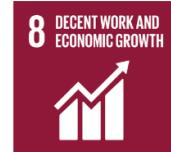




Chambers
Ireland
Advancing business together



New Statement of Strategy 2026-2030 for the National Transport Authority: Public Consultation

Submission by Chambers Ireland

November 2025

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About Chambers Ireland

Chambers Ireland is an all-island business organisation with a unique geographical reach. Our members are affiliated Chambers 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.

We are the only business organisation with a truly geographic footprint and as a result are uniquely positioned to assist in the development of critical transport infrastructure to meet our economy's future needs.

Questions

Q1. Please provide any comments that you have on the initial working draft of the NTA's proposed Mission, Goals and Strategic Objectives as set out in Appendix 1.

As the largest business network in the State, we recognise the critical role that effective public transport plays in the economy. Our core priorities are listed below:

- We support the emphasis on integration, accessibility, and inclusivity.
- We would also like to encourage the NTA to engage further with the affiliated Chamber Network to better understand local and regional needs to ensure that transport solutions are supportive of economic activity across all areas.
- We encourage the NTA to prioritise delivery timelines, address planning and funding barriers, and ensure balanced investment across all regions.
- The focus on modal shift, demand management, and emissions reduction is positive.
- We fully support the commitment to accelerate the rollout of zero-emission fleets.
- Climate adaptation should be incorporated into planning.
- The alignment of land use and transport planning is essential.
- Investment in active travel, BusConnects, MetroLink, DART+, and park-and-ride facilities is vital.
- We support the enhancement of PSO services and network redesign where this supports connectivity and sustainable transport across the country.
- Ongoing review of service adequacy, particularly in regional and rural areas, and greater integration of public and commercial transport services should be prioritised.
- The focus on organisational effectiveness and digital transformation is also welcomed.

Q2. Below is a list of key macro trends and potential areas for improvement for the NTA. If you were to determine how NTA resources are allocated, which two areas would you recommend the NTA prioritise in developing its new Statement of Strategy, and why?

The two areas we recommend be prioritised are:

- a) Climate Action and Accelerating the Shift Towards Sustainable Mobility, and
- b) Provision of Integrated Transport Across All Modalities.

Climate Action and Accelerating the Shift Towards Sustainable Mobility

Ireland has committed to a number of key Climate Action targets and failing to meet these will lead to financial penalties, environmental degradation, a loss of public trust in the State's commitment to climate action, and a loss of international credibility.

The shift towards sustainable mobility will be key to achieving our climate action targets. Transport infrastructure is foundational for thriving, resource-efficient, and sustainable cities and communities. Congestion and poor infrastructure cause a whole host of problems such as harming quality of life and negatively impacting economic productivity. Transport systems are complex and changes create feedback loops (e.g., sprawl leads to more congestion, which leads to more road building, which further encourages sprawl). In addition, congestion is worsening, especially in large urban areas, with significant economic and social costs. Major infrastructure projects (BusConnects, Luas, Dart Expansion, MetroLink) are important, but accelerating the shift to sustainable mobility also requires many local, incremental improvements and strong community engagement.

Transport infrastructure as it is currently constituted in Ireland encourages sprawl and car dependency. Meeting our climate action targets will require a wide-ranging modal shift to alternatives. A properly actuated transition would therefore lead to a large number of benefits such as reduced car ownership costs, increased local spending, and lower urban vacancy rates. Our aim should be to make sustainable transport the easiest, quickest, and safest option and to create "porous" neighbourhoods linked by efficient mass transit¹.

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

Provision of Integrated Transport Across All Modalities

The provision of integrated transport across all modalities is important. Transport infrastructure is vital to creating resource-efficient, quality, densified urban living which is necessary for the creation of sustainable cities and communities, whether that be local active travel supporting infrastructure, nodal inter-urban high-volume connections, or inter-city high-speed options. There should be greater and better investment in the provision of transport infrastructure across all modalities not only because of the quality-of-life benefits but also to improve economic competitiveness.

Adequate, efficient transport infrastructure is paramount to our competitiveness and critical considering the demands of our growing population. In the future we anticipate the densification of Ireland's five cities, in line with the Ireland 2024 projections and as a result transport networks, many of which are already nearing capacity, will face additional strain. Meeting this challenge means developing an integrated transport system across all modalities which is capable of sustaining these increases².

A robust network of inter-urban and intra-urban public transport networks will help to facilitate future economy growth and competitiveness.

It is important to integrate transport across all modalities³. The delivery of keystone urban infrastructure programmes should be accelerated. Train lines should be extended to ports. This has a number of important benefits:

- Rail freight emits significantly less CO₂ than road haulage which is conducive to attaining our climate targets.
- Efficient port-rail integration reduces logistics costs, supports exporters, and strengthens the State's trading capabilities.

² <https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Submission-to-the-Department-of-Transport-Statement-of-Strategy-2025-2028-March-2025.pdf>

³ <https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2026-PBS-FINAL.pdf> p.13

- Linking ports to rail encourages investment in regional economies and supports offshore wind and renewable energy projects that rely on port infrastructure.
- Each freight train can remove numerous trucks from our roads which will ease congestion and improve safety.

These are issues which are not specifically mentioned in the Draft Mission document but which is an issue of great importance. The NTA should consider these points in designing the Strategy.

It is also necessary to update intercity rail services to meet future demand. Delays in upgrading these services risk constraining growth, particularly in sectors reliant on fast, reliable connections.

Regarding road transport, we have consistently proposed implementing BusConnects projects in the National Development Plan growth cities which would be of great importance in terms of advancing sustainable transport across regions.

Q3. What one change or decision would have the biggest positive impact on your transport experience?

The single most impactful change is to ensure sustained progress across all commitments, in particular 'Climate Action' and 'Transport Services.' Delivering on these would significantly improve transport reliability, sustainability, and overall user experience.

Progress on both commitments is also conducive to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and our key commitments in Climate Action such as reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Notably, the Climate Action Plan 2025 and sectoral emissions ceilings identify fleet electrification and biofuels as the largest contributors to transport decarbonisation in the medium term.⁴ Full decarbonisation of public transport should therefore be accelerated without delay while

⁴ <https://www.environmentireland.ie/addressing-transport-emissions/>

developing public transport services. This should include investment in appropriate infrastructure to support the transition of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) to low-carbon fuel options like Bio-CNG. Furthermore, green hydrogen-fuelled buses across cities, towns, and intercity fleets should be expanded⁵.

In developing transport services, the NTA should have at its core the objective of encouraging people to use public transport, which will reduce congestion and reduce our overall carbon emissions.

In terms of climate action, investment should be made available for low-carbon technologies and for electrifying trains and buses to expedite progress. This can bring a large number of benefits, such as:

- Significantly lowering CO₂ and other harmful emissions.
- Reducing pollutants like nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.
- Reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels, which aids energy security.
- Future-proofing transport networks against volatile fuel price changes.

In addition, the electrification of buses complements Ireland's renewable energy expansion by ensuring that transport emissions fall in tandem with grid decarbonisation. For example, Hydrogen and biomethane can further diversify low-carbon solutions for regional and intercity bus routes, which can improve flexibility across the network.

It is also important that the public sector takes the lead in decarbonisation as its actions shape expectations and establish norms across wider society.

⁵ <https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2026-PBS-FINAL.pdf> p.13; <https://chambers.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Submission-to-the-Department-of-Transport-Statement-of-Strategy-2025-2028-March-2025.pdf> p.12

Q4. How can the NTA better engage and communicate with the public and stakeholders to deliver high-quality, accessible, and sustainable transport across Ireland, especially as quick responses to new projects and services are increasingly being demanded?

We would like to encourage engagement with local affiliated Chambers of Commerce around the country. Local Chambers of Commerce and their members offer unparalleled insight into regional priorities and challenges. By establishing structured engagement with these Chambers, the NTA can ensure that transport initiatives are informed by local expertise and community needs. This collaboration can enable timely identification of issues and foster transparent communication.

Q5. If there is anything else you would like to feed-back to the NTA to assist in the preparation of its five-year Statement of Strategy 2026 to 2030, please use this space.

One critical area that should be emphasised in the next five-year strategy is service availability. The NTA should work to ensure that urban and regional services operate at intervals that make public transport a viable alternative to private cars. Additionally, we should build resilience into scheduling to minimise cancellations and delays, especially during peak hours and adverse weather conditions. Availability should ideally mean not only mean more buses and trains, it should mean zero/low-emission vehicles operating consistently.