance interchanges between the various modes of public transport operating in Galway City and its wider metropolitan area. The design has been developed with this in mind and, in so far as possible, is seeking to provide for improved existing or new interchange opportunities with other transport services.
	<i>'Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car.'</i>	<i>'Goal 5 aims to encourage modal shift to more sustainable options across all ages through behavioural change and demand management measures.'</i>	The Proposed Scheme will promote a modal shift from private car use to more sustainable forms of transport. It will enhance active travel networks and thus will encourage the use of these modes, reducing reliance on the private car.

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Scheme Response
People Focused Mobility	<i>‘Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all.’</i>	<i>‘Goal 6 aims to support a whole of journey approach from planning a journey to arriving at the final destination and make sustainable mobility accessible and affordable to everyone. A whole of journey approach is also supported under Goals 7 and 10 through implementing a universal design approach to the design of new and retrofitted infrastructure; adherence to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets; and promoting integrated mobility through innovative technologies.’</i>	The Proposed Scheme aligns with the goal as it has considered the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (Department of Transport, 2019) and the National Cycle Manual (NTA 2011).
	<i>‘Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model.’</i>	<i>‘Goal 7 aims to support enhanced permeability and ensure that the universal design principle and Hierarchy of Road Users model is used to inform future investment decisions to reduce inequalities, support a whole of journey approach, and prioritise sustainable mobility.’</i>	The Proposed Scheme aligns with goal 7 as the design is based on the hierarchy of Road users model with Pedestrians improvements prioritised.
	<i>‘Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement.’</i>	<i>‘Goal 8 aims to improve research and citizen engagement around sustainable mobility and collaboration with other government departments, agencies and stakeholders in delivering the Policy.’</i>	A consultation exercise has been undertaken and has helped to inform the design and layout of the Proposed Scheme. The GCC is also working in partnership with various government departments and third parties to deliver a high quality sustainable transport scheme for Galway.
Better Integrated Mobility	<i>‘Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels.’</i>	<i>‘Goal 9 aims to support compact growth and transport – oriented development through better integrated land use and transport planning.’</i>	The Proposed Scheme will enhance the capacity of sustainable transport infrastructure as well as the efficiency of Galway’s road network. The enhanced sustainable transport provision along the scheme corridor can help to achieve greater land use densities that will promote compact sustainable growth.
	<i>‘Promote smart and integrated</i>	<i>‘Goal 10 aims to make the use of sustainable</i>	The Proposed Scheme aligns with the goal as it will enhance interchanges

Principle	Goal	Goal	Proposed Scheme Response
	<i>mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.'</i>	<i>mobility and the interchange between different modes easier through investment in smart digital solutions. Alongside better integrated land use and transport planning, technological advances in transport can enable people to move seamlessly from one mode to another and support a whole of journey approach.'</i>	between the various modes of public transport operating in Galway City and its wider metropolitan area, both now and in the future.

The Proposed Scheme is supported by the National Sustainable Mobility Policy. The Proposed Scheme as part of the BusConnects Programme is identified as a key project to help deliver Ireland's climate commitments and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector. The implementation of the Proposed Scheme will contribute to modal shift towards sustainable transport options, it will expand, enhance and connect to pedestrian and cycle networks.

2.2.3.5 Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 - 2020

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) is currently finalising a National Sustainable Mobility Policy which will replace both the Smarter Travel Policy document and National Cycle Policy Framework.

The new National Sustainable Mobility Policy will be “*centred upon three overarching principles – Safe and Green Mobility, People Focused Mobility and Better Integrated Mobility*”. The policy will align with various National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in the NPF, and “*will also support the actions in the Climate Action Plan to reduce transport emissions in line with necessary EU and Irish targets in respect of active travel and public transport*”.

The current Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020 (hereafter referred to as ‘Smarter Travel Policy’) (DTTAS 2009a) is the National planning policy document to deliver an integrated transport policy for Ireland as supported by Government. A SEA, NIS and AA were produced as part of Smarter Travel Policy.

The Smarter Travel Policy set out a series of actions and measures covering infrastructural and policy elements to promote and encourage the vision of a sustainable travel and transport system for the period 2009 to 2020. The Smarter Travel Policy also provides funding over the lifetime of the Policy to provide information and improve facilities for cyclists, walkers, and public transport users.

The vision presented in Smarter Travel Policy is summarised by five key goals:

1. *‘Improve quality of life and accessibility to transport for all and, in particular, for people with reduced mobility and those who may experience isolation due to lack of transport’;*
2. *‘Improve economic competitiveness through maximising the efficiency of the transport system and alleviating congestion and infrastructural bottlenecks’;*
3. *‘Minimise the negative impacts of transport on the local and global environment through reducing localised air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions’;*
4. *‘Reduce overall travel demand and commuting distances travelled by the private car’; and*
5. *‘Improve security of energy supply by reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels’.*

In regard to Public Transport it sets out that:

‘We estimate that by 2020 we will need to provide public transport to meet the needs of an additional 90,000 commuters on top of the 140,000 likely to be catered for by Transport 21. The bus will be at the heart of moving these additional people.’

It further comments that:

‘Bus use is particularly important for those without access to a car, the young, older people and people with mobility issues. If we are to encourage the use of public transport in Ireland, the availability of a safe, accessible, integrated and reliable service for 18+ hours of the day is essential in any attempts to increase patronage and gain more users.’

The Proposed Scheme will enhance the effectiveness / efficiency of future bus services as well as active travel required by Smarter Travel. The Proposed Scheme will maximise the efficiency of the transport network through the integration of cycling and public transport modes and support the provision of sustainable transport alternatives to reliance on car-based journeys.

2.2.3.6 The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009 - 2020

The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 (hereafter referred to as the NCPF) (DTTAS 2009b) is Ireland’s cycling policy framework. The vision is to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland, stating that ‘Cycling will be a normal way to get about, especially for short trips’. The NCPF outlines 19 specific objectives, so that by the year 2020 10% of all journeys made were intended to be by bicycle. This policy framework outlines a number of interventions to make cycling easier and safer. The interventions specific to the Proposed Scheme are:

- *‘We will pay special attention to integrating cycling and public transport. As commuting distances are lengthening, the importance of combining the bicycle with the bus, tram or train grows. We will provide state-of-the-art cycling parking at all appropriate PT interchanges and stops.’*

- Objective 2: *‘Ensure that the urban road infrastructure is designed/retrofitted so as to be cyclist-friendly and that traffic management measures are also cyclist friendly.’; and*
- Objective 8: *‘Ensure proper integration between cycling and public transport will assist in increasing the uptake in cycling across the region’.*

The Proposed Scheme will facilitate sustainable modes of transport and therefore supports the objectives set in the NCPF through the provision of safe cycling infrastructure network segregated from general traffic, wherever practicable.

2.2.3.7 Road Safety Strategy

The Road Safety Strategy (2021-2030) (Road Safety Authority (RSA), 2021) sets out targets to be achieved in terms of road safety in Ireland. The core aim of the Strategy is to achieve Vision Zero in Ireland by 2050 where no one will be seriously injured or killed on roads with an interim target to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2030.

The Strategy goes on to note that overall, 1,303 fatalities were recorded in Ireland between 2013-2020, with the following observed:

- Between 2013 and 2020, 269 fatalities were pedestrians, equating to 21% of the total number of fatalities; and
- Between 2013 and 2020, 79 fatalities were cyclists. Equating to 6% of the total number of fatalities.

The document sets out strategies for engineering and infrastructure that can effectively reduce collisions. The Proposed Scheme incorporates measures that will contribute to improving road safety in the form of upgrades to key junctions, and new / upgraded pedestrian and cycle infrastructure along the corridor.

2.2.3.8 Climate Action Plan 2021

The Climate Action Plan 2021 (Government of Ireland 2021b) sets out at a national level how Ireland is to halve its emissions by 2030 (51% reduction) and reach net zero no later than 2050. The Climate Action Plan is a road map to delivering Ireland's climate ambition. There are 475 actions identified that extend to all sectors of the economy aiming to transform Ireland into a low carbon nation over the next three decades.

Regarding modal shift, the Climate Action Plan 2021 sets out that:

*‘The proposed pathway in transport is focused on accelerating the electrification of road transport, the use of biofuels, and a **modal shift** to transport modes with lower energy consumption (e.g. public and active transport)’ (emphasis added).*

Promoting more sustainable travel modes is seen as critical for climate policy. It offers an opportunity to *‘improve our health, boost the quality of our lives, meet the need of our growing urban centres and connects our rural, urban and suburban communities’.*

The key targets to meet the emissions reduction include:

- *‘Provide for an additional 500,000 daily public transport and active travel journeys’;*
- *‘Develop the required infrastructural, regulatory, engagement, planning, innovation and financial supports for improved system, travel, vehicle and demand efficiencies’; and*
- *‘Reduce ICE [Internal Combustion Engine] kilometres by c. 10% compared to present day levels’.*

ICE reduction measures include:

- *‘Reallocating road space from the private car to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport’;*
- *‘Enhancing permeability for active travel’; and*
- *‘Delivering safer walking and cycling routes to encourage greater uptake of active transport.’*

BusConnects is referenced as a major transport project that will help to deliver the 500,000 additional sustainable journeys. A key goal of the plan is to provide citizens with reliable and realistic sustainable transport options. The Climate Action Plan further states:

‘The new approach to public transport will be based on a vision of an integrated public transport network, enabling short, medium and long distance trips for people in every part of Ireland. This will mean increasing the frequency of existing rail and bus services and expanding the bus network through the Connecting Ireland approach.’

The implementation of the Proposed Scheme will deliver the transport infrastructure required to support sustainable transport options that will in turn support the key actions set out in the Climate Action Plan 2021. The Proposed Scheme will expand, enhance and connect to pedestrian and cycle networks and will assist in facilitating the delivery of modal shift.

BusConnects will support the delivery of an efficient low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, contributing to emission reduction target achievement. BusConnects will contribute to Ireland’s journey to a low carbon / carbon neutral, energy efficient and reliable transport system which aligns with Government net zero policy commitments and enable customers to make sustainable choices.

Acknowledging that various policy initiatives are required to deliver national targets that are aligned to the Paris Agreement, BusConnects can facilitate services that are beneficial to communities. While mandated reductions are not required at an individual scheme level, carbon must be invested wisely. Chapter 8 (Climate) of this EIAR contains an assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Proposed Scheme.

2.2.3.9 Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020

The Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020 (hereafter referred to as the ‘Programme for Government’) (Government of Ireland, 2020) sets out the Government’s plan for the next five years. It states that the Government will

‘Develop and implement existing strategies for our cities such as ‘the Galway Transport Strategy’. The key objectives of the programme include the need to:

- ‘Address pinch points for buses and expand priority signalling for buses and real time information; and*
- ‘Give greater priority to bus services by expanding quality bus corridors and consider the introduction of Bus Rapid Transport services.’*

Specifically, regarding BusConnects, the Programme for Government states it will also *‘prioritise plans for the delivery of ... BusConnects in Galway’.*

2.2.3.10 Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) published the Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan in September 2015 (hereafter referred to as the Capital Plan) (DPER, 2015). It presented the findings of a Government-wide review of infrastructure and capital investment policy and outlined the Government’s commitment to ensuring that the country’s stock of infrastructure is capable of facilitating economic growth.

This report identifies the need to improve public transport facilities noting:

‘It is therefore essential that road, rail and public transport networks are developed and maintained to the standard required to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and freight.

In addition, getting people out of cars and onto public transport has a key role to play in reducing Ireland’s carbon emissions, by providing a viable, less polluting alternative to car and road transport for many journeys.’

The transport capital allocation in this Capital Plan is largely framed by the recommendations and priorities set out in the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (DoT 2015), which centres on:

- Maintaining and renewing the strategically important elements of the existing land transport system;*
- Addressing urban congestion; and*
- Maximise the contribution of land transport networks to our national development.*

The Capital Plan incorporates the following key objectives relevant to this Proposed Scheme:

- €3.6 billion of Public Transport Investment including further upgrading of Quality Bus Corridors.*

The Proposed Scheme is consistent with these recommendations, priorities and objectives as set out in the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (DoT 2015), and the Capital Plan. The Proposed Scheme is a significant investment in the improvement of public transport facilities including bus, cycle and pedestrian network enhancements and extensions.

2.2.3.11 The Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 – 2020

A new National Implementation Plan 2021-2023 is currently being finalised and is due to be published in 2021. Public consultation was undertaken between July-September 2021. The plan *“will set out arrangements for interdepartmental coordination, stakeholder engagement and actions needed for further SDG Implementation from 2021 to 2023”*.

The current Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 - 2020 (DCCAE 2018) is in direct response to the UN’s 2030 Agenda (see Section 2.2.1.1) and provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 SDGs. SDGs 3, 8, 9, 11 and 13 and the associated targets are relevant to the Proposed Scheme as presented in Table 2.1. The current National Implementation Plan sets out 19 specific actions to implement the SDGs.

The Proposed Scheme supports the goals and targets set out in the National Implementation Plan as it provides infrastructure that will support sustainable transport and will improve the safety of road users through the further segregation of road vehicles and active travel modes.

2.2.3.12 Investing in Our Transport Future – Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport 2015

Investing in Our Transport Future – Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (hereafter referred to as SIFLT) (DTTAS, 2015) sets out the priorities to guide the allocation of future investment to develop and manage Ireland’s transport network. It establishes:

- *‘High level priorities for future investment in land transport; and*
- *Key principles, reflective of those priorities, to which transport investment proposals will be required to adhere’.*

Urban Congestion and maximising the contribution of land transport networks to our national development are key priorities of the SIFLT Measures to address both, including:

- *‘Improved and expanded public transport capacity’;*
- *‘Improved and expanded walking and cycling infrastructure’; and*
- *‘Support identified national and regional spatial planning priorities’.*

The key principles for land transport investment proposals are:

- *‘The overall outcomes of transport investment, as governed by these principles, should maintain and improve the quality of life of citizens and be consistent with environmental, climate and biodiversity objectives, imperatives and obligations, including those arising from the EU Habitats Directive’;*
- *‘The next key priority for investment involves measures to address current and future urban congestion and to improve the efficiency and sustainability of urban transport including improved and expanded public transport; capacity*

- and walking and cycling infrastructure, improved traffic management and bus priority; and more and better use of Intelligent Transport Systems’; and*
- *‘To receive funding, transport projects must be implemented in conjunction with the implementation of supportive national and regional spatial planning policies, along with other demand management measures where appropriate’.*

The Proposed Scheme is compliant with the ‘priorities’ set out by the SIFLT as the infrastructure will support the improvement and expansion of public transport capacity and provide significantly improved facilities for active travel. The Proposed Scheme will improve the efficiency of public transport and encourage mode shift through delivering journey time savings.

2.2.3.13 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland

The Department of Transport (DoT) has finalised the transport framework, the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (hereafter referred to as NIFTI) (DoT 2021) to ensure alignment with the policies of the NPF.

The NIFTI sets out the DoT’s strategy for the development and management of Ireland’s land transport network (roads, public transport, walking and cycling) over the next two decades. The NPF and its projections around population and settlement patterns are central to the development of NIFTI. The purpose of NIFTI is to enable the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 and the ten National Strategic Objectives (NSOs) by guiding the appropriate investment in Ireland’s roads, active travel and public transport infrastructure.

The NIFTI sets out the types of positive outcomes transport investment can deliver, including:

- Delivering clean, low carbon and environmentally sustainable mobility;
- Supporting Successful Places and Vibrant Communities;
- Facilitating Safe, Accessible, Reliable and Efficient Travel on the Network; and
- Promoting a Strong and Balanced Economy.

To invest sustainably, the NIFTI establishes hierarchies which prioritise environmentally sustainable and proportional solutions to a given transport need or opportunity. In combination, it is intended that these hierarchies will ensure that we tackle the right problems with the right solutions. The investment priorities are based on two hierarchies:

1. Modal Hierarchy; and
2. Intervention Hierarchy.

Modal Hierarchy

The NIFTI Modal Hierarchy is:

- Active Travel;
- Public Transport; and
- Private Vehicles.

NIFTI Modal Hierarchy identifies travel modes to be accommodated and encouraged when investments and other interventions are made. Sustainable modes, starting with active travel and then public transport, will be encouraged over less sustainable modes such as the private car.

Active travel is the most sustainable mode of travel. Increasing the share of active travel can reduce the carbon footprint of the transport sector, improve air quality, reduce urban congestion, and bring about positive health impacts as a result of increased physical activity. The attractiveness of this mode is dependent on infrastructure for example, dedicated footpaths, segregated cycle lanes and the quality and priority of road crossing points all impact upon the number of people engaging in active travel.

Intervention Hierarchy

The NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy is:

- Maintain;
- Optimise;
- Improve; and
- New.

‘To support the delivery of the NPF, and to make best use of our existing assets, a hierarchy of these intervention types will be applied. Maintaining the existing transport network will be given first priority, followed by maximising the value of the network through optimising its use. Infrastructural investments will only be considered after these two categories have been assessed as inappropriate for the identified problem, with upgrades to existing infrastructure to be considered before new infrastructure.’

Decarbonising the transport sector is a key priority for reaching Ireland’s climate change targets. The NIFTI supports sustainable mobility and encourages active travel and public transport. It supports projects that will reduce urban congestion, particularly those that include new sustainable mobility infrastructure and optimises the existing infrastructure to prioritise sustainable transport modes.

The Proposed Scheme is compliant with the NIFTI as it will facilitate accessible and reliable public transport. It supports sustainable transport modes including active travel modes. The NIFTI recognises that active travel is the most sustainable mode of travel and acknowledges that the attractiveness of this mode is dependent on infrastructure for example, dedicated footpaths, segregated cycle lanes and the quality and priority of road crossing points all impact upon the number of people engaging in active travel.

The Proposed Scheme provides improved infrastructure for active travel modes, while optimising, improving and, where necessary, providing new infrastructure to improve bus network services for Galway.

2.2.3.14 Healthy Ireland – The National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland 2016

This plan was launched in 2016 and aims *‘to increase population levels of physical activity which would lead to health, economic and social benefits’*. The plan includes a number of *‘Action Areas’* which provide building blocks for greater participation in physical activity.

Action Area 4 (Environment) specifically promotes active transport as a sustainable way to increase physical activity. Active transport modes such as walking and cycling are being facilitated by the Proposed Scheme.

2.2.3.15 Five Cities Demand Management Study

This study focusses on the five main cities across Ireland, namely Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. The study was undertaken by Systra on behalf of the Department of Transport *‘to identify and review the drivers for, and potential management measures of, vehicle movements’* in the five cities.

These measures are known as Transport Demand Management (TDM) measures and *‘aim to influence and change travel demand patterns and encourage more efficient and sustainable use of transport resources’*. One of the mission areas includes the prioritisation of the BusConnects Galway plans.

The following TDM measures of relevance to the Proposed Scheme and to Galway City are proposed as part of the study:

- FM11: Congestion Charging – it is considered that this may be delivered in Galway City subject to the delivery of improved public transport facilities.
- PTM04: Public Parking Controls – reduction of on street parking is included in the proposed scheme in line with the delivery of sustainable mobility infrastructure.
- PP04: Enhance Delivery of the National Planning Framework – the Proposed Scheme represents enhanced delivery of the NPF (see section 2.2.3.3).
- PTM17: Car Free Zones & Streets – it is noted that this is already in place in Galway through implementation of the ‘City Centre Access Network’, which will be supplemented by the Proposed Scheme.
- TC07: Urban Traffic Management Centres – the Proposed Scheme includes a bus gate and it is stated in the study that Galway has been operating an Urban Traffic Management Centre since 2011.

2.2.4 Regional Policy

2.2.4.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly 2020-2032

The principal purpose of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) Regional Spatial Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (hereafter referred to as RSES) (NWRA, 2020) is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the

development of the region. A SEA, NIS and AA were produced as part of the RSES.

The RSES represents the regional tier for planning policy and provides a vision; a spatial plan and investment framework to shape future development of the Northern and Western Region to the year 2032. The RSES was formally adopted in January 2020 by NWRA and replaces the previous Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Region 2010 – 2022 (Regional Planning Guidelines Office 2010).

The RSES is centred on five key growth ambitions:

1. Economy and Employment – A Vibrant Region;
2. Environment – Natural Region;
3. Connectivity – Connected Region;
4. Quality of Life – Inclusive Region; and
5. Infrastructure – Enabling our Region.

Under Key Growth Ambition – 3. Connectivity – the benefits of sustainable travel are recognised and highlighted *‘Sustainable travel can have significant benefits for individuals, workplaces and educational facilities in terms of health and wellbeing, costs and time associated with travel. It has the potential to reduce congestion and emissions and to exploit investment in sustainable transport’*.

In this respect, the GTS is referenced as a best practice example of *‘where the integration of transport, spatial and economic planning is to be delivered’*, as it is incorporated and adopted into both the Galway County Council Development Plan and the Galway City Development Plan.

The RSES includes a number of high-level transport principles to support the delivery of integrated transport, spatial and economic planning:

- *‘Support improved strategic and local connectivity’;*
- *‘Expand attractive public transport and other alternatives to car transport;*
- *‘Recognise the role of the car and cater appropriately for it’; and*
- *‘Reduce congestion; and cater to the demands associated with longer-term population and employment growth, in a sustainable manner’.*

On the basis of these principles, a number of core priority outcomes are identified, including:

- *‘Supporting the achievement of ‘compact, smart growth’ through the achievement of ‘mutual consistency’ between land use and transport planning/investment/service provision’;*
- *‘Strengthening public transport, walking and cycling accessibility/connectivity within Galway City and environs’;*

With regard to investment in the bus network in Galway City, it is recognised in the RSES that *‘investment in bus infrastructure and services will be delivered through Bus Connects and the relevant parts of the GTS’*.

Included within the Proposed Scheme is provision for walking and cycling. The RSES recognises the importance of walking and cycling in facilitating modal shift - *‘Facilitating modal shift to more sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling is a key element in promoting healthier lifestyles, better traffic management and assisting in mitigating climate change’*.

The RSES develops Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) that are aligned to the key growth ambitions above. These are aligned to the UN’s 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), EU thematic objectives³ and the NPF (Government of Ireland 2018).

Those RPOs that relate to the Proposed Scheme are as follows:

RPO6.26: *‘The walking and cycling offer within the region shall be improved to encourage more people to walk and cycle, through:*

b) Safe walking and cycle infrastructure shall be provided in urban and rural areas, the design shall be informed by published design manuals, included the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and the NTA Cycle Manual’.

RPO6.29: *‘The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life’*.

RPO 6.30: *‘Planning at the local level should promote walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood or district centres, public transport services and other services at the local level such as schools’*.

RPO 6.32: *‘Invest in transport networks and services in the region that are socially inclusive and provide a quality of service, connectivity and facilities to meet all societal needs, disabilities (including mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments) and meet the needs and opportunities of an ageing population’*.

RPO 6.50: *‘Continue to encourage Active Travel initiatives and where possible leverage technology and digital platforms to enhance the delivery of cycleway and walking infrastructure, particularly in our urban centres’*.

As the only city in the Northern and Western Region, Galway is recognised as the principal driver of the region, with a commensurate challenge to accommodate an increased proportion of its’ envisaged growth within the existing metropolitan area. A specific Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) (hereafter referred to as the Galway MASP) (NWRA 2020) is contained within the RSES for Galway City, with the following vision:

‘The Vision of this MASP is that Galway will be a leading global city, renowned as a successful, sustainable, competitive, compact and accessible city of scale that supports a high quality of life, maintains its distinctive identity and supports its rich heritage, language and cultural experience. A Metropolitan area that is environmentally responsible, resilient to change and that attracts and retains

³ European Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

talent and skills and fosters innovation and creativity. An Area that offers sustainable choices in housing, work, transport and lifestyle opportunities for its communities, while supporting the health and wellbeing of its people.'

The Galway MASP affirms the support for the implementation of the GTS and its constituent interventions. The Galway MASP is contained within the RSES and identifies the strategic planning and investment framework to enable growth. The Galway MASP is aligned with the RPOs in the RSES to allow integrated transport and land use. The vision for the MASP is as follows:

'The MASP provides a strategic focus on the City and environs and sets out how it is envisaged the NPF will be implemented in the regional context of the RSES. The vision for Galway is that it will be a leading European city renowned for its quality of life, its history, its culture and its people.'

It is and will be a place that embraces modern technologies, high standards of education, competitive and sustainable enterprises.

The challenges to the city's development will be met by the integrated and timely provision of infrastructure much of which is included in this strategy'.

To achieve the vision, the Galway MASP sets out RPOs. Those most relevant to the Proposed Scheme are set out below.

RPO 3.6.7: *'The Assembly supports the delivery of the infrastructure projects outlined below to develop the MASP:*

- *Galway City Ring Road; and*
- *Galway Transport Strategy.'*

In addition to the above RPOs, the Galway MASP also identifies 'Key Transportation Components', of which the following are of most relevance to the Proposed Scheme:

- *'Development of a cross-city network of bus services which can serve the major trip attractors with five core bus routes to provide a minimum 15-minute frequency service during the peak periods and sustain a high-frequency service throughout the day'.*
- *'Provision of a core, secondary and feeder cycle network which includes segregated cycle routes, on-road cycle lanes and /or wide bus lanes to cater for both buses and cyclists along the same route'*
- *'Provision of measures to reduce traffic volumes in the city centre core, additional pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority, improvement of pedestrian facilities, in particular safe crossings, improvements to the public realm and use of universal design'.*

The above Key Transportation Components represent key characteristics of the Proposed Scheme, in that, they promote improved pedestrian, cycle and bus transport infrastructure. The Proposed Scheme is therefore supported by, and specifically identified as a keen enabler of the RSES.

BusConnects is identified as a key infrastructure project to deliver on the principles of Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity, which will support the regional growth strategy for the Northern and Western Region including the Galway MASP.

The Proposed Scheme will support continued improved integration of transport with land use planning. The delivery of improved high-capacity Core Bus Corridors will enable and support the delivery of both residential and economic development opportunities, facilitating the sustainable growth of Galway MASP. The dedicated bus lanes proposed will improve bus journey times and reliability while the cycle lane and pedestrian infrastructure will promote modal shift from private car to active travel. The RSES not only seeks an improved and enhanced bus network but also places sustainable travel at the core of its transport objectives.

2.2.5 Local Policy

2.2.5.1 Galway Transport Strategy

The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) (Galway City Council (GCC), 2016) is a comprehensive transport strategy for Galway City and its environs (including areas within the jurisdiction of Galway County Council), intended to establish a framework for the development of the transport network over the next 20 to 30 years. The GTS sets out proposals for the road network, public transport network, walking network and cycling network, and contains a number of significant proposals which will allow the city to continue to grow in a sustainable manner. The GTS has been adopted by both GCC and Galway County Council, and is implemented through the policies of their Development Plans.

The following principles are set out in the GTS:

1. To promote and encourage sustainable transport, and in particular to make it convenient and attractive to walk, cycle or use public transport.
2. To improve accessibility and permeability to, and within the city centre for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. While also maintaining an appropriate level of access for vehicular traffic for commercial and retail purposes.
3. To maximise the safety and security of pedestrians, cyclists and other transport users, particularly within the core city centre.
4. To manage and increase transport capacity (where necessary), for the efficient movement of people and goods into and within the city.
5. To provide opportunities to enhance the city centre public realm through traffic management and transport interventions.
6. To maintain and develop transport infrastructure and services to a high degree of quality and resilience.
7. To adopt a 'smarter technology' approach to all transport interventions, whereby transport infrastructure and services are future-proofed.

The GTS contains a number of comprehensive proposals across a number of transport modes, including the following significant measures:

- Establishment of a new cross-city bus network to serve Galway City;
- Establishment of primary, secondary and feeder cycle networks;
- Provision of a safe and efficient plan for general traffic to access key destinations in Galway City Centre, while discouraging through traffic;
- Creation of a high-quality public transport corridor through the city from east to west, which will be utilised to some extent by all proposed bus services (the Cross-City Link);
- Transformation of Galway City Centre into a new space where walking, cycling and public transport are all prioritised over private car traffic;
- Establishment of an orbital two-way traffic route around Galway City Centre;
- Establishment of an inner-city two-way traffic route in the environs of Galway City Centre;
- Implementation of the N6 Galway City Ring Road (N6GCRR) scheme to provide an additional crossing of River Corrib to the north of Quincentenary Bridge; and
- Localised route and junction improvement works at a number of locations to improve junction efficiency, to improve pedestrian and cyclist facilities and to incorporate priority for public transport services.

The GTS is underpinned by an extensive volume of supporting material, including Environmental Screening Assessments, Technical Feasibility Reports and Scheme Appraisal Reports using the Western Regional Multi-Modal Model, to ensure that a robust, evidence-based strategy can be put in place. The GTS was completed in September 2016 and has subsequently been incorporated and adopted into the Galway County Council Development Plan (Section 2.2.5.2) and GCC Development Plan (Section 2.2.5.3).

The GTS examined a number of options for each project identified and undertook a Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) of each option utilising the Common Appraisal Framework (CAF) for Transport Projects and Programmes appraisal categories.

Utilising the assessment criteria above, the GTS identified proposed improvements to the city transport network including the ‘Cross City Link’ (i.e. the Proposed Scheme), ‘City Centre Access Network’, and ‘Inner City Access Route’.

The Cross City Link (i.e. the Proposed Scheme) is to form a central route for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians along a corridor from west to east, through the city centre. It will complement the proposed new city bus network routes approaching from the east and west of the city centre, which coalesce along this high-quality corridor, providing high-frequency services with journey time reliability and opportunities for interchange.

The Cross City Link (i.e. the Proposed Scheme) will ensure that public transport services can access key areas such as the retail & recreational centre of the city, public transport hubs at the rail & bus stations, City & County Halls along with the city centre hotels and bed & breakfasts on College Road, key areas such as University Hospital Galway, NUI Galway, the Sportsgrounds and the car parking and coach facilities at Galway Cathedral.

Within the GTS proposals for Galway City Centre, this central priority corridor is to be complemented by a two-way inner-city vehicle access route linking Lough Atalia Road to the N6 via Fairgreen Road, Bóthar Uí hEithir, Prospect Hill, Bóthar na mBan and Headford Road. The Proposed Scheme also includes the reconfiguration of traffic flow along the Inner-City Access Route between the junction of Bóthar Uí hEithir/College Road and Bóthar na mBan/Headford Road, and improvements to ancillary adjacent streets.

2.2.5.2 The Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028)

This plan which was adopted in May 2022, makes provision for the following objectives of relevance to the Proposed Scheme

GCTPS 1 Galway County Transport & Planning Study and Galway Transportation Strategy

It is a policy objective of Galway County Council to support and facilitate the implementation of the Galway County Transport & Planning Study and Galway Transport & Planning Study across all modes of transport.

GCTPS 3 Sustainable Transport

The County will seek to support a variety of measures which will reduce car dependency for residents, and will specifically seek to improve access to sustainable transport choices (including responsive and “flexible” modes) for those residents in rural areas of the County.

GCTPS 9 Collaboration with Galway City

The Galway County Council will collaborate with Galway City Council as appropriate to bring forward transport proposals and measures which will enhance travel to and from Galway City in a manner which is compatible with the GTS and GCTPS, and where possible maximises the benefits to both areas from this approach.

PT 2 Development of Public Transport Infrastructure To engage and work closely with the National Transport Authority and other relevant transport authorities and both public and private operators, in facilitating and securing improvements to footpaths, pedestrian crossing points and permeability to facilitate access and encourage use of public transport and to secure the implementation of recommendations of the GTS bus network and the expansion of public transport infrastructure in areas such as spaces for parking of local link buses and services in the County.

2.2.5.3 Galway City Development Plan (2017-2023)

GCC have recently commenced a review of the Galway City Development Plan, undertaking early stage public consultation. A revised Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 is not expected to be finalised until February 2023.

The existing Galway City Development Plan (2017 - 2023) (GCC, 2017) sets out a strategic transport aim as follows:

‘To integrate sustainable land use and transportation, facilitating access and choice to a range of transport modes, accessible to all sections of the community that ensures safety and ease of movement to and within the city and onward connectivity to the wider area of County Galway and the West Region.’

The implementation of the GTS is also a strategic aim of GCC, as set out within the City Development Plan; in particular the implementation of the Proposed Scheme and a reduction in car movements through the city centre and the implementation of the proposed cross-city radial bus network as identified in the GTS.

The Galway City Development Plan also lists the following specific objectives in relation to Transportation and specifically in relation to Public Transport and Pedestrians:

- *Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the provision of the ‘Cross – City Link’ as part of the GTS;*
- *Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the development of a public bus network in accordance with the GTS;*
- *Support the improvement of access for public transport, pedestrian and cyclists to and within major employment areas and institutions;*
- *Prioritise improvements to pedestrian movements and safety within the city centre including extension of pedestrianisation, provision of wider footpaths and shared streets; and*
- *Prioritise improvements to pedestrian movements and safety between the City Centre, Woodquay and Bóthar na mBan to the Headford Road LAP area.*

The Proposed Scheme is directly in keeping with each of the strategic and specific objectives of the existing Galway City Development Plan.

2.2.5.4 Galway City Public Realm Strategy

The Galway Public Realm Strategy (GCC 2019) explores the current condition of Galway City’s townscape and network of public and green spaces, and sets out a vision and strategy for improvements to guide investment and development in the future. The strategy recognises the ambition of the GTS to provide more space within the public realm for pedestrians and cyclists, and seeks to utilise this ambition advantageously within the public realm.

The Proposed Scheme includes some public realm enhancements which has been developed in line with the Public Realm Strategy and with pedestrian and cyclist prioritisation in mind, refer to Chapter 16, (Landscape (Townscape) and Visual) of this EIAR for further details.

2.2.5.5 GCC Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

As part of the Climate Change Action Plan 2019 (see Section 2.2.3.8), GCC produced and adopted its own Climate Adaptation Strategy in 2019 (GCC, 2019). The GCC Climate Adaptation Strategy considers actions to be implemented by GCC, in order to tackle the significant issues of climate change within Galway City.

The strategy identifies transport infrastructure as critical infrastructure and highlights smarter travel as a way of reducing the demand on the infrastructure and subsequently reducing transport emissions. To achieve effective climate adaptation, the strategy includes several actions which the Proposed Scheme supports.

Climate Adaptation Strategy Action 8-2 is of particular relevance to the Proposed Scheme:

‘Develop policies to reduce air pollution from road vehicles, which promote a modal shift to cycling, public transport and support the decarbonisation of road vehicles.’

2.2.5.6 Galway City Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021

This plan aims to *‘promote and support economic development and to promote and support local and community development in Galway City’*. Goal 4 states *‘Galway. A sustainable, resilient urban environment and the regional capital of the West’*, and the plan aims to support the improvement of transport infrastructure, in line with the Integrated Transport Management Programme for Galway City (Galway Transport Strategy) in order to help realise this goal. The Proposed Scheme is aligned with this approach (see section 2.2.5.1).

2.3 Transport Need

In preparing the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) a number of studies were undertaken by GCC and the National Transport Authority (NTA) to assess the need and demand for transport improvements in Galway City and the surrounding areas. In these studies, transport demand and supply issues were examined and the transport interventions required to meet future demand were derived. The recommendations from these studies have been taken on board in the formulation of the GTS.

The following sections provide a summary of the need for transport solutions to help Galway City and the surrounding areas achieve sustainable growth and the vision of the GTS for Galway: *‘a connected city region driven by smarter mobility.’*

2.3.1 Current Issues Affecting the Transport Network

A number of specific characteristics of Galway City and environs result in significant problems and inefficiencies with respect to the movement of people and goods, including:

- An over-reliance on private cars;
- Peak hour congestion and journey time unreliability for all motorised transport;
- Safety concerns as a result of traffic congestion;
- Many key junctions within the city operating at or over capacity;
- Connectivity issues on the National and Regional road network resulting in significant volumes of cross-county and strategic travel demand between east and west Galway being concentrated and funnelled through the city area in order to cross the River Corrib;
- The pattern of residential development in the area, along with the location of employment destinations, generating a large amount of cross-city as well as city-bound travel demand;
- Large amounts of residential development located proximate to major employment and educational destinations city-wide, but not readily accessible by walking, cycling or public transport, thereby encouraging travel by private car;
- The short distance between Lough Corrib and Galway Bay, two significant natural physical constraints impacting upon the city;
- A natural barrier to cross-city and cross-county travel formed by Lough Corrib, the River Corrib and Galway Bay, with the three principal river crossings experiencing heavy traffic flows, leading to congestion and delay;
- The position of Galway City as a major regional centre for employment and education for a large geographical area, leading to large numbers of long-distance commuters for whom public transport is not currently a viable option, which leads to greater numbers of cars entering the city;
- The impact of traffic congestion on the City's reputation, particularly with regard to inward development;
- The suburban nature of much of the residential areas, and the wide distribution of jobs across a number of central and non-central locations, which lead to a situation where travel by public transport is not a viable option for many journeys;
- Long journey times and delays on the current bus network, due in part to the limited available road space in the city centre for introducing bus priority which both reduces its attractiveness to passengers and increases costs of operating; and
- Limited road space on most of the principal roads, which reduces opportunities for safe and comfortable cycling.

2.3.2 The Pedestrian Network

The GTS identified areas of Galway City where the quality of the pedestrian facilities is poor and where private and public vehicular traffic impacts on the safety and comfort of pedestrians.

There are streets throughout Galway City with substandard or missing footpaths, limited or no crossing facilities, and permeability issues resulting from the manner in which residential areas have been developed. Some suburban residential areas are accessible by direct routes, but these are substandard and not suitable for use by mobility impaired pedestrians. Other residential areas have no footpaths provided for pedestrian access to main thoroughfares. The absence of permeability within housing areas often leads to excessively circuitous trips for pedestrians to walk relatively short distances. Within a 'walkable city', all of these factors discourage walking as an active travel mode for short trips. In order to address this, the GTS aims:

- *To provide improvements for pedestrians along city centre public transport corridors;*
- *To increase priority given to pedestrians over road traffic;*
- *To increase legibility and wayfinding; and*
- *To increase the quality, comfort and safety of the pedestrian facilities.*

The GTS identifies measures to ensure that the needs of pedestrians, including the mobility impaired and disabled, are fully considered in the design of all new facilities and upgrades of existing facilities. Measures include:

- *Revision of road junction layouts, where appropriate, to provide dedicated pedestrian crossings, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, provide more direct pedestrian routes and reduce the speed of turning traffic;*
- *Creation of permeable pedestrian environments in residential areas, amenable to walking, and maximising accessibility to the proposed bus network;*
- *In conjunction with An Garda Síochána, evaluate, and where appropriate seek the introduction of, lower speed limits in the core city centre area and on residential streets;*
- *Cooperation with other agencies in the enforcement of laws in relation to parking on footpaths; and*
- *Removal of unnecessary street clutter to facilitate ease of movement along streets and through 'places'.*

The Proposed Scheme affords the opportunity to implement the measures identified in the GTS and improve the pedestrian environment along, and in some instances in the vicinity of the route of the Proposed Scheme, while taking cognisance of, and supporting pedestrian and public realm planning objectives locally. Refer to Chapter 6 (Traffic & Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Scheme for an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Scheme on the pedestrian network.

2.3.3 The Cycle Network

Although Galway City's generally flat topography is conducive to cycling, the GTS reports that the modal share of all journeys by bicycle was 5% in 2016, which is relatively low. Similar to the bus network (see Section 2.3.4), the existing network of cycle infrastructure is limited and discontinuous. Furthermore, the volume of vehicular traffic on the narrow city centre streets also contributes to an environment that is neither appealing nor perceived as safe for cycling.

While there have been numerous cycle network improvements in recent years, not least the roll-out of the Bike Share Scheme, and several schemes in development aimed at enhancing the network, the cycling environment remains limited. Diagram 2.2 indicates the extent of the cycle network as reported in the GTS in 2016.

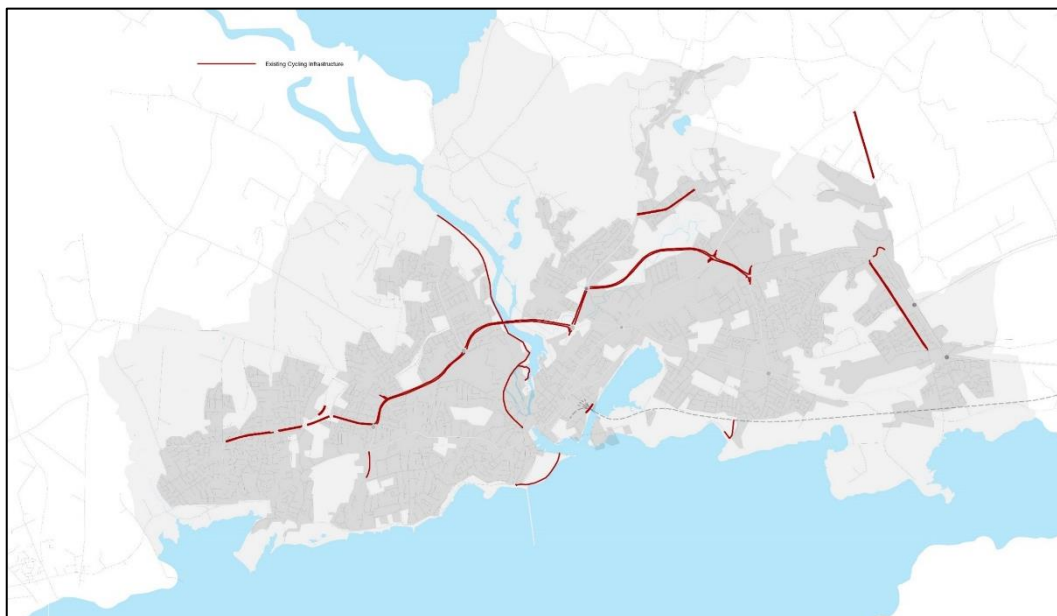


Diagram 2.2: Extent of Cycle Network in Galway City (GTS, 2016)

GTS Appendix F “GTS Cycle Network & Infrastructure Development” presents the cycle network proposed by the GTS. The cycle network has been developed on the basis of three networks categorised as primary, secondary and feeder networks (Diagram 2.3). The GTS proposes to provide a cycle network which support each other and reinforce connections across the urban area. The GTS includes the following aims for the cycle network:

- To provide a primary ‘trunk’ cycle network which will provide a convenient and safe route for medium-distance radial commuter/leisure journeys;
- To provide a secondary cycle network which will provide a recognisable grid network for local journeys, and will be connected to the primary network for longer journeys.
- To provide feeder cycle links on streets and roads which are highly constrained or more suited to other modes, but need to cater for cyclists also. These are generally cycle-friendly advisory routes where traffic calming and management measures allow cyclists and motorists to mix safely; and
- To increase options for cycling in and across the city centre which will remove through traffic from the city centre. This will create a shared environment where cyclists can safely use the street network.

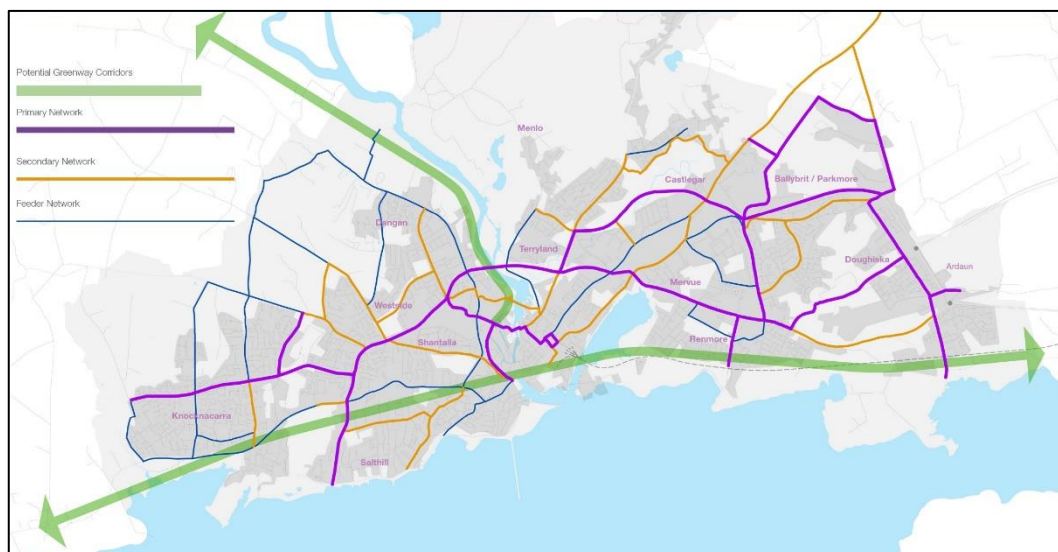


Diagram 2.3: Cycle Network proposed in the GTS (GTS, 2016)

The GTS identifies the infrastructure measures required to provide a continuous and safe cycle network. The aims for each category of cycle network and include:

- Greenway Corridors and primary routes are generally either segregated, off-road cycle only paths, or dedicated cycle lanes along new or existing roads. Wherever possible, these routes are separated from traffic by kerbs or edge markings.
- Secondary links are a combination of off-road cycle paths, cycle lanes along existing roads, shared bus and cycle lanes, and traffic-calmed roads. They often run parallel to primary routes, providing an alternative link.
- Feeder links are generally cycle-friendly advisory routes where traffic calming and management measures allow cyclists and motorists to mix safely.

The GTS also states that, in addition to this, proposed traffic management measures play a part in providing an environment that welcomes cyclists. The Proposed Scheme is an important element in this, by limiting access to parts of the city for private motorised vehicles, and thereby providing priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport vehicles.

The physical infrastructure measures identified in the GTS and proposed as part of the Proposed Scheme include the measures identified in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Cycling Infrastructure Measures (GTS, 2016) Relevant to the Proposed Scheme

Location	Cycling Infrastructure Measures proposed by GTS	Category
University Road	Limited access for private motorised vehicles provides priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport.	Primary
Salmon Weir Bridge	Cyclists and public transport only.	Primary

Location	Cycling Infrastructure Measures proposed by GTS	Category
St. Francis Street	Cyclists and public transport only.	Primary
Eglinton Street	Cyclists and public transport only.	Primary
Williamsgate Street	Cyclists and public transport only.	Primary
Eyre Square	Cyclists and public transport only.	Primary
Forster Street	Cyclists and public transport only.	Secondary
College Road	Limited access for private motorised vehicles provides priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport.	Secondary
Dublin Road	Two way segregated cycleway on southern side of the road in the vicinity of Moneenageisha, crossing the Dublin Road and continuing along the northern side of the road as far as the current entrance to Merlin Park Hospital.	Primary

In addition to the physical cycle infrastructure measures identified in Table 2.4 above, the GTS proposed cycle network will require traffic management measures to provide an environment that welcomes cyclists. The Proposed Scheme is an important element in achieving the aims of the GTS, by limiting access to parts of the core city centre for private motorised vehicles / through traffic, and thereby providing priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport vehicles.

Refer to Chapter 6 (Traffic and Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Scheme for an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Scheme on the cycle network.

2.3.4 The Bus Network

The existing bus network within Galway City and suburbs is shown in Diagram 2.4. It can be clearly seen that Eyre Square is the focal point for the bus network and for interchange between routes.

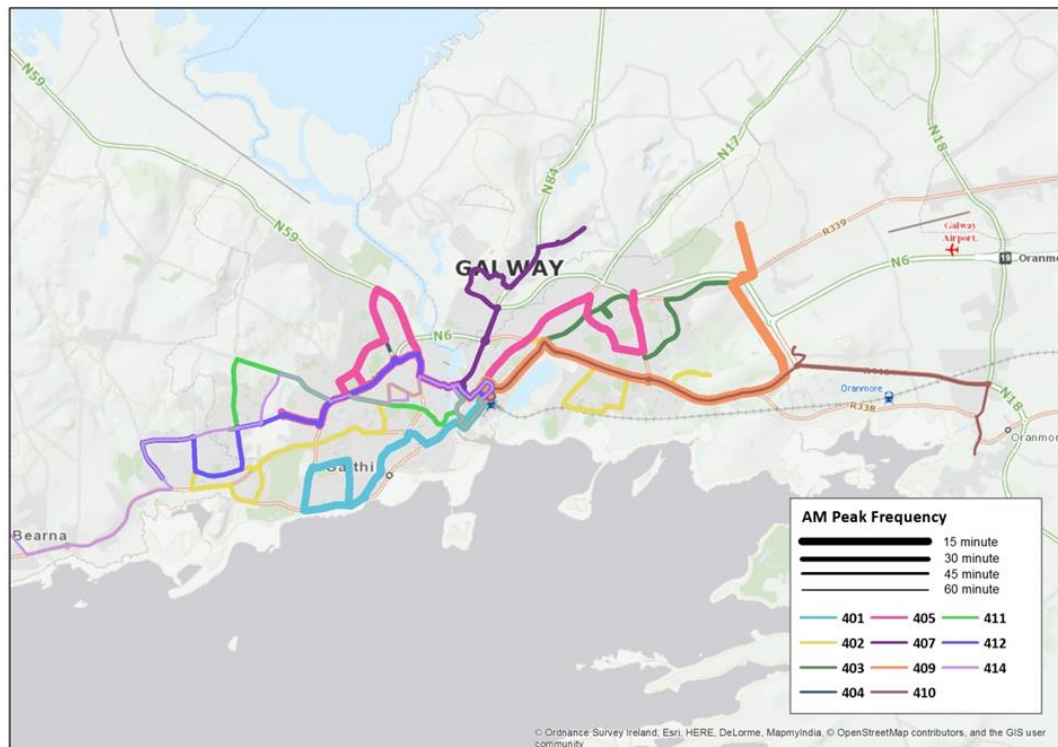


Diagram 2.4: Existing Bus Network (GTS, 2016)

The existing bus priority within Galway City and suburbs is shown in Diagram 2.5. There is a total of approximately 10.4km of dedicated bus lanes in Galway City (GTS, 2016) and suburbs of which, almost 30% are outside the city, near Baile Chláir. Sections of the existing network where there is no designated priority are therefore completely dependent on prevailing traffic conditions, with reliability of public transport services impacted by traffic congestion. Refer to Chapter 6 (Traffic and Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Scheme on the bus network.



Diagram 2.5: Existing Bus Priority (GTS, 2016)

The absence of dedicated bus priority (both physical, e.g., bus lanes and / or supporting traffic management measures) compromises the reliability of the existing public transport service offering, and therefore reduces the appeal of the bus services available (local, regional and inter-city). In addition, congestion and delay on the road and street network quickly propagates and impacts on the bus service where there is no priority and the bus must merge with general traffic, undermining the public transport service further.

GTS Appendix C ‘GTS Public Transport Network Development’, presents the Galway City Bus Network (envisaged in 2016), which proposes several bus network routes (Diagram 2.6):

- Green Route: Knocknacarra – City Centre – Parkmore Industrial Estate (via Seamus Quirke Road and Dublin Road);
- Red Route: Knocknacarra – City Centre – Parkmore Industrial Estate (via Salthill and Ballybrit Industrial Estate);
- Blue Route: Clybaun Road – City Centre – Castlegar (via Dr Mannix Road and Tirellan);
- Yellow Route: Dangan – City Centre – Parkmore Industrial Estate (via Westside Shopping Centre and Castlepark); and
- Brown Route: Bearna – City Centre – Oranmore (via Seamus Quirke Road and Deerpark Industrial Estate).

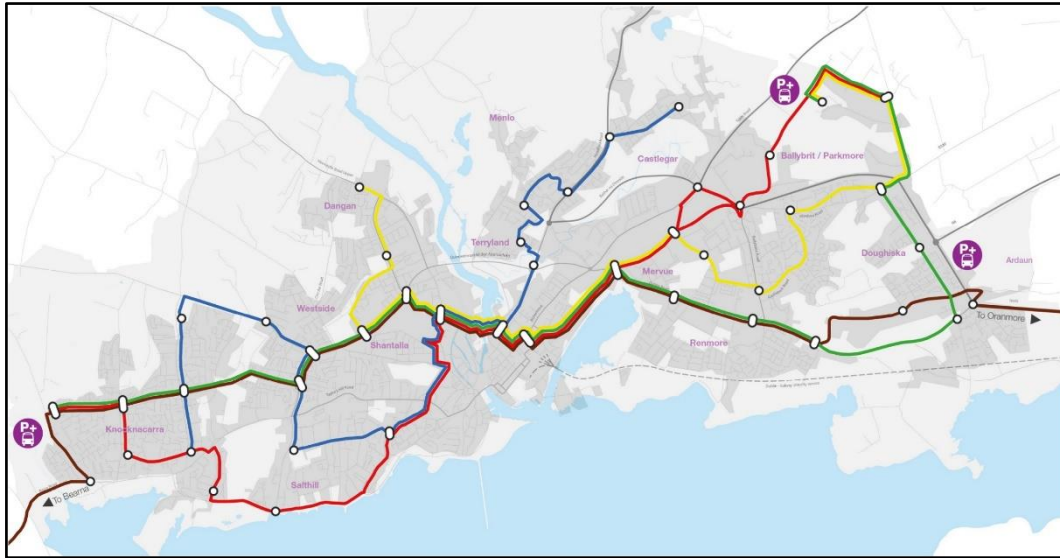


Diagram 2.6: Galway City Bus Network Proposed Routes (GTS, 2016)

While the future bus network will continuously be required to adapt to changing travel demands, as is the case with the majority of existing bus services, all the bus services routes identified in the GTS, are supported in terms of the infrastructure and traffic management measures provided by the Proposed Scheme.

The Galway City Bus Network (Diagram 2.6) has been developed on the basis of service frequency and catchment areas. The aspiration of GTS is that all routes will operate at a 15-minute frequency (or better) during the peak period. Within the GTS study area there are circa 35,000 properties, 90% of which are residential. It is the intention of the GTS to ensure that as many of these properties as possible are within 10 minutes walking distance of a bus service.



Diagram 2.7: Galway City Bus Network Bus Priority Infrastructure (GTS, 2016)

The physical infrastructure and traffic management measures identified in the GTS and proposed as part of the Proposed Scheme include the measures presented in Diagram 2.7 identified in Table 2.5.

The GTS states that it is intended that dedicated bus infrastructure will be developed to the greatest extent possible along the core routes in order to deliver continuous bus priority on the approaches to the city and through the core city centre area. However, the GTS also recognises that on some approaches, and certainly through the city centre, it is not practical to achieve this within the constraints of the current road layout and allocation of space, and hence there will be an increasing emphasis on overall traffic management and the removal of through-traffic on the Proposed Scheme. Furthermore, the GTS acknowledges that a consequence of this alteration of traffic networks and bus routes, the current bus lane on Bóthar Bhreandáin Uí hEithir and Forster Street will be removed. As a result, Forster Street will be restricted to use by public transport and for local access only and the Bóthar Bhreandáin Uí hEithir will be converted for use by general traffic as part of the city centre access network.

Table 2.5: Galway City Bus Network Bus Priority Infrastructure Measures proposed by the GTS (GTS, 2016)

Location	Bus Priority Infrastructure Measures proposed by GTS
University Road	Limited access for private motorised vehicles.
Salmon Weir Bridge	Public transport and cyclists only.
St. Francis Street	Public transport and cyclists only.
Eglinton Street	Public transport and cyclists only.
Williamsgate Street	Public transport and cyclists only.
Eyre Square	Public transport and cyclists only.
Forster Street	Public transport and cyclists only.
College Road	Limited access for private motorised vehicles.
R338 Dublin Road	Bus lane inbound on approach to Moneenageisha Cross.
R338 Dublin Road	Extension of existing bus lane outbound as far as Skerrit Roundabout.

Refer to Chapter 6: (Traffic and Transport) of this EIAR for an assessment of the Proposed Scheme for an assessment of the impact of the Proposed Scheme on the bus network.

2.4 Benefits of the Proposed Scheme

The Proposed Scheme has been designed to facilitate improved efficiency of the transport network through the improvement of the infrastructure for active (walking and cycling) and public transport modes making them attractive alternatives to car-based journeys. Central to the design is the optimization of roadway space with a focus on the movement of people rather than vehicles along the route and through the junctions. A typical double-deck bus takes up the same road space as three standard cars but typically carries 50-100 times the number of passengers.

On average, a typical double-deck bus carries approximately 60-70 passengers making the bus typically 20 times more efficient in providing people movement capacity within the equivalent spatial area of three cars. These efficiency gains can provide a significant reduction in road network congestion where the equivalent car capacity would require 50 or more vehicles based on average occupancy levels. Consequently, by prioritising the movement of bus over cars, significantly more people can be transported along the limited road space available. Similarly, cyclists and pedestrians require significantly less roadway space than general traffic users to move safely and efficiently along the route. Making space for improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure can significantly benefit these sustainable modes and encourage greater use of these modes.

A key objective of the Proposed Scheme is to enhance the potential for cycling along the route. Without the provision of safe cycling infrastructure, intended as part of the Proposed Scheme the Quality of Service along the route would be insufficient to attract new cyclists. Currently within the existing extents of the Proposed Scheme there are no segregated cycle tracks on the route outbound or inbound. This will increase to 95% of the route overall with some sections being fully segregated. The Proposed Scheme is implementing safe, segregated infrastructure throughout and as such is greatly enhancing the potential for cycling along the route in line with the objectives set out in Section 2.1.

The Proposed Scheme will make significant improvements to pedestrian infrastructure through the provision of increased signal crossings, introduction of traffic calming measures, improved accessibility, increased pedestrian directness and wider footpath and crossing. The scheme design has been developed in accordance with the relevant accessibility guidance.

It is anticipated that the overall quality of pedestrian infrastructure will improve as a result of the Proposed Scheme. This aligns with the overarching aim to provide enhanced walking infrastructure on the corridor. The improved walking and cycling measures that the Proposed Scheme will provide will enhance the potential to grow these modes into the future.

An assessment of transport impact arising from the delivery of the Proposed Scheme is presented in Chapter 6 (Traffic & Transport) of this EIAR.

The Proposed Scheme will address sustainable mode transport infrastructure constraints while contributing to an overall integrated sustainable transport system as proposed in the Galway Transport Strategy. It will increase the effectiveness and attractiveness of bus services operating along the corridor and will result in more people benefiting from faster journey times and improved journey time reliability.

This in turn will facilitate the increase in the bus network capacity of services operating along the corridor and thereby further increase the attractiveness of public transport. In addition, the significant segregation and safety improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure that are a key feature of the Proposed Scheme will further maximise the movement of people travelling sustainably along the corridor and will therefore cater for higher levels of future sustainable population and employment growth.

In the absence of the delivery of the Proposed Scheme, growth along this key corridor would continue to contribute to increased traffic congestion and operational issues on the road network. The Proposed Scheme delivers a reliable alternative to car-based travel that can support future sustainable growth and contribute positively towards reducing carbon emissions.

In the absence of the Proposed Scheme bus services will operate in a more congested environment, leading to higher journey times for bus and lower reliability which will lead to reduced levels of public transport use, making the bus system far less attractive and less resilient to higher levels of growth. The absence of walking and cycling measures that the Proposed Scheme will provide would significantly limit the potential to grow those modes into the future. In addition to the public transport benefits, the Proposed Scheme will also improve the existing streetscape/urban realm setting along the corridor. This will include the introduction of new and improved landscaping provisions along the corridor. A complimentary planting regime and streetscape improvements at key locations will also enhance the character of the surrounding built environment along the corridor.

The Proposed Scheme and its objectives fit within the current planning frameworks that are described in Section 2.3. The Proposed Scheme will help deliver many of the objectives on an international, national, regional and local level.

Overall, the Proposed Scheme will make a significant contribution to the overall aims and objectives of BusConnects, the Galway Transport Strategy and allow the city to grow sustainably into the future, which would not be possible in the absence of the Proposed Scheme.

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