

IRELAND'S ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

DID YOU KNOW?

- Approximately three quarters of all journeys made in Ireland are made by private car
- Transport accounts for almost one-fifth of total greenhouse gas emissions
- Limerick City, Dungarvan and Westport currently share funding of €23million to transform into Smarter Travel Areas
- Ireland's **National Cycle Policy** aims to develop a cycling culture to the extent that by 2020, 10% of all journeys will be by bike

Transport accounts for almost one-fifth of total greenhouse gas emissions and is an emission source that will require major action if Ireland is to meet its 2020 greenhouse emissions obligations.

Between 1990 and 2007, transport emissions grew considerably in Ireland, with emissions in 2007 137% higher than in 1990. However, since 2007 transport emissions have decreased by 20% - due largely to the economic downturn and changes to the vehicle registration and road taxes. Given the strong relationship between growth in transport emissions and the economy, it is reasonable to assume that as the economy recovers, transport emissions will increase again without sustained policy action and further intervention.

75%
of journeys are made by car

20%
of greenhouse gas emissions from transport

OUR TARGET FOR CYCLING
10%
of all journeys by 2020



TRANSPORT POLICY

Sustainable transport is central to efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and environmental damage. The benefits of sustainable transport, however, extend beyond environmental considerations, delivering improvements in congestion, productivity, health and quality of life.

Nationally, the Government approach to sustainable transport is set out in '**Smarter Travel - a Sustainable Transport Future**', which aims to improve our current transport and travel patterns. Key goals of the strategy include improving economic competitiveness through maximising the efficiency of the transport system; alleviating congestion and infrastructural bottlenecks; minimising the negative impacts of transport on the local and global environments; reducing overall travel demand and commuting distances travelled by private car; and improving security of energy supply by reducing dependency on imported fossil fuels.

Investment in transport, and in particular in large-scale public transport projects, has seen a sharp fall in funding as a result of the economic recession. Government policy is now focused on a wide range of small-scale projects such as improving the existing network, cycling and pedestrianisation projects and the Smarter Travel Areas programme.

SMARTER TRAVEL AREAS

In 2012, Limerick City, Dungarvan and Westport were awarded a combined total funding of €23 million over a five-year period to transform into Smarter Travel Areas, promoting cycling and walking, the use of public transport, and reducing car travel. In broad terms, these Smarter Travel Area projects include provisions for:

- Improved cycling ways, including safe routes to school and to key business and workplace zones
- Secure cycle parking in town centres or at public transport nodes
- Better walking facilities, including pedestrianisation
- Lower speed limits in residential and town centre areas
- School and workplace travel planning
- E-working
- Car clubs



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RENEWABLE SOURCES

Alternative fuels and electric vehicles also comprise a significant element of National policy to reduce transport emissions. Under the European Renewable Energy Directive, Ireland is obliged to deliver 10% of transport energy by renewable sources by 2020. The [Biofuels Obligation Scheme 2010](#) and the rollout of electric vehicles underpin the achievement of this target. The electric vehicle target is for 10% of all passenger vehicles to be electric by 2020. However, in June 2013 there were a total of 259 electric cars in Ireland, representing only 0.2% of the national fleet.

VEHICLE TAXATION

Switching vehicle taxation to emissions instead of engine size in 2008 was an attempt to incentivise more sustainable transport choices. The new car taxation system also highlights how environmental sustainability is interwoven with financial sustainability. In the first year of the new emissions-based taxation system, average emissions of new cars fell by 13%, due to a significant switch to diesel engines, and estimated total emissions declined by 5.9 kt CO₂. This was a significant policy success and the consumer trend since then is towards emissions-efficient cars. Further readjustment of motor tax rates in Budget 2013 continues the incentive towards more emissions-efficient cars while maintaining Exchequer revenues.

TRANSPORT EMISSIONS

EPA emission projections published in 2013 estimate that, under the most optimistic scenario, transport emissions will increase by 12% over the period 2011-2020, returning transport emissions to 2009 levels by 2020. In this scenario, it is assumed that renewable energy penetration is 10% by 2020 while more efficient road traffic movements and public transport efficiencies deliver savings. However, achieving emissions reductions into the future in the transport sector will remain a significant challenge. The EPA projections are predicated on the assumption that all policies and measures to improve/reduce emissions will deliver as anticipated and in full. Failure to deliver on these policies will result in higher emissions from this sector.

Research on Irish transport and policy initiatives further highlights the difficulty of moving to a more sustainable transport economy. Figures released by the Central Statistics Office show that despite the economic downturn, the proportion of those travelling to work by private cars is still growing, while use of more sustainable travel modes is declining.



200k
Electric Cars by
2020

Emissions-based
tax incentivises
more sustainable
transport choices



From 2011-2020
transport
emissions will
increase by
12%



CHALLENGES AHEAD

Reducing reliance on the private car is a difficult policy target, particularly in a low-density, dispersed population such as Ireland's. Integrating spatial planning and transport investment is one of the most effective means of controlling emissions from road transport and reducing reliance on car use. The role of the [National Spatial Strategy](#) and its alignment with Transport 21 were seen as a key means of reducing people's dependence on private car travel. A significant legacy of Ireland's rapidly growing economy in recent years has, however, been urban sprawl and low-density development, which has 'locked in' unsustainable travel patterns. Countering these established travel patterns and providing attractive and cost-effective public transport alternatives now presents a serious challenge – particularly given limited public finances for investment in transport infrastructure.

Research suggests that two overriding issues are important in developing policies to reduce reliance on private cars. First, there is a strong persistence in car ownership in Ireland, making the policy challenge to switch transport modes one not just of providing transport alternatives but also of aggressively tackling entrenched behaviours. The second issue is delivering alternative transport options with attractive journey times (and the associated issue of frequency of service). While many factors are important, journey time is a particularly important factor influencing choice of mode of transport to work. The policy challenge to switch transport modes is not just one of providing transport alternatives but of providing attractive alternatives.