

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION TO
AN BORD PLEANÁLA

FOR APPROVAL OF THE BUS CONNECTS GALWAY: CROSS CITY LINK (UNIVERSITY ROAD TO
DUBLIN ROAD) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER NO. CCL-CPO-001, 2022

ORAL HEARING

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE

on

Scheme Overview and Alternatives Considered (Strategic and Route Options)

by

Donal McDaid, BE, MSc (Civil), CEng, Arup

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1. Qualifications, experience and role on project

1.1 Qualifications

- 1.1.1 My name is Donal McDaid. I am a Director of Arup and lead Arup's Transport, Energy, Water and Resources Business and Services in Ireland. I qualified with a degree in Civil Engineering from University College Galway in 1993 and obtained a master's degree in civil engineering from Trinity College in 1994. I am a Chartered Engineer with Engineers Ireland with over 28 years' professional experience in a wide range of civil, transport and environmental engineering fields.

1.2 Experience

- 1.2.1 Throughout my career, I have been involved in the planning, management and co-ordination of transport, energy, and environmental projects. I have acted as both Project Manager or Project Director on public transport, bus infrastructure, road, walking and cycling projects in Ireland and overseas.
- 1.2.2 Road infrastructure project experience includes the Dublin Outer Ring Road and the M7 Osberstown Interchange & R407 Sallins Bypass.
- 1.2.3 Development transport planning projects include the National Children's Hospital Campus.
- 1.2.4 Transport strategy experience includes the 2016 Galway Transport Strategy (the 'GTS').
- 1.2.5 I am currently actively involved in the BusConnects Dublin Core Bus Infrastructure Projects as part of the Planning Team on behalf of the National Transport Authority.

1.3 Role on Project

- 1.3.1 I am the Arup Project Director for the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road) project (the Proposed Scheme).

2. Scheme Overview

- 2.1.1 The Proposed Scheme will enable and deliver efficient, safe, and integrated sustainable transport movement to and through Galway City Centre to meet travel demand. In this regard, the Proposed Scheme aligns with the objectives of the National Transport Authority (NTA) BusConnects Programme, which are:
- To enhance the capacity and potential of the public transport system by improving bus speeds, reliability, and punctuality through the provision of bus lanes and other measures to provide priority to bus movements over general traffic movements.
 - To enhance the potential for cycling by providing safe infrastructure for cycling, segregated from general traffic wherever practicable.
 - To support the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, which supports the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets.

- d. To enable compact growth, regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land, for present and future generations, through the provision of safe and efficient sustainable transport networks.
- e. To improve accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities through the provision of improved sustainable connectivity and integration with other public transport services; and
- f. To ensure that the public realm is carefully considered in the design and development of the transport infrastructure and seek to enhance key urban focal points where appropriate and feasible.

2.1.2 The Proposed Scheme forms a significant component of, and supports the realisation of several transport objectives identified for Galway City and environs within the GTS, being:

- a. The establishment of a new cross-city bus network to serve Galway City.
- b. The establishment of primary, secondary and feeder cycle networks.
- c. The provision of a safe and efficient plan for general traffic to access key destinations in Galway City Centre, while discouraging through traffic.
- d. The creation of a high-quality public transport corridor through the city from east to west, which will be utilised to some extent by all city bus services (specifically, the Cross-City Link project).
- e. The transformation of Galway City Centre into a new space where walking, cycling and public transport are all prioritised over private car traffic.
- f. The establishment of an orbital two-way traffic route around Galway City Centre (elements of this are included within the Proposed Scheme to enable implementation of the Cross-City Link high quality public transport corridor).
- g. The establishment of an inner-city two-way traffic route in the environs of Galway City Centre (elements of this are included within the Proposed Scheme to enable implementation of the Cross-City Link high quality public transport corridor); and
- h. The implementation of 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.

2.1.3 A short video used during public consultations on the Proposed Scheme will now be played. The video is publicly available to access via the link below:

- a. <https://www.crosscitylinkgalway.ie/contact-us/>

3. Policy Context

3.1 Policy Updates

3.1.1 The Proposed Scheme is fully supported by National, Regional and Local planning and transport policy objectives, as set out in Section 2.2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

3.1.2 Since the submission of the planning application for the Proposed Scheme to An Bord Pleanála, the following have been updated, and are relevant to the Proposed Scheme:

- a. The ‘Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029’;
 - b. The ‘Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2023 and 2024’; and
 - c. The completion of the Galway Bus Network Redesign by the NTA.
- 3.1.3 Relevant detail from the ‘**Galway City Development Plan 2023-2039**’, which continues to support the Proposed Scheme as a policy objective, has been set out in the Statement of Evidence from Mr Uinsinn Finn, Galway City Council.
- 3.1.4 Section 15 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended), states that a relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with:
- a. the most recent approved climate action plan;
 - b. the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy;
 - c. the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans;
 - d. the furtherance of the national climate objective; and
 - e. the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.
- 3.1.5 In developing the Proposed Scheme, Galway City Council has taken cognisance of the need to be consistent with each of these as they apply to the EIA process.

3.2 The Climate Action Plan

- 3.2.1 The role of the Proposed Scheme in supporting the Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2021 (the adopted CAP at the time of making the application) is set out in Section 2.2.3.8 of the EIAR.
- 3.2.2 The 2023 Climate Action Plan (CAP23) was launched in December 2022 and was the first to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended). In terms of specific actions relating to the Proposed Scheme, the following are noted:
- a. Action No. TR/23/17(TF) - Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies - publication of the Galway Transport Strategy – This action includes for the draft Galway Transport Strategy to be presented for public consultation in Q3 2023.
 - b. Action No. TR/23/35(TF) - Advance the BusConnects Programme in 5 cities (including Galway) – This action identifies the continued phased programme of public consultations, strategic network design, statutory planning applications and phased implementation of services and infrastructure works subject to planning and necessary Cabinet approvals.
- 3.2.3 The 2024 Climate Action Plan (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan. The updated CAP24 was approved by Government on the 20th of December 2023, subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. CAP24 sets out the latest roadmap to deliver on Ireland’s climate ambition. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022. In terms of specific actions relating to the Proposed Scheme, the following are noted:
- a. Action No. TR/24/9(TF) - Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies – programme of review, update, appraisal – This action identifies publication of finalised Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS) in Q4 2024.
 - b. Action No. TR/24/13(TF) - Advance BusConnects Programme – This action identifies the continued phased programme of public consultations, strategic network design, statutory planning applications and phased implementation of services and infrastructure works across Dublin, Cork, **Galway** (*emphasis added*), Limerick, and Waterford.

- 3.2.4 Our Climate Action Plan will enable Ireland to meet its 2030 targets and be well placed to meet mid-century decarbonisation objectives. This will also deliver cleaner air, warmer homes, a more secure energy system and a better quality of life for Irish citizens.
- 3.2.5 The Proposed Scheme is therefore not only clearly supported by CAP23 and CAP24, but also a key infrastructure project enabling the realisation of Ireland's transport sector emission reduction requirements.

3.3 Galway Bus Network Redesign

- 3.3.1 The NTA published its planned bus network for Galway on the 20th of December 2023. This represents a further refinement of the service plan which was included in the 2016 GTS.
- 3.3.2 The new network is intended to transform the public transport network across the Galway Metropolitan Area. The new network will involve the creation of new bus routes and improved bus frequencies to help transform the public transport network to meet anticipated growth and future travel demands in the region.
- 3.3.3 The redesign of the bus network is one of the nine key elements of BusConnects Galway that aims to fundamentally transform the city's bus system, making public transport more attractive and accessible. The updated analysis by the NTA concludes that the new bus network will enable more people to avail of public transport resulting in increased access to a greater number of schools and workplaces across Galway City, Bearna and Oranmore. Overall, 67% of residents will live within 400 metres of a high frequency bus route (running at a service frequency of every 15 minutes or better).
- 3.3.4 The need for the Cross City Link to support the Galway Bus Network remains, as is evident from the bus network map, reproduced as Figure 3-1 of this Statement of Evidence, and the core city centre network, reproduced as Figure 3-2.

Galway Network Map

- How BusConnects gets you where you want to go.



Figure 3-1 BusConnects Galway Network Map

Galway City Centre Network Map

- How BusConnects gets you where you want to go.

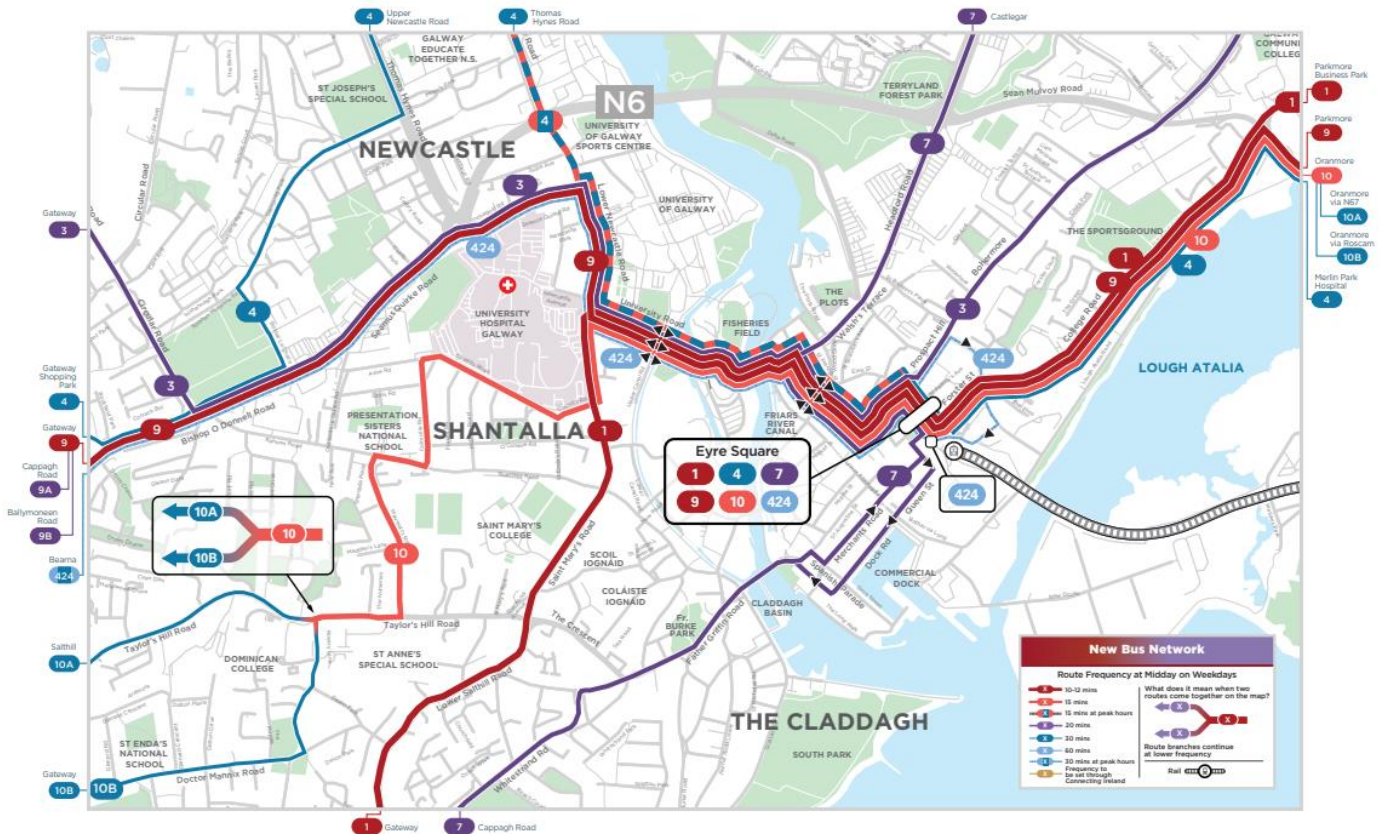


Figure 3-2 BusConnects Galway City Centre Network Map

4. Alternatives Considered: Strategic and Route Options

4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment Requirements

- 4.1.1 Reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Scheme have been fully considered and presented in Chapter 3 of the EIAR in accordance with the requirements as set out in Article 5(1)(d) of Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU “the EIA Directive”, the provisions of Annex IV to the EIA Directive and Section 50(2)(b)(vi) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended (“the Roads Act”).
- 4.1.2 The appropriateness of, and alternatives to the Proposed Scheme have been considered at three levels, being:
 - a. Strategic Alternatives
 - b. Route Alternatives; and
 - c. Design Alternatives
- 4.1.3 Alternatives at a Design Level will be addressed by my colleague, Mr Brian Burke B.E., CEng.

4.2 Strategic Alternatives

- 4.2.1 Consideration of strategic alternatives was addressed as part of the development of the GTS. Alternatives considered were:
- a. A ‘Do Nothing’ option; and
 - b. Alternative Transport Options and solutions in the form of:
 - i. System Choices
 - ii. Bus Alternatives
 - iii. Light Rail Alternatives
 - iv. Rail Integration
 - v. Demand Management Alternatives; and
 - vi. Technological Alternatives.
- 4.2.2 The conclusion from the assessment of the ‘Do Nothing’ option is that such an approach for bus services would most likely result in an exacerbation of the problems which currently arise. The capacity and potential of the public transport system would remain restricted by the existing deficient and inconsistent provision of bus lanes and the resulting sub-standard levels of bus priority and journey-time reliability. Similarly, without appropriate investment in the provision of safe cycling infrastructure and the creation of a congestion free, traffic calmed street network in the core city centre area, cycling uptake in Galway (which was previously regarded very much as a cycling city), will continue to stagnate. The same applies to the need for sufficient investment in public realm and facilities for pedestrian movement.
- 4.2.3 For all these reasons, a Do Nothing option is not considered to be a viable alternative to meet current or future transport needs of Galway relative to the outcomes which can be realised through the delivery of the Proposed Scheme.
- 4.2.4 The analysis of transport demand in Galway undertaken as part of the GTS concluded that a public transport network of services is required to provide for sufficient attractive accessibility to public transport for the widest population catchment possible within Galway City and environs.
- 4.2.5 As set out earlier in this Statement of Evidence, the final bus network redesign for Galway has now been concluded by the NTA, with the route of the ‘Cross City Link’ remaining the spine of the network in terms of where buses are routed to and through Galway City Centre.
- 4.2.6 Travel demand along any specific corridor indicated levels of demand far less than typically required or desirable for Light Rail, reinforcing the need for continued emphasis on, and need for an enhanced bus network with geographically wide service coverage. This does not however preclude the potential for corridor approaches to emerge into the future, linked to more intense land-use development which would give rise to the potential to be served by light rail. This is something that is currently being assessed further as part of the GTS review and will be concluded upon as part of the new GMATS once finalised later this year.
- 4.2.7 Demand Management focuses on the need to travel, reducing the reliance on private car usage, particularly during the commuter peaks, and encouraging use of walking, cycling and public transport. Demand management is therefore considered to be an inherent component of any existing and future transport strategy and plans for Galway and has been considered as part of the Proposed Scheme. Adopting a demand management approach, the GTS seeks to:
- a. Reduce through-car movement and traffic speeds in the city centre; and
 - b. Prioritise public transport and active travel movements in the city centre.

- 4.2.8 Technological solutions considered and subsequently adopted as part of the GTS, and applicable to the Proposed Scheme, come under the umbrella of Smarter Mobility, in the form of projects which:
- Provide additional capacity to the transportation network;
 - Incorporate demand management; and
 - Utilise intelligent systems to deliver overall efficiency and cost savings.
- 4.2.9 These have all been incorporated within the Proposed Scheme.
- 4.2.10 The GTS seeks to redress the balance in favour of pedestrians and cyclists over vehicular traffic, while the Galway Public Realm Strategy seeks to capitalise on this by creating a high-quality public realm, made possible by reducing the dominance of car traffic and upgrading the quality of the physical fabric of the city centre, through both hard and soft landscaping urban design and placemaking. In the context of the Cross-City Link and its ability to better connect places, when considering alternatives at design development stages, cognisance was given to the opportunities for public realm enhancement identified in the Galway Public Realm Strategy, where appropriate to do so.
- 4.2.11 The GTS identifies a series of aims and measures to provide a basis for developing plans and infrastructure proposals to better provide for cycling, being:
- 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 recognizable grid network for local journeys, and will be connected to the primary network for longer journeys; and
 - To increase options for cycling in and across the city centre.
- 4.2.12 Consideration of alternatives for the Cross-City Link, both at GTS preparation stage, and in subsequent route and design development stages took cognisance of these aims which ultimately shape the Proposed Scheme and will do similarly for all other projects emerging from the GTS.
- 4.2.13 In support of the objectives of the GTS, Galway City Council has introduced a 30km/h speed limit within the city centre. Bye laws giving effect to this were adopted by Galway City Council in April 2023, with new speed limits coming into effect in August 2023. The 30 km/h speed limit applies to the Cross City Link, from University Road to Lough Atalia Road and the Inner-City Access Route.
- 4.2.14 The preparation of the GTS was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The SEA included an assessment of various alternative approaches for the GTS, comprising:
- A ‘do-minimum’ approach
 - Prioritisation of a road transport-based approach
 - Prioritisation of a public transport-based approach; and
 - An integrated transport-based approach
- 4.2.15 The assessment of alternative approaches found that the integrated transport-based approach, as detailed in the GTS has the preferred outcome in terms of effectiveness and overall environmental benefit.

4.3 Route Alternatives

- 4.3.1 Section 3.3.4 of the EIAR sets out the high-level route alternatives for the Cross City Link considered as part of the GTS, taking cognisance of both the existing and future planned bus network and service provision.

- 4.3.2 In terms of identifying a primary route through the city centre, high level options assessment concentrated on the existing limited bridge crossings over the river Corrib, and the need to remove traffic congestion from the core city centre area while providing appropriate balanced alternatives for east-west orbital movement of traffic.
- 4.3.3 The Quincentenary Bridge to the north of the city currently acts as the primary National and Regional Road link for east west traffic movement. By removing more traffic from the city centre, it pushes more onto this bridge. This is however necessary to achieve the road space reallocation and modal shift objectives of the GTS and the BusConnects Programme, as enabled by the Proposed Scheme.
- 4.3.4 Of the existing bridges in the city centre, the Salmon Weir bridge was considered as the most attractive for running most public transport services across and through the city centre, routing both existing and new services in closest proximity to key trip attractors or generators, including University of Galway and University Hospital, as well as accessing the social and retail amenities catered for by Galway City Centre.
- 4.3.5 Reinforcing and enabling this route corridor, the new Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle bridge, also identified as a project within the GTS, was opened to the public in May 2023, providing a highly attractive alternative for pedestrians and cyclists, segregated from vehicular traffic on the existing bridge.