

RE: Open Letter to Party Leaders - Radical Changes to Transport MUST Be Part of the Next Programme for Government

Dear Deputy,

The election is over but a new government has not yet formed. The arrival of COVID 19 has added to the challenge of negotiations for a new Programme for Government but at the same time we cannot stand still on other issues. During the election, Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network, urged parties to implement two key transport policies - 1) the rebalancing of Land Transport funding to allocate more to cycling and 2) the provision of high quality cycling infrastructure. They will continue long into the future if Ireland is to achieve government goals on road safety, climate action, congestion, the environment and health.

From election manifestos, all political parties accept the need for increased everyday cycling while most accept the need for increased funding to 10% of the Land Transport budget which in 2020 would amount to €182M. To put this figure in context, a recent parliamentary question revealed that by August 2019 the Minister for Transport had spent approximately €2M or 0.11% of his annual Land Transport budget on cycling from his *Walking /Cycling* allocation - the principal area of expenditure for everyday cycling. We accept that an immediate increase to 10% by the Minister for Transport is not practical in 2020 or 2021 but it is realistic to ramp up investment to 10% within three or four years. Cyclist.ie is not looking for additional funding for transport – only a rebalance of transport funding to give cycling its logical share. Politicians have promoted cycling for some 20 years and in 2009 cycling policy set a target of 10% commuter cycling by 2020, but Ireland is nowhere near achieving this. The outcome of such “promotion” in the absence of adequate funding is that the level of cycling nationally has stagnated in the last 20 years. If spending on cycling is not significantly increased, the level of cycling is unlikely to significantly increase in the next 20 years.

A revision to the Strategic Framework Investment in Land Transport (SFILT) is essential. The original SFILT was developed in 2015 but now belongs to another time as it fails to take into account increasing congestion, chronic health issues, air and noise pollution. A suite of some twenty background papers informed the SFILT process but most were related to existing high car dependency and failed to give any serious consideration to increased active travel. While a paper on climate change was included, it predated by four years the report

by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action and the Government Climate Plan 2019. It also predated any consideration that Ireland's failure to meet its EU target on reduction of emissions could lead to fines amounting to millions of Euros per year. We need to ensure that all factors are taken into account in assessing transport investment and call for the adoption of the WHO Health Economic Assessment Tool ([HEAT](#)) into the transport assessment process for both large and small schemes.

The second issue which the incoming government must address is the quality of infrastructure. Last year, international attendees at the Velo-City cycling conference in Dublin were shocked at the quality of Irish cycling infrastructure. In order to attract people out of cars, high quality segregated infrastructure is essential.

Seville was able to provide a cycle network and increase cycling significantly to 8% in five years - the same period of office as an incoming Irish government. In the last five years, there has been little progress on the Greater Dublin Cycle Network and progress in Cork, Limerick and Galway has been even more protracted. Cyclists in Galway and Cork are frustrated and alarmed by their respective Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies while Limerick cyclists have little confidence in efforts to date at urban improvement by their local authority. The Strategies pay lip service to prioritising cycling and instead reflect the road-centric policies of the SFILT. In particular, traffic models are constructed on the basis that traffic levels will increase, with the inevitable "conclusion" that more roads are needed. The increases are large enough to justify "one more lane" but less than the scale of actual increases which would cause politicians to question the viability of schemes in terms of sustainability and value for money.

According to Erik Teteroo, a transport planner in sustainable transport who advises the Dutch Ministry of Transport and Environment, the UK is 50 years behind the Netherlands in terms of road planning. Irish road planning is in the same position as it largely follows UK practice. From the lengthy list of road schemes proposed under *Review of the Capital Plan 2016 - 2021* and the *National Development Plan 2018-27*, official Ireland still deludes itself that it can build its way out of congestion whereas in the short term additional roads will only move the congestion elsewhere and in the medium term the additional roads will fill up due to induced demand. The lack of vision on cycling by Irish local authorities is clearly demonstrated by several Dutch cities having current cycling levels in excess of 40% of journeys, whereas by 2039-2040 the predicted level of cycling in Galway city centre is 6% and in Cork is 4% - which are reductions from current levels.

Internationally, local authorities are one of the main agents for change in travel mode but in Ireland they are a barrier to change with no-one responsible for delivering modal change. Cyclist.ie believes that the Department of Transport should require Directors of Services for Transport to be appointed as Cycling Officers with responsibility for change in transport mode for their authority and for publishing annual progress reports.

The recently published report on *Sustainable Urban Mobility in the EU* by the European Court of Auditors found that an investment of some €16 Billion between 2014 and 2019 resulted in insignificant reduction in car dependency. Many of the projects in question were found to be based on inadequate urban mobility strategies, which lacked fundamental data and appropriate analyses, relevant targets and coordination with other plans and neighbouring municipalities. The incoming Irish government must learn from these past mistakes.

In the autumn of 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that there was only a period of 12 years left in which to limit climate change to less than 1.5°C in order to prevent a climate catastrophe. This period is now reduced to less than 11 years.

The challenges to the next Irish government are unprecedented. It MUST introduce radical change to the way transport is managed in order to achieve the desired outcomes, or as close to the desired outcomes as possible, not just on movement but also on climate action, on the environment and last, but not least, on community health.

We are happy to discuss these issues with you at any stage if you wish.

Yours sincerely,

Colm Ryder,
Chair, Cyclist.ie (Irish Cycling Advocacy Network)

Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network, is the federation of Cycling Campaign Groups, Greenway Groups, and Bike Festivals on the island of Ireland. We are the Irish member of the European Cyclists' Federation. Our vision is that cycling will be a normal part of transport and everyday life in Ireland.