

CNDMR Public Consultation,
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To whom it may concern,

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork City and County, uniting, representing and supporting our members and community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for 2024-25.

Cork Chamber's advocacy efforts are guided by the views and priorities of our partners, and are shaped by our continuous engagement with members, our board and key stakeholders in Cork City and County. Cork Chamber is deeply committed to sustainability, embedding it within all our activities and initiatives.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process on the emerging preferred route for the Cork Northern Distributor Multi-Modal Road (CNDMR), which was first identified in the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) in 2020. The CMATS noted the need for this east-west route on the north side of Cork city.

The stated aim of the scheme is to provide improved access for existing and future communities along the route and the wider city, to facilitate the sustainable development of the area, and to provide a safe, attractive route with dedicated infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and traffic.

Cork Chamber shares in this vision of creating sustainable transport corridors and people-centric environments. Such projects will contribute to Cork's development as a sustainable city with vibrant communities and a strong quality of life. In doing so, Cork will be well-positioned to attract and retain investment and talent.

In our manifesto published ahead of the 2024 General Election, Cork Chamber noted the importance of progressing the Northern Distributor Road. It is vital to the north of Cork city and will cater for access to planned development lands, provide walking and cycling linkages, as well as access to orbital public transport routes, and allow for the removal of certain traffic from the city centre.

It is a key component in achieving commercial, residential, and environmental targets for Cork, both city and county, and, indeed, the southern region as a whole.

Residential benefits

Among the stated aims of the CNDMR project is the unlocking of lands on the northside of the city which are zoned for residential use.

Housing supply in Cork remains a pressing concern for Cork Chamber and our members. The Housing Commission has estimated that as of the 2022 census, there was a deficit of between 24,000 and 29,000 homes in Cork. All steps that can be taken to remedy the current shortage of available housing are to be welcomed.

Cork Chamber has called on the government to target the delivery of between 7,500 and 10,000 housing units per year as Cork's population is projected to grow considerably in the coming decades. To achieve this aim, access to zoned and serviced land for housing developments is essential and the preferred route for the CNDMR as mapped out in this consultation would help to unlock vast swathes of land across the city's northside.

These areas would be within commuting distance of the existing city centre and would also provide greenfield sites that could facilitate the development of new communities with standalone services too.

Additionally, we recommend consultation with existing communities in the vicinity of the preferred route to ensure proper integration during the development process.

Transport and sustainability

Improvements to infrastructure, connectivity and accessibility are critical to enhancing Ireland's competitiveness and sustainable economic development. Cork currently has an opportunity to integrate economic growth and environmental responsibility, with a number of major infrastructure projects that will promote sustainable transport choices. The multi-modal aspects of the CNDMR scheme as proposed are a clear example of this, with segregated spaces for buses, cyclists and pedestrians, in addition to space for private vehicles.

The creation of dedicated bus and cycle lanes is particularly welcome as these should provide viable alternative choices to private vehicles, a move which should help to reduce traffic congestion and gridlock in many areas and also assist in the modal shift required to achieve our climate goals by reducing emissions. In 2023, emissions were responsible for 21.4% of national greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Achieving the required decreases in this space will only be possible through the provision of practical alternatives, such as increased and reliable public transport networks, and safe and connected cycle paths.

An increased number of bus services will be possible in the area around the preferred CNDMR route, while segregated bus lanes should also result in improved travel times, all of which should make the bus services a more attractive proposition in encouraging people to choose more sustainable modes of transport ahead of private cars. All of this should benefit residents in the area, as well as the thousands of workers employed in the area, including those at the Apple campus in Hollyhill.

We also recommend that the provision of essential amenities at bus stops, including proper shelters, seating, and real-time service information, be incorporated into the planning and

¹ <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/ghg/transport/>

design of the CNDMR to enhance passenger comfort and encourage greater public transport usage.

Cork Chamber notes that the proposed route incorporates part of the Lee Fields, a popular amenity for walkers and cyclists, and also an area of thriving biodiversity. We encourage the project team to take all possible steps to minimise the disruption to this area and to protect biodiversity.

Cork has been designated an EU mission city for climate neutrality to 2030, along with Dublin. The transition to a more sustainable and climate-resilient city and region will lay the foundations for sustainable economic development and improved quality of life.

Projects, such as the CNDMR, which facilitate sustainable modes of transport, including bus and cycle corridors and pedestrian access, are of the utmost importance in achieving these objectives.

The development of the CNDMR presents a valuable opportunity to enhance multimodal transport across the city. It is important to ensure that the multimodal approach planned for the CNDMR continues seamlessly beyond its termination point, integrating effectively with the wider transport network.

Industrial development

Furthermore, the scheme aims to unlock lands which will facilitate future commercial development, enhancing the attractiveness of the area for investment.

Among Cork Chamber's key asks for the new government is the unlocking of strategic sites for IDA and other developments, providing serviced greenfield sites which are needed for continued industrial growth. Cork is home to many large indigenous and FDI companies, and the region continues to attract interest from other such operators due to our talent and skills.

However, our ability to continue to keep punching above our weight in global competitiveness depends on being able to provide lands for expansion and future investment. Improved connectivity through this region will ensure that such spaces are accessible and attractive to potential investors.

Given the strategic importance of this corridor for industry and logistics, it is also critical that the route is designed to accommodate Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) efficiently. This will be essential for businesses relying on logistics, including those connected to the Port of Cork and other industrial zones. Proper planning for HGV accessibility will contribute to smoother freight movement, reduce bottlenecks, and enhance the overall functionality of the route.

Cork Chamber also notes longer-term ambitions for upgrades to the road network in Tivoli, including improved access to the Port of Cork, and encourages the project team to examine if such upgrades could be progressed in tandem with the CNDMR.

In addition, the delivery of the CNDMR will have significant benefits for those already operating in the area, including Apple, which employs thousands at its site in Hollyhill. The current road network and public transport infrastructure are simply not sufficient to support thousands of employees on their daily commutes.

The congestion caused on the existing road network due to this traffic, partly due to the absence of viable alternatives including reliable bus services and segregated bicycle lanes, causes further issues for residents in the area.

The delivery of the CNDMR will ease this traffic congestion and facilitate thousands of employees and residents to choose alternative modes of transport.

Conclusion

The public consultation on the CNDMR marks a significant and welcome milestone for the project. The route is critical for all those living and working on Cork's northside and will play a key role in advancing more sustainable and active travel options for the area, while also reducing traffic congestion in Cork city centre.

The new route will also unlock zoned lands to facilitate much-needed housing and business development, supporting the growth of sustainable urban communities.

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the preferred route. This much-needed project will be transformative for the city, county and region, and we encourage the delivery of this crucial project on budget and without delay.

Yours Sincerely,



Conor Healy
CEO