



Cork Chamber N25 Upgrades Carrigtwohill to Midleton Submission

November 12th 2020

Introduction

Cork Chamber is the leading business representative organisation in Cork, proactively working to identify and progress developments that are facilitative of sustainable economic growth. Representing an employer base of close to 1,200 businesses and over 100,000 employees across the region, Cork Chamber is the largest business representation organisation in the south of Ireland. We commend Cork County Council and TII for their ongoing work to secure infrastructure that best secures the competitiveness of the Cork economy, a region that successfully competes on a European and global stage to sustain a vibrant indigenous and FDI led economy.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

This submission has been guided by our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.¹ Five specific goals have been identified which we actively advocate for throughout our work;



This commitment is supplemented and further developed through our Sustainable Cork Programme which focusses on a sustainable and resilient recovery for Cork, and which is developed in considerable detail through deep member and community engagement in our Building Economic Resilience report which sets forth a strong and sustainable vision for the future of Cork.²

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

² <https://www.corkchamber.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Sustainable-Cork-Programme-Building-Economic-Resilience.pdf>

Programme for Government

This submission also takes place in the context of the National Development Plan review which will be framed at least in part by the reality of a progressive new Programme for Government (PfG)³, which sets out that:

“We are committed to a fundamental change in the nature of transport in Ireland. Necessary improvements in climate impact, quality of life, air quality and physical and mental health demand that every effort is made by the Government to make active travel and public transport better and more accessible. Each local authority will be immediately mandated to carry out an assessment of their road network, to see where space can be reallocated for pedestrians and cyclists.”

The PfG also includes support for an integrated network of greenways, and a commitment to a 2:1 ratio of expenditure between new public transport infrastructure and new roads over its lifetime, maintained in each Budget by the Government. There is also a commitment to prioritising the rail network in Cork which also runs along the Cork Eastern transport corridor. In relation to safety Government commit to a new road safety strategy focused on reducing death and injuries of vulnerable road users, pedestrians, and cyclists and N25 upgrades must focus on this element too.

Cork Eastern Transport Corridor

The Cork Eastern Transport Corridor, running from the City eastwards has historically been referred to as the N25 corridor reflecting the real primacy of the road as the dominant method of transport. Historical upgrades have led to great improvement, taking traffic out of Glounthaune, Carrigtwohill and Midleton, in the same way that in time the N22 will remove traffic from Macroom and Ballyvourney. These improvements have been essential to both communities and to transport efficiency.

It is still essential to emphasise the importance of the N25 as a significant transport asset, and it may continue to be the primary transport asset in the corridor, however, it is now appropriate to robustly pursue and implement rail, bus, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure with equal or more urgency. The importance of the N25 is clear, but it must be considered as one of many important transport assets along our eastern corridor.

Pursuing road improvements in isolation does not take account of reality of the growth projections for Cork, as set out in Ireland 2040, and the absolute necessity for multimodal transport to service this projected demand. We must establish an infrastructure that provides options and does not consign current and future talent exclusively to reliance on the car.

CMATS puts Cork in a unique and enviable position to transform mobility and sets forth a policy blueprint from which to develop and implement detailed interventions in our mobility network. CMATS supports an interurban cycleway running from Midleton to Cork and a secondary network connecting to Cobh. It includes Bus Connects routes utilising the N25. It includes dual track rail to Midleton with increased frequency of service and new stations at Carrigtwohill West and Water Rock. These developments are of absolute and total importance to the creation of a functioning

³ https://www.finegael.ie/app/uploads/2020/06/ProgrammeforGovernment_Final_16.06.20-1.pdf

eastern corridor, that offers a facilitative environment for investors and an enjoyable environment for residents alike.

Regional Strategic Importance

The N25 is of regionally significant importance and this is set out in National Development Plan⁴ which supports the development of appraisal and planning in readiness for construction. It provides a valuable function as a commuter route within the metropolitan area and as an inter-regional route connecting Cork and Waterford, which is of national strategic significance for haulage, goods and service provision. The significance is also acknowledged in the RSES.⁵ It is clear that upgrades which remove regional traffic from Castlemartyr and Killeagh should also be progressed at pace to remove detrimental heavy traffic from these unique and character filled towns which boast such strong natural and tourism assets.

Ballyadam – Carrigtwohill West

The predicted population growth in Cork will be driven by an influx of talented people encouraged by all that our natural, social and economic environment has to offer. Economic resilience is key and building on existing strengths requires us to look to embedded sectors with the same enthusiasm and facilitative environment that created our economy in the first place. We can't be complacent about what we already have, or about what we may achieve with strategic planning.

Cork has built an international reputation and track record as a location for attracting and sustaining large scale indigenous and foreign direct investment in advanced manufacturing sectors such as biopharmaceutical, medical technologies, ICT and food technology. These manufacturing sectors remain a cornerstone of the Cork regional economy providing high quality jobs and sustaining a large network of supporting businesses.

A major factor in Cork's success in attracting manufacturing FDI has been the availability of high-quality serviced lands in strategic city environ locations, in particular, Ringaskiddy, Little Island and Carrigtwohill. However, the success of these locations has inevitably led to a reduction in the number of viable greenfield sites now available for new investment. Challenges in terms of access (eg Little Island, Ringaskiddy and Carrigtwohill, Ballyadam) and the availability of key utilities to support new large industry are also coming under pressure. Increased competition from other regions seeking to attract manufacturing FDI in the high-tech manufacturing sectors has also intensified over the past decade.

As such the importance of a functioning and enabled Ballyadam has never been more important. The IDA land at Ballyadam is an asset that is of significant regional economic importance. The N25 upgrades set out in the proposals should be of the highest standards in relation to access to Ballyadam with an appropriately designed interchange, that takes account of lessons learned in Little Island with its restrictive access and lack of provision for public and sustainable transport corridors. Rail access at Carrigtwohill West and a cycle connectivity, east to Midleton and west to Cork are also

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<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/37937/12baa8fe0dcb43a78122fb316dc51277.pdf#page=null>

⁵ <http://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Southern%20Regional%20Assembly%20RSES%202020%20High%20Res.pdf>

essential to the attraction of talent and investment to this site. Integration with Bus Connects must also be planned for.

Little Island & The Dunkettle Interchange

While not within the scope of the design envelope of this consultation, it is relevant and must be acknowledged that Little Island remains an exceptional area of high value employment that is well planned for in terms of the Little Island Transport Strategy which seeks to retrofit a greater balance of mobility options on an area that has all but exclusively relied on car usage. The Dunkettle Interchange is hugely significant in terms of the positive impact it will have on regional traffic flow and for the accessibility to Little Island and the facilitation of bus, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure. However, mobility improvements to Little Island remain a key component of the improvement of the Eastern Corridor.

Midleton & the Midleton to Youghal Greenway

While not entirely within the scope of the design envelope of this consultation, it is relevant and must be acknowledged that Midleton, will be in a position of unique economic opportunity with the progression of the Midleton to Youghal Greenway which is a valuable and visionary project. It would seem abstract and utterly disjointed for Midleton not to connect onwards to Carrigtwohill, hence connecting Youghal to the City. Connectivity to Cobh and to Roches Point would complete the package creating an incredible tourism asset and provide a real USP for the whole of East Cork. In parallel, there is an opportunity to continue to thoroughly enhance the safety and experience of pedestrians and cyclists within Midleton and Youghal, to ensure the greenway experience is not tarnished at each destination, as is arguably the case in other greenways currently in place.

Safety

It is obvious to any road user that the number of junctions and the shortness of access and exit slip roads, pose a significant safety risk to current road users, from cyclists to motorists and even pedestrians who use the route to access their homes through lack of any alternative.

Upgrade/Route Selection

The upgrade to the N25, as set out, is necessary from the perspective of enhancing access the high-value FDI site at Ballyadam, it's inter-regional interconnectivity significance and the enhancement of safety for all road users.

It is also clear that upgrading the road, based on the current available designs, does not appear to enhance mobility options along the corridor. It appears to solely improve the asset for motorised vehicular movements. This is an important and essential improvement, but it cannot happen in isolation, and mixed mobility options must either be incorporated or progressed in parallel out of functional necessity and to meet the clear need to address sustainability, and synchronise with Government policy.

Based on the presented options, the red option, based on the location of a significant junction at Ballyadam, would appear to be the most appropriate option, from the perspective of economic development. We note also that it most closely tracks the existing route, minimising any reduction in agricultural land from economic use. From a safety perspective, the brown option should be implemented immediately, as a minimum viable improvement.



Consultation

As ever, we encourage the project team to engage proactively with the community and stakeholders throughout the development process.

Conclusion

Cork Chamber supports the upgrading of the N25 and in particular the access to Ballyadam as a critical component of the upgrading of the eastern transport corridor. For the reasons outlined throughout this submission we encourage the project team to take every available opportunity to complement and/or implement CMATS objectives in the final design stages and to ensure that the design is leading, contemporary, safe and progressive in relation to multi modal mobility.