



**Submission on review of
Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy Issues Paper
22nd January 2021**



Introduction

Celbridge Community Council was established as a voluntary community group in 1975 and has for over forty years been actively involved in many aspects of community life in Celbridge. Our goal is to promote and improve community life and to influence in a positive way the physical development of the area for the benefit of all those who live and work there. As a voluntary group and representative voice for the community, Celbridge Community Council welcomes this opportunity to make a submission as part of the public consultation on the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy Issues Paper.

Celbridge Community Council's overriding concern in relation to the GDA Transport Strategy is that although Dublin City is at the centre of the GDA Transport Strategy, **every settlement and segment in the GDA needs solutions tailored to its specific needs**. The Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy covers a large area from Dublin City Centre out to the rural extremities of the commuter belt and populations throughout the area have very different needs. About a quarter of a million people live across the 15 largest settlements outside of Dublin itself. Seven or eight of these settlements have populations of 20,000 or greater. Residents of these large settlements make an important contribution towards the economy of Dublin but **car dependency** amongst many of these residents is at an unsustainably high level as acknowledged by the Strategy (p.30). Figure 9.1 (p.106) illustrates significant growth in travel demand and shows clusters of settlements in the Outer Metropolitan areas.

From the perspective of Celbridge and similarly sized towns, the **GDA Transport Strategy focuses primarily on getting commuters in and out of Dublin and on enhancing mobility closer to the city centre**. This focus is to the detriment of improving mobility in Celbridge where our road network is choked, the mobility of buses is impaired by the volume of private vehicles, commuters cannot efficiently access rail services, pedestrians and cyclists vie for space on narrow footpaths, young children learn to cycle on footpaths and continue to cycle on footpaths as they get older due to fear of sharing space with motor vehicles.

Despite the opportunity for enhancing sustainable transport in the outer metropolitan segments, the GDA Transport Strategy focuses heavily on the radial corridors into Dublin City (pp. 37-43) and **fails to look at each segment individually**. Sustainable mobility within and between segments of the GDA is essential if the GDA is to meet the climate change, population growth, employment, and wellbeing challenges that we face but **most of the settlements in the GDA outside of Dublin city are losing out on delivery of the GDA Transport Strategy and policies** therein.



Concerns

Need for a North Kildare Transport Strategy

Whilst it is important to have a high level transport strategy for the Greater Dublin area, **it is imperative that a North Kildare Transport Strategy (NKTS) is commissioned.** A NKTS would ensure a greater understanding of the existing transport patterns and behaviours is obtained. It would allow for specific transport policies and objectives to be identified which would support movements within and through the North Kildare area. The NKTS would also allow for specific interventions to be identified which would closely align to national sustainability objectives whilst supporting the needs of local residents.

Inclusion of the parts of West Dublin and South Meath that are in segments B2, C2 and D2 (Figure 3.11, p. 46) would be beneficial given the extent to which mobility occurs between adjoining Outer Metropolitan segments to the west of the M50. Local Authorities try¹ to prepare Local Transport Plans in tandem with Local Area Plans but, by their nature, Local Transport Plans do not take the type of holistic view needed to devise strategies for mobility between satellite urban towns.

Experience of **living through a pandemic has taught us that Celbridge falls very far short of being a self-sustaining town.** Different degrees of travel restrictions served to highlight how heavily reliant Celbridge currently is on West Dublin and how difficult it is to access services, retail and recreation within 15 minutes of home. Post-COVID, the **ratio of local journeys to commutes into Dublin is likely to differ from the pre-COVID era as many will continue working from home and will seek to socialise, exercise, and shop closer to home.** If alternatives do not exist, then these local journeys will happen by car. Despite the anticipated increase in demand for local journeys, as towns in the GDA continue expanding, **demand for efficient transport from North Kildare to key employment and education destinations in North Kildare, Dublin city and western suburbs will remain high.**

Gap Between Strategy & Delivery

Unfortunately without specific objectives for the North Kildare region, we are left with **inconsistency across transport infrastructure delivery.** In Celbridge, we have 'cycle provision' which does not meet national standards and ensures that **cycling is an unattractive option for many.** Whilst transport policies often outline the need to prioritise sustainable transport, we have a Main Street which prioritises single occupancy car journeys through an

¹ Despite it being a Local Area Plan objective to prepare a transport strategy for Celbridge within 12 months of the adoption of the Celbridge LAP 2017-2023, Kildare County Council has been unsuccessful in delivering this. The making of the Celbridge LAP 2017-2023 pre-dated the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator. The absence of a transport strategy has resulted in extremely poor planning decisions for Celbridge as An Bord Pleanála approving three Strategic Housing Developments in areas of the town with very high car dependency.



abundance of on-street car parking and **no dedicated cycle infrastructure** and **substandard walking provision with major severance issues**.

It is apparent that **Kildare County Council has failed to follow policies and principles outlined in the current transport strategy**, for example,

- p.6 “the mode share target of a maximum of 45% of car-based work commuting established under in “Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future””
- p.51 “The overarching principle guiding the development of the Strategy was to meet existing and future demand with a sustainable, effective and efficient transport system”
- p.57 - Key linkages to connect residential communities to their local services and, as required, to strategic public transport have not been identified, permeability guidelines have not been implemented, etc.
- p.77 - Implementation of the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan in full, delivering “safe, high quality cycle facilities, which will be designed and constructed in accordance with the principles set out in the National Cycle Manual”.
- p.79 - Provision for pedestrians
- p.93 - Safety of footpaths is not ensured due to cyclists feeling unsafe on shared surfaces with traffic and thus using the footpaths.
- p.96 - Environmental objectives relating to parking spaces for the exclusive use by low and zero emissions vehicles
- p.98 - The local planning principles which are intended to achieve the land use and transport integration goals of
 - reducing the need to travel,
 - reducing the distance travelled,
 - reducing the time taken to travel,
 - promoting walking, cycling, public transport use by maximizing the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood or district centres, public transport services, and other services at the local level such as schools.
 - promoting permeable neighbourhoods and filtered permeability in order to a give competitive advantage to these modes

There is a clear **need for analysis to be undertaken within commuter towns such as Celbridge to understand the existing and projected travel patterns** as a prerequisite for implementing appropriate measures but this has not happened.

During the pandemic, we have witnessed a **stark contrast between the response of Kildare County Council and other local authorities in the GDA to the need to make more space for pedestrians and cyclists**. The fact that Dublin local authorities successfully initiated pop up cycling and walking provision highlights the lack of consistency within transport policy/ delivery. Local Authorities in the GDA outside of Dublin are amongst the most poorly resourced per head of population due to outdated benchmarking on the Needs and Resources model (1994). This



shortage of funding is a major external factor hindering progress towards delivery of GDA and national transport strategies.

Reduction in public transport journey times to Dublin from commuter towns needs to be prioritised, starting with the outer metropolitan towns whose residents are instrumental in Dublin's growth. Resolution of congestion in towns like Celbridge requires that there are **safe, efficient and comfortable alternatives to people driving their cars** but people are caught in a vicious circle whereby the alternatives to driving are too unreliable, too dangerous and/ or too slow. Despite being a priority of the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (DTTAS, 2015), this **does not translate to work plan prioritisation**.

It appears that **those who are expected to deliver based on the “*framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area*” (p.5) need assistance with this delivery**. The current review of the Strategy must consider what measures are needed to encourage and compel the translation of existing policies into results for Celbridge and similar large settlements across the GDA.

Innovation

Much has changed locally, globally and technologically since the GDA Transport Strategy was published, in terms of challenges and solutions. **MaaS** (e.g. Whim App in Helsinki, Antwerp, West Midlands, Vienna, Tokyo, Singapore, Turku) is no longer a futuristic idea and **innovations in the area of seamless multi-modal transport** are being rolled out all the time. The GDA Transport Strategy must give innovations that are happening elsewhere serious attention and include Maas, car sharing, etc. prominence as important elements of the strategy for the GDA.

Specific Needs of Celbridge

Based on the development of a NKTS, Celbridge Community Council believes that some of the specific needs of Celbridge are likely to be as follows:

- Adoption of transport strategies (and specific policies) in **infrastructural delivery by Kildare County Council** - this may require an investment in awareness building activities amongst Councillors and officials
- Enforcement of **alignment to the GDA Transport Strategy** during pre-implementation appraisal of all infrastructure schemes
- Prioritisation of **shuttle bus services** to train stations including
 - accelerated rollout of proposed new W6, L58 and L58 routes under the BusConnects Network Redesign
 - introduction of a shuttle bus service connecting Celbridge with Louisa Bridge train station
 - removal of congestion that impairs the mobility of buses



- **Footpaths that are wide enough** for pedestrians, wheelchairs, buggies, etc. to comfortably pass one another, especially on all radial road approaching the town centre
- **A well designed network of high-quality segregated cycleways** that make short journeys more convenient for people from all parts of town by providing connectivity between the origins and destinations of local journeys that people need to make - i.e. to
 - the town centre
 - schools
 - Hazelhatch train station
 - sporting grounds
 - Castletown House
 - etc.
- **Secure bicycle storage** at Hazelhatch and Louisa Bridge train stations
- Completion of the **Grand Canal Greenway** between Hazelhatch and Lucan in addition to safe cycle route from Celbridge out to Hazelhatch
- Strategies to **remove traffic that is only passing through** Celbridge
- Promotion of a mix of mode shares thereby reducing the need for car ownership
- **Car share schemes** - Celbridge currently has no GoCars or similar and could do with at least 2 or 3 on the Main Street and a number of others strategically placed around the town
- **EV charge points** at multiple locations throughout the town
- Recommendations for **public transport services** to meet the needs of commuters to not only **Dublin** city but also to towns in **Co.Kildare (Leixlip, Maynooth, Naas and Newbridge)** and **West Dublin (Blanchardstown, Lucan, Clondalkin, Tallaght)**
- A commitment to focus on **placemaking** in the town centre that
 - rebalances the hierarchy of road users with infrastructure that makes
 - more space for pedestrians and cyclists,
 - mobility by active modes more convenient than driving
 - achieves a more vibrant Main Street
 - provides off-street parking solutions that people feel safe using (access to car parks in the backlands is dangerous as most are through narrow alleyways)

GDA Projects Appraisal from Perspective of Celbridge

See **Appendix A** for Celbridge Community Council's appraisal of the walking & cycling, bus, rail and ticketing projects in the GDA Transport Strategy that impact Celbridge.



Opportunities

Local Engagement on a Transport Strategy

As part of the commission of a transport strategy, Celbridge Community Council would welcome the opportunity to **engage with the National Transport Authority and Kildare County Council** to discuss the development of transport strategies would:

- Identify existing transport patterns and problems
- Identify projected travel patterns and opportunities based on COVID-19
- Review transport infrastructure delivery in North Kildare region
- Review Transport Policy and ensure alignment to the Greater Dublin Transport Strategy
- Engage with stakeholders (local residents, schools and businesses) to identify preferred transport solutions.
- Identify vision and objectives based on transport and policy review
- Develop a package of interventions to support the delivery of objectives and overall policy

Reduce Car Ownership

Cars sitting idle in driveways for months has prompted **people to start thinking about how they might manage without a second car if solid alternatives to driving are in place** after the pandemic. This unexpected consequence of the pandemic should be exploited before people return to pre-COVID behaviours.

Recommendations

Celbridge Community Council recommends that this review of the GDA Transport Strategy should

- Either
 - outline strategies for commissioning **transport strategies for areas that are larger than a settlement** but smaller than a region and that may cross county boundaries or
 - examine the **needs of the Outer Metropolitan segments** (Figure 3.11, p.46) in greater detail as part of the review of the GDA Transport Strategy and include strategies for geographical sub-areas within the Greater Dublin Area that cover multiple towns with interdependencies
 - Such strategies would complement the strategies for radial routes in the corridors to Dublin city by addressing mobility needs between towns, industrial areas, medical facilities and colleges within and between Outer Metropolitan segments
 - Such strategies may cross local authority boundaries so could not be commissioned by a single local authority



- Celbridge would benefit from a Transport Strategy that covers at least the North East of Co.Kildare but ideally also the rest of the C2 segment and the adjoining B2 and D2 segments
 - Such strategies should be in addition to local transport plans for each large town as holistic strategies that look at geographical sub-areas do not exist
 - Outline strategies that will **enable underfunded local authorities to innovate** and to be prepared to **tap into funding** as it becomes available
 - Outline, in conjunction with the OPR and other relevant bodies, a **strategic prioritisation framework** so infrastructure projects implementing GDA Transport Strategy policies can be prioritised based on criteria that might include, for example, the projected emissions that would result from implementing/ not implementing a project
 - Outline **scenarios where a local authority should prioritise a transport strategy** (outside of the review period) **for towns like Celbridge that currently do not have one** (as the current LAP was created before the OPR was established)
 - Outline strategies for how underfunded local authorities with a large number of settlements within their boundaries and/ or a backlog of transport strategies to produce might be assisted to produce these, perhaps through mentoring and funding assistance
 - Outline **strategies for mentoring local authorities** that have settlements in Dublin's Outer Metropolitan area yet have little experience of active transport projects for metropolitan areas - this mentoring may involve
 - secondments from other local authorities in the region and/ or the NTA and
 - advice to management and transport engineers in local authorities with less experience of active transport projects for metropolitan areas
 - support from
- Capacity building amongst teams in local authorities is crucial as the need for expertise in the successful delivery of active transport projects will be ongoing
- Establish an **inter-departmental implementation review group** to help pull disparate 'systems' together to support implementations and make the GDA Transport Strategy work
 - Outline **strategies for finding and implementing sustainable solutions** to the identified challenges
 - Focus strongly on ensuring that **alternatives to car ownership are competitive** in terms of both financial cost and convenience
 - Outline strategies for **effective engagement with both local authorities and communities** so they recognise the benefits early and become evangelists for change rather than opponents
 - Borrow proven techniques from **Human-Centred Design / User eXperience (UX) Design** with successful outcomes for the transit user taking centre stage
 - Outline **strategies for capturing the data needed to proactively plan for transport needs** rather than reacting based on passenger complaints



While outside the scope of what the NTA can achieve under current legislation, **statutory requirements for local authorities to achieve specific outcomes** could have real impact in redressing the shortcomings with respect to active transport infrastructure in some local authorities areas. It would be beneficial if the NTA highlighted the disparity between the approaches of different local authorities to the Department of Transport and encouraged legislative reform in areas where local authorities are failing to deliver on active transport strategies.

Conclusion

The public consultation on the GDA Transport Strategy Issues paper sets out four key questions. The answers to these questions from a Celbridge perspective are as follows:

Q1 What are the things that we should look at first while working on this plan?

- Celbridge absolutely needs transport strategies that address
 - local mobility
 - journeys to Dublin city
 - journeys to other areas in the western Outer Metropolitan segmentsso the GDA Transport Strategy must include strategies to ensure that Celbridge is not left behind and that there are attractive alternatives to car dependency (Ref. **Need for a North Kildare Transport Strategy** section)
- Celbridge needs Kildare County Council to have the capacity to deliver on the GDA Transport Strategy and active transport guidelines - enabling Kildare County Council to do this requires funding, strategic prioritisation of a work programme for active transport, building capacity amongst teams who have traditionally focused on roads, the right expertise and strategic thinkers who apply joined up planning and transport thinking in Celbridge (ref. **Gap Between Strategy & Delivery** and **Recommendations** sections)
- Rollout of the proposed new local and orbital routes under BusConnects (L58, L59 and W6) must be fast-tracked to provide the population of Celbridge with bus connections to rail and to parts of the D2 outer metropolitan segment (ref. **Appendix A**)
- Park & Rides that serve the needs of drivers on the N4 corridor from Kildare, Meath and beyond are essential to prevent gridlock on the approach to the M50 once the Lucan CBC is implemented (ref. **Appendix A**)

Q2 How should we evaluate future transport needs?

- This is difficult to answer in the context of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic but we do know that climate change is likely to have a far greater impact on the world than the COVID pandemic so we need to prioritise in a way that reduces emissions. This is the biggest challenge for transport so must underpin everything that we do. Population growth, employment, and wellbeing challenges are also important but **reduction of**



emissions must be the priority that all transport initiatives are measured against. (ref. **Recommendations** sections)

Q3 What are the key components to a forward-looking transport strategy?

- A forward-looking transport strategy should focus on giving residents of the Metropolitan area **credible alternatives to car ownership** - from active transport infrastructure including permeability, adequate footpaths and segregated cycleways, to public transport options that get residents to where they need to go, to the ability to avail of car sharing (e.g. GoCar) when a car is needed, to explore innovations such as MaaS, there are so many things that can be done.
- It is crucial that a human-centred approach be taken to understanding **what will entice people away from unsustainable transport modes** because we cannot continue at current levels of car dependency

Q4 What does the future of transport in this region look like to you?

- The vast majority of residents of the Greater Dublin Area, especially those within the Inner & Outer Metropolitan Areas, should be able to **get to work, college, school, hospital, retail and recreational destinations within 15 minutes and without requiring cars**
- Operational silos between transport operators would be invisible to the population who should be able to **avail of multi-modal transport seamlessly and in a cost competitive manner**
- More people will be working from home and able to avail of retail needs locally so **mobility will be more local** and people will be able to do **move about safely using active modes**



Appendix A: Appraisal of GDA Transport Strategy Projects

Walking & Cycling Projects

Celbridge has not benefited from any significant investment in walking and cycling infrastructure and the Dublin Cycle Network fails to show any understanding of Celbridge. The cycling network in Celbridge consists of shared use provision which does not provide safe access across side roads or junctions. Advisory cycle lanes have also been introduced on narrow roads which cannot accommodate cars and cycle users, this is a significant safety issue and raises concerns in regards to the technical expertise of engineers and planners implementing such provision.

We have also seen cycle lanes as part of new developments which merely replace substandard infrastructure prior to the development. It is important that new developments (in partnership with the local authority) develop cycle routes which connect new developments to local services ensuring an actual cycle route is provided.

The cycle network marks cycle routes on existing roads in Celbridge which cannot accommodate both

- 2-way traffic and
- infrastructure for active modes of transport that is fit for purpose.

Initiatives to make space for pedestrians and cyclists would most likely require a second river crossing and a ring road to divert traffic away from the heart of the town and enable the possibility of 1-way traffic flows.

The EMRA Regional and Spatial Strategy envisages the development of Maynooth as a key town, yet there is no sensible strategy for cycling infrastructure between Celbridge and Maynooth.

Bus Projects

BusConnects Lucan CBC

The removal of the bottleneck for buses at the M50 overpass as part of the BusConnects Lucan Core Bus Corridor should improve journey times for those commuting to Dublin by bus but the knock-on effects for traffic will be significant.

A robust strategy is needed to give people who commute into Dublin by car convenient options. This would require a combination of improved public transport and the provision of Park & Rides that serves the needs of drivers on the N4 corridor from Kildare, Meath and beyond is essential to prevent gridlock on the approach to the M50. This may need



to be coupled with deterrents to cars being driven inside the M50 belt (congestion charges). A Park & Ride strategy that is overly linked to rail services (for example at the train station that may or may not ever happen at Collinstown in Leixlip) will not be convenient enough for many commuters to entice them to use it.

BusConnects Network Redesign

The BusConnects Network Redesign proposes very positive service enhancements for Celbridge, as follows:

- W6 orbital route between Maynooth and Tallaght via Celbridge and Hazelhatch
- L58 between Hazelhatch Train Station and Leixlip-Confey Train Station via the south of Celbridge and Liffey Park Business Campus (former HP)
- L59 between Hazelhatch Train Station and Leixlip-Confey Train Station via the town centre, Clane Road, Aghards Road and Green Lane in Leixlip

These services cannot be deployed fast enough from the perspective of Celbridge residents.

However, there are shortcomings in the Network Redesign as follows and it is not clear that there is any strategy to address these:

- Neither Leixlip Louisa-Bridge train station nor Intel are served by a bus route from Celbridge
 - Residents from the North of Celbridge who use rail services take the train from Leixlip Louisa-Bridge but the proposed L59 passes too far away from the train station to make it a convenient way of getting to the train and traffic congestion in Leixlip town centre is likely to make journey times to Leixlip-Confey Train Station unattractive.
 - Intel is only served by a private shuttle bus on a limited timetable and, while this may work for employees working on shift patterns, it does not afford employees flexibility regarding their working patterns. Huge numbers commute to Intel using private cars and this should not be the default.
- Maynooth Business Campus will be served by a bus route and parts of Celbridge are not connected to Maynooth. Unless distances between stops on to the proposed W6 bus route and both commuters' homes and destinations are short, they will default to use of private cars so there is a need to consider additional options for transport between Celbridge and Maynooth
 - Those who work in Maynooth Business Campus may have a 1.3km - 2km walk from the bus stop at Railpark in Maynooth to work
 - Residents of the Ardclough Road, Clane Road, Shackleton Road and Dublin Road areas of Celbridge may have a long walk to get the W6 to Maynooth



The large employment areas close to Celbridge are Maynooth University, Maynooth Business Campus, Intel in Leixlip, Liffey Park Business Campus (former HP) and locations in West Dublin yet there is no strategy for making journeys to and from destinations in North-East Kildare / West Dublin by active modes and public transport convenient.

Local Link Services

Local Link services run to complement rather than compete with existing public transport services provided by CIÉ companies or by private transport operators but the effect of this is that Local Link services cannot be introduced within “areas that are served by Dublin Bus” even though Dublin Bus is not providing the desired connectivity. The silos in which different types of operators are permitted to operate are an impediment to providing the quality of public transport services in areas on the boundaries of the Dublin Metropolitan Area that might otherwise have the potential to entice people away from car dependency. This is an area that would benefit hugely from the application of Human-Centred Design techniques.

Rail Projects

Reopening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel

The reopening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel rail line for commuters on the Kildare line was a very positive development as it gave commuters a much faster option for getting to “*the more centrally located rail stations within the largest employment areas on the eastern side of the City Centre*” (p.41). Ridership figures from Hazelhatch confirm this success.

However, the increase in services from Hazelhatch was not supported by an increased shuttle bus service or secure bike parking at Hazelhatch. Given the limited capacity on the line pending new rolling stock, this may have been deliberate to dampen demand but enhancements in rail services need to be accompanied by other measures.

DART Expansion (including DART Underground)

The DART expansion on the Maynooth and Kildare lines are absolutely essential but a holistic approach needs to be taken which involves ensuring that passengers can get to and from the train stations efficiently at all times of the day. This requires investment in cycling infrastructure and prioritisation of bus services to and from the train stations (connectivity to both Hazelhatch and Louisa Bridge are important but only Hazelhatch is served by the proposed BusConnects proposals).



Additionally, while excluded from the most recent DART expansion plans, the DART Interconnector / Underground must remain prominently in the roadmap for the Dublin rail network. The routing via Christchurch and St. Stephen's Green will get more south Dublin-bound commuters closer to their destinations faster. It currently takes about 30 minutes to travel from Park West to Pearse Station and DART Underground should see a reduction of 10-15 minutes from this so would be a real game changer for the wellbeing of people living close to the Kildare rail line. In light of development plans in North Kildare, Adamstown and Clonburriss the DART expansion has got to be a top priority for the NTA.

Ticketing Initiatives

Proposals for a 90-minute fare under BusConnects did not include regional bus routes so someone boarding the 120 GoAhead bus on the Clane Road in Celbridge who needs to take a bus, Luas or train once they get to Dublin city would incur high charges. Fare structures should be set to minimise the cost of public transport as an essential measure to ensure that public transport is an attractive alternative to car dependency. This is another area that would benefit hugely from the application of Human-Centred Design techniques.