



**Chambers
Ireland**
Advancing business together

**Chambers Ireland's submission for the RSA
Consultation by the Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030**

December 2020

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Chambers Ireland's Perspective on Road Safety

Chambers Ireland is the State's largest business representative network. We are an all-island organisation with a unique geographical reach; our members are the chambers of commerce in the cities and towns throughout the country – active in every constituency.

Each of our member chambers is central to their local business community and all seek to promote thriving local economies that can support sustainable cities and communities.

Chambers Ireland priorities regarding Road Safety in General:

Road safety, in its broadest sense, is hugely important to our members, and the businesses within the Chambers Ireland network, as we highlighted in our submission to the Department of Transport earlier this year¹.

The principle work-related aspect of road safety which is of greatest importance to the employers within the Chambers Ireland network relates to commuting, urban transport, and active travel.

We have throughout our submissions, for many years, advocated for more people friendly roads where the space available is optimised for best use.

¹ <https://www.chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Chambers-Ireland-Sustainable-Mobility-Consultation.pdf>

Creating a transport infrastructure which facilitates the revival of our urban spaces, local communities, and town centres is critical to our national economic development.

This is likely to require the reallocation of road area with a view towards maximising the commuter throughput rather than minimising congestion, a strategy that has not met with much success, considering that Dublin has the slowest last mile and the 2nd worst congestion in Europe² and congestion which has been worsening consistently for years³. A pattern which was being replicated in all our major towns and cities before the Covid-19 crisis came upon us.

This misuse of our roads is having a detrimental effect on our quality of life, is damaging productivity, and amplifies the obesogenic environment which is fuelling the expansion of our health budget.

Making our roads easier to commute using modes of active transport, particularly pedestrianisation, needs to be core to the Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030.

Facilitating the use of Personal Powered Transporters (be they eScooters or other similar technologies) will be critical to meeting our national goals around carbon emissions, our submission⁴ to the Department of Transport on this was to emphasise how important it is that these are treated as equivalent to eBicycles, if they are to be an effective mode of transport.

² https://static.poder360.com.br/2019/02/INRIX_2018_Global_Traffic_Scorecard_Report_final_.pdf

³ https://www.tomtom.com/en_gb/traffic-index/dublin-traffic#statistics

⁴ <https://www.chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Chambers-Ireland-PPT-submission-November-2019.pdf>

Chambers Ireland observations regarding work-related road safety

The primary necessity is to introduce infrastructure which will facilitate streets that prioritise people who are pedestrians and also the separated cycling infrastructure which will allow safe cycling to occur.

Work related travel involves a very small proportion of road deaths and serious injuries directly, with tremendous efforts having been taken over a period of decades to reduce the incidence of each, both by officials and also by employers, and particularly the employers of fleets.

One of the trends of the moment however is the shift away from employer operated fleets towards Transport as a Service, the Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 must do all that it can to ensure that this trend continues by facilitating the entry to the streets of non-traditional transport options, including motor assisted cargo bikes and other novel personal vehicles which can be used to divert work-related transport necessities from larger vehicles (which pose a risk to other road users and pedestrians). The strategy should promote this shift towards more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable transport options.

How should these priorities be addressed?

Particularly for our urban spaces, private motor vehicles need to be seen as the least preferred transport option and ideally, they should only be used where necessary. Fleet vehicles are already held to a higher standard than other private vehicles this must be maintained, where Transport as a Service fleets do gain traction, it is vital that they do not (as has been the case in other jurisdictions) succeed commercially by being able to avoid the regulatory requirements that are demanded of fleet owners.

It is also important that all parties inform their media communications using well-researched data which has been subject to peer-review. There has been a disappointing amount of poorly considered and sometimes counter-productive opinion which has been injected into the public discourse regarding road users which are not car drivers.

It would be useful if there was a more holistic view of the shared public space which are our roads. Roads which are safer for all users, which do not suffer congestion, and reduce (both particulate and greenhouse gas emission) pollution are in the long term interest of not only the people who live and work in our towns, they are critical to the economic productivity of our country, and the attractiveness and viability of our cities and towns.

Further elements for consideration:

Critical to our country's economic development will be the maintenance and creation of sustainable cities and communities. At the highest level this will require massive decarbonisation of our transport systems – which in practical terms will involve the vast bulk of our urban transport shifting towards active and public forms of transport.

In the short run the pre-existing problem of town centre vacancies will be amplified following the wave of closures which are expected as a result of Covid-19. This means that if our cities and towns are to have a fighting chance as being economically viable, we will need to make them places which are pleasant places to work, shop, and live.

As a consequence, much of the area which is given over to road use will need to be converted to the use of pedestrians, Covid-19 has made this shift even more urgent than it has been in the past.