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Department of Transport,
Leeson Lane,
Dublin 2.

28th May 2021

**Re: Submission to the Draft National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland
SRA File Ref: 21/GD003**

A Chara,

The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) welcome the publication of the Draft National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) and the opportunity to make a submission on this important framework for future investment and decision making in land transport projects.

The SRA welcome the purpose of this new framework to:

- Put in place priorities and hierarchies to ensure the strategic alignment of future transport investment to support the delivery of National Strategic Outcomes under the National Planning Framework (NPF).
- Assess future transport investment for its alignment with NIFTI.

The SRA supports the four NIFTI priorities for investment:

- Decarbonisation
- Protection and Renewal
- Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas
- Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity.

The SRA welcome the clarification within the Draft Report on how these hierarchies will be applied. They are principles-based tools, rather than strict rules. Investment planning will continue to be needs-based and objectives-led. The hierarchies will assist, at both the project and budgetary levels, to identify the most appropriate solution to a given problem.

The SRA understands that implementation of the NIFTI will be through:

- The identification of specific transport projects and potential investments is guided by the NTA's Metropolitan Transport Strategies, TII's National Roads 2040 Plan and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for example. However, the projects that emerge from these strategies and the project stages will have to demonstrate their alignment with the NIFTI priorities, modal hierarchy and intervention hierarchy to receive funding.
- It will be a requirement for all new transport schemes that the Strategic Assessment Report for that project sets out which of the NIFTI Investment Priorities it addresses and its alignment with the NPF.

- Sponsoring agencies will be required to demonstrate project alignment with NIFTI within Strategic Assessment Reports to proceed to the Preliminary Business Case stage for transport projects.
- Sponsoring agencies will be required to include a spatial and land use assessment within Strategic Assessment Reports and Business Cases for projects and programmes.
- Once the review of the current NDP is approved and published, NIFTI will apply at individual, project-level assessment and appraisal.
- The NIFTI Investment Priorities will inform future public capital investment plans.
- The Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes (CAF), setting out guidance for the appraisal of transport infrastructure in Ireland, will be reviewed alongside the NIFTI and provide sector-specific guidance as well as assessing the strategic fit of proposed projects with NIFTI.

By enabling the national strategic outcomes of the NPF, NIFTI will strategically guide transport investment to enable the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) of the Southern Region and the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford for positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. **Alignment between the NDP and the NPF is fundamental including the achievement of 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland region, and the Southern and Northern and Western regions, with 75% of the growth to be outside of Dublin and its suburbs.'**

The NIFTI investment priorities and the principles of the modal and intervention hierarchies are aligned with the RSES Regional Transport Strategy, and this positive alignment will be demonstrated through our submission.

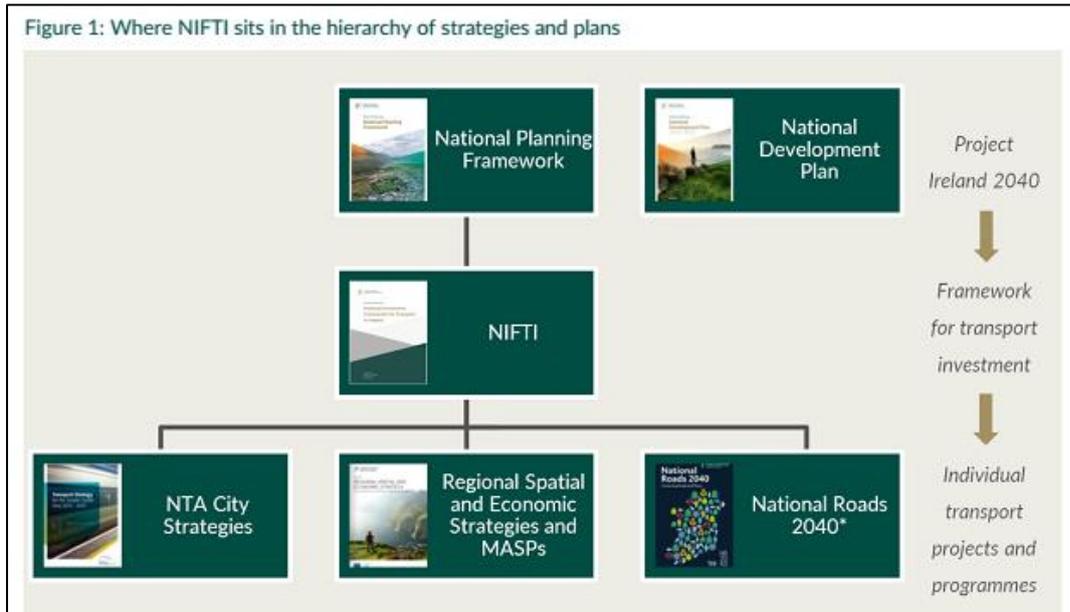
NIFTI is also important to the work of the SRA in ensuring the delivery of investment through the NDP and the European Regional Development Fund co-financed programmes, including the 2021-2027 programme for the Southern and Eastern & Midland Regions which the Southern Regional Assembly are responsible for managing. This programme will focus on smart cities and a smart region, lower carbon emissions, climate resilience and urban regeneration, themes that align with the NIFTI investment priorities.

The SRA welcomes references to the role of the regional tier and role of the RSES within the planning hierarchy (Figure 1 of the NIFTI consultation report) in delivering the National Strategic Outcomes for the National Planning Framework (NPF) and through National Development Plan (NDP) Investment.

As evident from the diagram below in the NIFTI consultation report, there is a clear hierarchy for interaction between the NIFTI as a higher-level framework with the RSES, MASPs and Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies to assess and fund transport infrastructure priorities for our Region.

The diagram could be updated to include reference to the NTA/TII and Local Authority Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies (as opposed to the reference to NTA city strategies) which comprehensively address multi-modal transport infrastructure across the city and metropolitan area integrating with region wide connectivity.

Figure 1: Where NIFTI sits in the hierarchy of strategies and plans



Delivering strategic transport infrastructure projects are integral to the implementation of the RSES and MASPs. The SRA acknowledge the iterative process of engagement with the Department of Transport and transport authorities to date in the preparation and implementation of the RSES and MASPs.

The SRA commend the Department's team for their detailed briefing to the elected members and staff of the SRA on the 9th of April 2021.

Our submission is structured as follows:

- Section 1.0, the context of the RSES.
- Section 2.0, the recommendations of the Elected Members of the Southern Regional Assembly
- Section 3.0, recommendations under the Department's NIFTI consultation survey headings of:
 - National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.
 - Compact Growth in Towns and Cities.
 - Enhance Regional Accessibility.
 - Enhance Rural Economies and Communities.
 - Deliver Sustainable Mobility and Modal Shift.
 - High Quality International Connectivity between Ports and Airports.
 - Transition to a Low Carbon Climate Resilient Society.
- Section 4.0, Challenges and Opportunities for our Transport Sectors.
- Section 5.0, NIFTI Investment Priorities and Alignment with the RSES.

In setting out recommendations to the Department, the SRA appreciate that the NIFTI does not identify specific projects for investment. It is also beyond the scope of NIFTI to prioritise specific geographic areas.

The recommendations provided through this submission are for the purpose of:

- Ensuring that the overall ambition of Project Ireland 2040 and the RSES for balanced regional growth based on 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland region, and the Southern and Northern and Western regions, with 75% of the growth to be outside of Dublin and its suburbs' is achieved.

- Supporting and reinforcing the thematic investment priorities of the Draft NIFTI.
- Provide insight into the example measures that can be undertaken to advance the thematic priorities. Where projects and programmes align with such similar measures, they will help build the case that they align successfully with the NIFTI and NPF, which assists their project strategic assessment, business case and appraisal procedures.
- In providing example measures, our recommendations are also made to benefit project process stages such as Strategic Assessment Reports, consideration of spatial implications of transport proposals, mitigation and avoiding negative impacts on National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF etc.
- Insight into measures from the Regional perspective is intended to be proactive and assist decision makers to align with the NIFTI in prioritising projects and potential investments at an early stage. While the extent of recommendations may not be suited to include in the NIFTI, they respond to the consultation survey questions and themes and may assist parallel processes in the Department such as the Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes (CAF) for different transport sectors.

Recommendations are made under the following headings.

National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF

- Recommendation No 1: Placemaking

Compact Growth in Towns and Cities

- Recommendation No 2: Alignment of the NDP with the NPF/RSES
- Recommendation No 3: Infrastructure Packages
- Recommendation No 4: Implement Metropolitan Transport Strategies
- Recommendation No 5: Implement Local Transport Plans

Enhance Regional Accessibility

- Recommendation No 6: Strengthen Bus Networks and Services
- Recommendation No 7: Maintain, Enhance and Extend Rail Infrastructure
- Recommendation No 8: Enhance Road Networks and Public Transport Corridors

Enhance Rural Economies and Communities

- Recommendation No 9: Rural Connectivity

Deliver Sustainable Mobility and Modal Shift

- Recommendation No 10: Implement 10 Minute City and Town Concepts
- Recommendation No 11: Walking and Cycling Infrastructure
- Recommendation No 12: Multi Modal Travel Integration
- Recommendation No 13: Feasibility for Water Transportation Services

High Quality International Connectivity between Ports and Airports

- Recommendation No 14: Integration of Regional and International Connectivity and Freight

Transition to a Low Carbon Climate Resilient Society

- Recommendation No 15: Smart Mobility
- Recommendation No 16: EV Charging Infrastructure
- Recommendation No 17: Lower Carbon Fuels
- Recommendation No 18: Nature Based Design Solutions and Transport

Challenges and Opportunities for our Transport Sectors

- Recommendation No 19: Funding Mechanisms
- Recommendation No 20: Sequencing Land Use and Transport Planning Integration
- Recommendation No 21: Demand Side Behavior Change Initiatives

Section 1.0 Context of the RSES

The Region’s priorities for investment are identified in the RSES and MASPs for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford which came into effect on the 31st January 2020. In line with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP), they set a 12-year statutory strategic planning and economic development framework for future economic, spatial, and social development of Southern Region to become one of Europe’s most “**Creative and Innovative**”, “**Liveable**” and “**Greenest**” Regions.

The Southern Region has the State’s most significant proposition to achieve the aim of Regional Parity fundamental to the Project Ireland 2040 process. The NPF and RSES targets our three cities to grow by over 50% to 2040 as part of a structural realignment away from the Greater Dublin Area with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands region and the Southern and Northern and Western Regions.

These are extremely ambitious targets which have never been accomplished in the State’s history. **Their achievement requires a structure change in the scale and nature of investment to the Regions and the Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick- Shannon, Waterford and Galway.**

Compact growth of at least 50% of all new homes that are targeted in the region’s three metropolitan areas are to be delivered within their existing built up footprints and a corresponding target of at least 30% within all other settlements in accordance with NPF National Policy Objective 3b and 3c.

By 2040, the population of the Region is projected to rise to almost two million, requiring new homes and jobs. RSES Appendix 1, page 347 sets out Local Authority population projections to 2031, which combined deliver a projected uplift between 280,000 to 343,500 in the Region to 2031.

To accommodate this growth, the RSES recognises the strategic role played by all areas in achieving regional and national targets outlined in the NPF. Achieving such ambitious targets will require an equally ambitious alignment in funding priorities and service delivery. Transport infrastructure is fundamental to underpin this growth.

The settlement strategy builds on the Region’s three cities and metropolitan areas as engines of growth supported by a network of 14 strategically located Key Towns namely Kilkenny, Ennis, Carlow, Tralee, Wexford, Clonmel, Killarney, Mallow, Nenagh, Thurles, Newcastle West, Clonakilty, Dungarvan and Gorey.

Regeneration and growth across our Region’s Cities, Key Towns and further through its network of towns, villages and rural communities are supported to build an economically resilient, competitive and growing region.

Under RSES Section 3.2 Sustainable Place Framework and Table 3.2 Settlement Typology, the role and attributes of different locations in the settlement hierarchy of the Region are defined. The RSES sets specific targets for cities and metropolitan areas (50-60% to 2040 in line with the NPF, with projections to 2031 set in each MASP) and restates the NPF growth projections for each local authority area.

By summary, the RSES and MASPs set a framework for the sustainable growth of Cork metropolitan area by over additional 104,600 persons to 2031 (75,000 of which is in the city and suburbs). Growth for the Limerick Shannon metropolitan area is targeted at over 39,700 additional persons (33,900 in the city and suburbs) in the same period. Growth for the Waterford is targeted at over 14,600

additional persons to 2031 (13,800 in the city and suburbs). Within the RSES, refer to population projection tables in Cork MASP page 244, Limerick-Shannon MASP page 286 and Waterford MASP page 323 for the breakdown of these targets and headroom allowances.

For Key Towns, Local Authorities are supported in targeting growth of more than 30% subject to capacity analysis and sustainable criteria under Section 3.3 A Tailored Approach. The appropriate level of growth is to be determined by the Core Strategies of Development Plans. Regeneration and growth are supported through towns, villages and rural communities as determined through the Core Strategies of Development Plans.

The RSES sets a framework to guide the sustainable plan-led distribution of growth under each City and County Development Plan. Section 3.3, "A Tailored Approach" requires an evidence-based approach for Core Strategies linking growth targets to clarity on existing infrastructure deficits, new infrastructure requirements and the timescale and plan to deliver these requirements, including transport infrastructure.

It is this regional policy context that supports the delivery of transport infrastructure for our Region through the NIFTI. References to the final published RSES and the MASP for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford can be obtained through <http://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/rses>

Section 2.0 Recommendations of the Elected Members of the Southern Regional Assembly

At the Southern Regional Assembly meeting of the 14th of May 2021, the Members of the Assembly approved the recommendations of this submission. In particular, the Members wish to provide to the Department an emphasis on the following points:

- As City and County Development Plans align with the NPF and RSES to deliver National Strategic Outcomes at the local level, the local tier of plans need support under the NIFTI hierarchy (addressed under Recommendations 3 and 19 below).
- The economic impacts of Covid-19 on the financial resources of Local Authorities are significant. The ability to match-fund and to complete projects is severely curtailed. More direct funding for transport and sustainable mobility projects are needed to enable Local Authorities deliver the outcomes of the NPF at local level. A report by the Regional Assemblies on the economic impacts of Covid-19 on our Regions , which in turn impacts the financial resources of Local Authorities, can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.southernassembly.ie/news/news-article/impact-of-covid-19-on-irish-regions>
- The NIFTI should align with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill and give recognition to the coordinated initiatives between Local Authorities and the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROS) for low carbon transport. Such projects can be identified through Local Authority Climate Adaptation Strategies and other Local Authority initiatives for climate action. Recommendations for lower carbon mobility are addressed through Recommendations 10-13 and 15-18 below. The important work of the CAROs is further referenced in Recommendation 21. The final report of the Spatial Planning and Climate Action Workshops which were coordinated between the SRA, CAROS and Local Authorities in our Region in November 2020 is a beneficial resource for the Department on this theme: (<https://www.southernassembly.ie/regional-planning/spatial-planning-climate-action-workshops-report>)
- The NIFTI needs to capitalise on transport initiatives undertaken at local level that give an important "one voice" and joined up thinking across stakeholders on the key transport priorities that need to be delivered to improve mobility within and between settlements and ports (multi-modal). This is especially important to back transport priorities identified between Local Authorities and transport agencies under Metropolitan Transport Strategies for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford and forthcoming Local Transport Plans for our Key Towns (addressed under Recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 19 below).

- Growth under the NPF and RSES needs to be transport infrastructure led. A greater emphasis on putting the transport infrastructure **in place first** is needed. Key public transport projects are the enablers to achieve our targeted growth rates, especially in the cities and metropolitan areas (an example being the project management for a new light rail system for Cork under the Cork Metropolitan Transport Strategy and other city and metropolitan transport projects identified in the Metropolitan Transport Strategies of Cork, Limerick - Shannon and Waterford (addressed under Recommendations 3, 4, 19 and 20 below).
- Support transport projects that complete our transport grid (multi-modal road and rail including the TEN-T networks) between urban nodes and ports for efficient freight distribution. This strengthened grid also strengthens our international connectivity as sought under the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF (addressed under Recommendations 7, 8, 9 and 14 below).
- Support the completion of key road and rail projects, especially those identified in the NDP, RSES and by Local Authorities that strengthen multi modal connectivity Region wide, especially connecting our cities, rural towns, villages and communities for economic interaction and public transport. These connections deliver the National Strategic Outcome for Enhanced Regional Accessibility and are an integral part of our sustainable transport networks (addressed under Recommendations 6-9, 14 and 19).

Section 3.0 Recommendations Under the Department’s NIFTI Consultation Survey Headings for Transport Investment

3.1 National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

Transport has a major impact on quality of life, community interactions, economic prosperity and environmental quality. It is an enabling infrastructure for delivery across all the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and in turn the strategy statements and Regional Policy Objectives of the RSES for a Creative and Innovative, Liveable and Green Region.

The consultation survey gives prominence to the importance of transport investment for achieving compact growth, sustainable mobility, modal change, decarbonisation of travel, regional connectivity, international connectivity, urban mobility and rural connectivity for economic and social progress. The SRA’s support and recommendations are outlined below under these themes.

An overarching recommendation, that best captures the multiple benefits achieved from transport investment to deliver for the NPF and RSES, is to embed funding for transport infrastructure, with an emphasis on sustainable mobility and active travel, as a key attribute of placemaking.

Placemaking qualities, for improving the qualities and attractiveness of our settlements for both living and working, is a key principle for the Region’s growth strategy and economic strategy.

A greater emphasis will be needed on placemaking projects as part of the urban regeneration and renewal of our settlements at all scale, in their achievement of compact growth targets and to successfully attract people to live, work and invest in our city, town and village centres.

Placemaking projects therefore, that demonstrate these principles and strengths, should be awarded funding through the tool of the NIFTI for the transport elements of transformative urban renewal projects, thereby augmenting the other funding sources for Local Authorities, Transport Agencies, Developers, and other stakeholders in pursuit of urban regeneration that delivers on the outcomes of the NPF and RSES.

Such funding for the transport elements of placemaking projects could bolster funding drawn down through the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) for regenerative placemaking projects in cities, towns and villages across the Region.

- **Recommendation No 1 Placemaking:** The NIFTI should place an increased emphasis on the importance of sustainable mobility and public realm as key placemaking principles for transformative urban regeneration projects in cities, towns and villages. Placemaking enables outcomes of the NPF and RSES across all themes and merits greater prominence as a holistic theme within the NIFTI to achieve our spatial and economic growth targets at the local level.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPO 7, RPO 9, RPO 11, RPO 26, RPO 31, RPO 34, RPO 70 , Section 4.2 Economic Principles of the RSES, Section 4.7 Placemaking for Enterprise Development, RPO 61, RPO 151 , RPO 152, RPO 175 and RPO 176.

3.2 Compact Growth in Towns and Cities.

3.2.1 Compact Growth and Integration of Land Use and Transport

A key aspect underpinning Project Ireland 2040 is the alignment of the NPF and the NDP involving a structural change in the nature and location of population growth in the state as set out in National Policy Objective 1 of the NPF. This include the growth of our three (of five) cities by up to 60% to 2040, as part of a structural realignment for the overall betterment of our society and environment in population, homes, and jobs away from the Greater Dublin Area with a 50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midlands region and the Southern and Northern and Western Regions.

The recently published Project Ireland 2040: Phase 1 Report Review of the National Development Plan underlines the need for Alignment of the NPF and the NDP and notes that: ‘There is a risk of Departments or Agencies assuming that a general regional spread of investment represents alignment with the NPF in and of itself, as opposed to an explicit recognition and focus on achieving the specific growth targets set out in the NPF, in particular the greater levels of growth in our regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.’ The report emphasises that Departmental strategies should reflect and reference the specific regional, city and compact growth targets set out in the NPF. It is critical that the NIFTI demonstrably supports the alignment of the NDP and NPF and regional parity.

Aligned with National Strategic Outcome 1 Compact Growth, the RSES Strategy Statements targets Compact Growth and Sustainable, Planned and Infrastructure Led-Development to deliver on the vision of the NPF and RSES at the local level.

Increasing priority to brownfield and infill development projects in Local Authorities is needed to achieve these transformative targets. Land use and transport planning coordination to achieve compact growth is necessary and complex. Planning for this complexity across a number of stakeholders needs a framework of certainty.

The NIFTI needs to be an enabler to support delivery of infrastructure packages to assist the work of Local Authorities, infrastructure agencies and other stakeholders to sequence and prioritise infrastructure projects in the short, medium and longer term to both retrofit existing deficits and plan ahead for future growth. The theme of ring-fenced funding packages for settlements to achieve compact growth, with transport infrastructure a key enabler, will be a constant theme in this submission.

The biggest challenge to achieving compact growth is a piecemeal approach to infrastructure delivery, combined with a lack of funding for retrofitting of infrastructure and services and for planning ahead with certainty at local level.

The biggest opportunity, through tools like the NIFTI, is to use such frameworks alongside the NPF and NDP to coordinate land use planning and transport infrastructure delivery (in addition to other key infrastructures) to achieve our compact growth targets.

- **Recommendation No 2: Alignment of the NDP with the NPF/RSES:** The NIFTI should ensure that robust measures are put in place to ensure alignment between the NDP and NPF/RSES targets including NPO 1, and the growth targets set for the Southern Region. This will include adoption of the measures outlined in the Project Ireland 2040; Phase 1 Report Review of the National Development Plan.
- **Recommendation No 3 Infrastructure Packages:** The NIFTI should support the principle of “infrastructure packages” to assist the work of Local Authorities, infrastructure agencies and other stakeholders to sequence and coordinate actions for transport and land use planning over the short, medium and long term, for retrofitting transport infrastructure and planning for future growth, across different tiers of settlements and for different modes. This is important to plan ahead with certainty at the local level and streamline processes for better coordination between land use planning and transport infrastructure delivery to achieve compact growth targets.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPO 7, RPO 8, RPO 9, RPO 11, RPO 26, RPO 31, RPO 34, RPO 35, RPO 70, Section 6.3.6 Transport Investment Priorities, RPO 175, RPO 227, Cork MASP Objectives 5 and 6, Limerick -Shannon MASP Objectives 4 and 5 and Waterford MASP Objectives 3 and 4.

3.2.2 Implement Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies

The scale of challenge to transition travel to sustainable modes in cities and metropolitan areas in the context of high growth is significant. The RSES and MASPs highlight that 2016 travel patterns are dominated by private car.

In the Cork Metropolitan Area, travel mode to work/education by private car is 66.9%, by public transport is 8.6% and walking and cycling 18.4%. Private car mode reduces in the core city centre (20.3%), but significant change is needed for people moving to and from the city centre across the metropolitan area by sustainable modes.

A similar pattern is observed in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area but with greater use of walking and cycling in the metropolitan area, where travel mode to work/education by private car is 63.8%, by public transport is 7.6% and walking and cycling 21.5%.

In the Waterford Metropolitan Area, travel mode to work/education by private car is 69.1%, by public transport is 4.9% and walking and cycling 18.3%.

Transport investment, with a focus on sustainable travel between our cities along with sustainable and active travel within our cities and metropolitan area for daily activities, is a key enabler for each city and metropolitan area. Investment is urgently needed to transition travel patterns to public transport and active modes across cities and metropolitan areas, as demonstrated in the above trends.

The RSES specifically identifies transport investment priorities under all transport modes (including rail, strategic bus networks, orbital traffic management, strategic road improvements, improved access to ports and airports, walking and cycling infrastructure, greenways, interchange facilities including park & ride) to be addressed by a metropolitan transport strategy for each city. Each MASP in turn integrates specific objectives for integrated land use and transport planning, sustainable transport and investment under the metropolitan transport strategies.

Progress by the NTA, TII, Local Authorities and stakeholders (which include the SRA) is positive with the Cork Metropolitan Transport Strategy completed and at implementation stage, the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Transport Strategy at draft stage and the Waterford Metropolitan Strategy at pre-draft preparation stage.

From the regional perspective, the preparation, implementation and follow through investment in delivering metropolitan transport strategies cannot be over-stated. For the regions to succeed, our cities and metropolitan areas must be prioritised for investment in transport infrastructure projects.

Beyond policies, pro-active project management/project implementation mechanisms need to be supported and initiated in each city and metropolitan area to deliver transformative transport projects in a timely manner.

- **Recommendation No 4 Implement Metropolitan Transport Strategies:** Support the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Local Authorities and other stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies which are transformative game changers for sustainable transport infrastructure led planning. Funding packages specific to each city and metropolitan area, aligned to the infrastructure projects and delivery of short term, medium term and longer-term transport priorities need to be supported.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 160-165, 170, 171, 174, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

3.2.3 Implement Local Transport Plans

Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are an objective of the RSES. They are game changing framework for transport investment, integration of land use and transport planning and transition to sustainable mobility for towns and rural areas across our Regions.

LTP's will be prepared by the NTA in co-ordination with TII, Local Authorities and other stakeholders (including the SRA) for Key Towns and other large settlements across our Region.

Currently in our Region, an LTP for Kilkenny is at draft preparation stage and will set a high-quality benchmark for what LTP's should address and implement. This process should be highlighted as a good practice case study.

LTPs will be evidence based and informed by Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) guidance produced by NTA and TII. LTPs will plan for the efficient and sustainable movement of people, goods and services within, to and from the Plan area.

As outlined in Section 2.0 above and raised in Recommendations 3 and 19, the ability of Local Authorities to plan with certainty for transport infrastructure led regeneration and growth in accordance with NPF and RSES growth targets remains a serious issue.

Where a LTP underpins the sustainable transport infrastructure led regeneration and growth of our towns, funding for packages of multi-modal transport projects across the short , medium and longer need a committed pathway.

The LTP as a tool is an enabler to achieve NPF and RSES outcomes at the settlement level, in addition to helping each settlement lower carbon emissions from transport by prioritising active and sustainable travel.

As preparing such plans in accordance with RSES RPO 157 will require specialist inputs, resources and costs to Local Authorities, a commitment that these costs and efforts will be rewarded through Department level support and funding pathways for projects identified by LTPs as they are prepared is critical for LTPs as a tool for enhanced sustainable mobility across our settlements to succeed.

- **Recommendation No 5 Implement Local Transport Plans**
 - Support NTA, TII, Local Authorities and other stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of Local Transport Plans (LTPs).
 - In support of the initiatives of the NTA, TII and Local Authorities in the preparation and implementation of LTPs, the Department should consider:
 - Affordability and resources of each Local Authority to prepare a LTP. These important tools should be funded and assisted as they are just as important as the projects they identify where prepared robustly as per RPO 157.
 - Cost Benefit Analysis, similar to the analysis undertaken for proposals under Metropolitan Transport Strategies should be integrated within LTPs with oversight of such an analysis at Department or agency level (NTA).
 - After undergoing robust LTP preparation and Cost Benefit Analysis assessments, certainty is needed to forward plan infrastructure led regeneration and growth at the local level and pathways for funding should be made available for Local Authorities and Transport Agencies to construct and deliver LTP projects.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 11, 12-25, 157 and 160-163.

3.3 Enhance Regional Accessibility

3.3.1 Strengthen the Region’s Bus Networks and Services

The RSES places significant emphasis on the important role of bus services in our region, especially the flexibility of bus networks to use existing road networks in servicing urban areas and accessing locations currently underserved.

Road based transport is often the only viable and sustainable mode for rural and peripheral locations. It is essential for “life-lines” whereby smaller urban settlements and rural areas can access essential services, including health, education, retail, employment etc. and interchange with other public transport modes through a safe and well-maintained road network. A high-quality road network is needed for successful rural public transport services, the movement of freight and emergency services.

In larger urban areas, strategic road investment for orbital routes can facilitate a more efficient separation of economic and HGV movements, reduce congestion in the urban cores to improve the public realm, interchange facilities and active travel and allow new bus corridors to be established.

Greater use of our road network for public transport, inter-regional bus services and local bus services, is an opportunity to encourage greater modal change. Regional objectives support strategic bus networks (initiatives identified as Bus Connects in the NDP) through identification, safeguarding and phasing of strategic bus network Bus Connects routes throughout the Southern Region's Cities and metropolitan areas. RSES objectives also seek network reviews, services to small towns and villages, rural bus services including Local Link services, enhanced passenger information and facilities, upgrading of the bus fleet to low carbon/low emissions and access for all.

- **Recommendation No 6 Strengthen Bus Networks and Services:** Flexibility of bus routes and services to deliver cost effective public transport access and services for all locations in our Region in the shorter and medium terms which will help meet the urgent need for action for climate change and modal shift to low carbon transport. Investment is needed for strategic bus network projects in cities and towns (including Bus Connects projects in our cities), inter-city and inter-urban bus services, rural bus services (Local Link and the Rural Transport Programme), modal interchange facilities and transition of fleets to low carbon fuel sources.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 157, 160-165, 171, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

3.3.2 Maintain, Enhance and Extend Rail Infrastructure

Our rail networks will be key corridors for sustainable movement of people and goods into the future. The rail network will play an important role in achieving effective land use and transport planning in pursuit of our growth targets. This includes not only existing successful services and lines, but current underperforming lines need to be recognised as assets for the long-term achievement of greater sustainable mobility and a low carbon society. The RSES has identified a greater role for our rail network through:

- Enhanced role of rail corridors for movement of people and freight.
- Align transportation planning with spatial land use planning to optimise access to public transport, especially rail stations.
- For an economically competitive region, we need to modernise our rail infrastructure, guarantee and reduce journey times, especially between each of the four cities and metropolitan areas outside of Dublin as well as to Dublin.
- The scope for electrification needs to be pursued.
- There is an urgent need to transition public transport fleets to lower carbon fuel sources.
- Need to invest in high quality passenger facilities, real time journey information, integrated ticketing across all modes of transport.
- The role of multi-modal travel chains received significant focus for greater transition to sustainable travel. Improved integration of park and ride, cycling and rail, bus and rail, car share and rail, pedestrian and cycle routes to rail stations, facilities and ticketing for ease of storing bicycles on rail.
- Support the role of rail networks in the successful implementation of economic corridors and urban networks across the region, connecting settlements and strategic employment locations.
- Optimise rail freight to ports in the Southern Region.

Recommendation No 7 Maintain, Enhance and Extend Rail Infrastructure: The delivery of capital investment to maintain, improve and extend the existing rail network of the Southern Region should be a priority. Specific investment should target inter-city rail and the potential for electrification of rail for higher speeds and efficient journey times between our cities, key towns and along economic corridors, target opportunities for rail-based freight distribution. Invest in commuter rail stations and services, especially in cities, suburbs, and metropolitan areas. Investment is required to develop multi-modal interchange with rail (including Park and Ride facilities), transitioning the fleets to renewable or low carbon sources, and improving the passenger facilities and services.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 140, 141, 160-166, 170, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6

3.3.3 Enhance Inter-Regional and Intra-Regional Road Networks

Investment in national and regional road corridors remains an important consideration, both for steady state maintenance and new improved corridors. The NPF, NDP and RSES has identified strategic road corridor improvements (including for public transport use), especially improved corridors connecting our cities and Tier 1 and Tier 2 Ports. In larger urban areas, strategic road investment for orbital routes can facilitate a more efficient separation of economic and HGV movements, reduce congestion in the urban cores to improve the public realm, interchange facilities and active travel and allow new bus corridors to be established.

These projects, identified in co-ordination with the NTA and TII with additional regional priorities through the RSES process, are at different stages of the assessment, design and planning, but all need to be supported and progressed to underpin transport infrastructure led sustainable and economic growth, particularly as enablers of compact sustainable growth.

- **Recommendation No 8 Enhance Road Networks and Public Transport Corridors:** Enhance the Region’s road networks and public transport corridors that connect the Region’s Cities and Metropolitan Areas, Ports and Airports, Economic Corridors and Key Towns. Capital investment in the steady state maintenance and enhancement of road networks deliver for sustainable transport, economic resilience, inter-urban and rural public transport (bus) corridors, connectivity “life lines” extending access to services in peripheral locations and public transport access along our Region’s three tourism corridors (the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland Ancient East and Hidden Heartlands). Investment in the road networks also enables transformative urban regeneration in city and town centres (allowing new traffic management solutions to unlock large scale brownfield sites for regeneration including docklands).

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 140, 141, 156, 158, 166-168, 171, 172, Cork MASP Objective 9, Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 8, and Waterford MASP Objective 7.

3.4 Enhance Rural Economies and Communities.

The RSES seeks investment in the development of fully accessible infrastructure that strengthens intra-regional rural connectivity including rural public transport services connecting communities in remote locations and smaller scaled settlements with larger scaled settlements to access important services.

Investment in national and regional road corridors, for steady state maintenance and new improved corridors, is needed for enhanced regional connectivity and to facilitate bus networks to service rural towns, villages and communities. Developing and expanding services such as Local Link is important with opportunities to integrate with education and health services, create better linkages between towns, villages and rural areas, create better linkages with other modes including rail and increase patronage across all age cohorts.

Investment in the quality of the road network along tourism corridors is also important to ensure a safe and good standard of connectivity and to generate economic activity across our urban and rural tourism locations.

Further, our network of rail stations connects rural towns with our largest economic engines (cities and metropolitan areas) and integrates towns on rail networks with economic corridors. The asset of our rail lines and stations can be a catalyst for town centre first renewal and economic growth.

- **Recommendation No 9 Rural Connectivity :** Adequate levels of capital investment should be provided for both steady state maintenance and enhancement of existing regional and local road networks for connectivity, public transport, and delivery of services to rural areas in the Southern Region.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 26, 53, 68, 158, 168, 171, 172 and 173.

3.5 Deliver Sustainable Mobility and Modal Shift.

The recommendations outlined in Section 2.2 above for compact growth, integration of land use and transport planning, implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies and Local Transport Plans are directly relevant and beneficial to deliver sustainable mobility and modal shift. The following recommendations are provided in addition.

3.5.1 10 Minute City and Town Concepts

To improve quality of life attributes in our region, through RPO 176, the RSES seeks to attain sustainable compact settlements with the “10-minute” city and town concepts, whereby, a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycle timeframes from homes and/or are accessible by high quality public transport services by connecting people to larger scaled settlements delivering these services.

In collaboration with the INTERREG Europe project MATCH-UP (which aims to achieve significant improvements of modal interchange to foster low-carbon urban mobility <http://www.southernassembly.ie/eu-projects/MATCH-UP>) the SRA undertook a proof of concept of this objective by studying three case study settlements (Carlow, Ennis and Tralee) to establish the existing accessibility issues, location of key services and proposals to improve connectivity to these services by sustainable modes. A framework report was published providing good practice example and a methodology for Local Authorities to prepare, implement and promote sustainable “10 minute” concepts across different settlements.

The NIFTI should provide investment support for “10 Minute” City and Town concepts, recognising the important role of sustainable mobility and permeability for high quality place making and enhanced quality of life in our urban settlements.

- **Recommendation No 10 Implement 10 Minute City and Town Concepts:**
 - The NIFTI should support the implementation of sustainable 10 Minute City and Town concepts as a key principle of sustainable mobility policy and support the initiatives of Local Authorities, transport agencies and communities with investment packages to achieve projects that enhance permeability to achieve sustainable 10 Minute City and Town concepts. Such projects can be cost effective and delivered in the short term.
 - Under NIFTI Table 3 “NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy -Example Measures”, under improve measures support the implementation of active travel improvements including those identified as part of 10 Minute City or Town Assessments.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 151, 152, 160-165, 174, 176, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

3.5.2 Walking and Cycling Infrastructure

The RSES emphasises walking and cycling modes, with more commitment at a regional level to seeking tangible infrastructure and integration of good design practice as we plan for change and growth.

Improving permeability, walking and cycling infrastructure can be cost effective, delivered in the short term but achieve significant positive impacts that can be appreciated across all communities, which will help achieve modal change.

The policy review should provide strong support for walking and cycle infrastructure, especially on the potential for accessible walking and cycle lanes and greenways connecting different settlements, interconnecting with other public transport modes, facilitating active travel throughout larger urban

centres and metropolitan areas, facilitating safe access to schools, recreation and other services on a daily basis.

- **Recommendation No 11 Walking and Cycling Infrastructure:** Enhance the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the Southern Region with investment to deliver safe segregated cycling routes, create recognisable safe school zones, reallocate road space for active travel modes and enhance and improve the accessibility of pedestrian facilities across settlements of all scale in our Region, with packaged investments to Local Authorities and transport agencies to action cost effective local walking and cycling infrastructure improvements and developing Greenway and Blue Way projects.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 151, 152, 160-165, 174, 176, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

3.5.3 Multi Modal Travel Integration

The RSES seeks investment in infrastructure that facilitates integration between all modes of transport to support the use of sustainable travel choices. Options include both conventional interchange infrastructure (park and ride) with emerging smarter travel modes and technology and include:

- Bike and Ride facilities
- Park and Cycle facilities
- Park and Car-Pool facilities
- Public bicycle sharing facilities
- Car sharing (GoCar type)
- Integration of cycling and public transport
- Integrated ticketing to include bike and car sharing
- Integrated ticketing/cards across bike sharing, bus use, train use and car sharing
- Investigate the feasibility of Mobility Hubs for major developments or multi-developments sharing the facility.
- The feasibility of e-scooter schemes.

Blending public and private enterprise partnerships to embrace research and innovation will support greater change, especially for Mobility as a Service Solutions as a way of life. Our cities and towns should be leaders and pioneer such approaches. Strengthened collaborations with transport operators, enterprise, research and development centres such as the Future Mobility Campus Ireland (located as a cluster for autonomous vehicle and smart mobility technology) is encouraged.

- **Recommendation No 12 Multi Modal Travel Integration:** Support the full potential for smarter urban transport networks, seamless multi modal travel chains across different modes using new technologies and Mobility as a Service transport solutions to support greater use of sustainable travel choices.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 93, 133, 134, 160, 161, 162 and 163.

3.5.4 Water Transportation Services

The city and metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick -Shannon and Waterford are uniquely integrated with harbours and estuaries, with waterfront city quarters, harbour side towns, villages and communities in the wider metropolitan areas sharing an outstanding natural resource.

Unlike other international cities, water based public transport , connecting city centre and dockland areas with the wide harbor towns, villages and communities, is underused. In other cities, ferry public transport services integrate with rail, bus, walking and cycling, offering wider options for sustainable mobility and modes across the wider city and metropolitan areas. The feasibility of integrating water based public transport should be assessed for cities and metropolitan areas as a future mode of transport.

- **Recommendation No 13 Feasibility for Water Transportation Services:** Assess the feasibility for the greater use of water based public transportation and the integration of water based transport with other public transport and active travel modes for our waterfront cities and metropolitan areas as part of the multi-modal transport networks for our cities and metropolitan areas located along river, estuary and harbor settings.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPO 79 and RPO 160.

3.6 High Quality International Connectivity between Ports and Airports.

Improved regional connectivity, road and rail, for moving people and goods between our Region's economic drivers and international connectivity gateways of ports and airports on safe, efficient networks with guaranteed journey times is essential for our economic competitiveness and resilience.

This includes the movement and distribution of logistics between our cities and metropolitan areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford, the Atlantic Economic Corridor, the Eastern Economic Corridor and between our Tier 1 and Tier 2 Port assets (Ports of Cork, Shannon- Foynes, Waterford-Belview and Rosslare Europort), National Airports (Cork and Shannon) and Regional Airports (Kerry and Waterford).

These ports and airports are essential individual and a combined basis for the strength of our State's international connectivity and economic growth, with a key role for EU, UK, and international trade post Brexit. Optimising the capacity of these assets for economic competitiveness advances Regional Parity and provides a counterbalance to pressures on Dublin's infrastructure.

Completion of the EU TEN-T multi-modal Core and Comprehensive Networks through our Region, in addition to the transport projects identified through the RSES, MASPs, Metropolitan Transport Strategies and Local Transport Plans which will develop freight and passenger distribution networks within and around our urban nodes and to and from our international transport gateways, require strong support.

Through RSES RPOs 141 Regional Freight Strategy, RPO 145 Ports and Harbour Strategy for the Southern Region, RPO 149 Airport Strategy for the Southern Region and RPO 90 Regional Decarbonisation, the SRA are in the process of defining the scope and role of these strategies to inform a strengthening of national policy and the development of actions by the relevant departments and agencies for a vibrant and greener future in these sectors from the perspective of regional stakeholders.

- **Recommendation No 14 Integration of Regional and International Connectivity and Freight:** Support the capacity and collective strength of our port and harbour assets and airport assets in the Regions for the economic competitiveness of our State by completing the TEN-T Core and Comprehensive Networks and strengthening sustainable multi-modal (road and rail) connectivity between regional and international transport networks for freight and passenger mobility between ports, airports and urban nodes.

This recommendation aligns with RSES RPOs 140, 141, 156, 158, 166-168, 171, 172, Cork MASP Objective 9, Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 8, and Waterford MASP Objective 7.

3.7 Transition to a Low Carbon Climate Resilient Society.

3.7.1 Smarter Travel

The “Smart City” concept envisages that digital technology is embedded across all city functions as a platform to solve complex challenges. It involves systematic integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in planning, design, operations and management of public services including transport.

The RSES seeks to build on the “Smart Cities” concept, extending such activities to other towns, villages and rural areas across the region, thereby developing a wider “Smart Region”. To support the development of a “Smart region”, investment in digital infrastructures and new technologies for smarter travel (such as Mobility as a Service systems) will be required.

- **Recommendation No 15 Smart Mobility:** Enhance the use of smart transport technologies in the Southern Region. Transport infrastructure capital expenditure in the Region should involve a systematic integration of ICT in the planning, design, operations, and management of transport services of the Region’s settlements. Investment should leverage intelligent low carbon e-mobility and Mobility as a Service Systems.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 157, 160-164, Cork MASP Objective 7 & 8, Limerick MASP Objective 7, and Waterford MASP Objective 6.

3.7.2 Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

An increased rate of capital expenditure to facilitate and encourage greater use of electric vehicles by developing more publicly owned recharging facilities in the Southern Region is required. This should aim to develop EV “Fast Charge” points or EV “High Powered Charge” points in strategic and accessible locations across the Region.

- **Recommendation No 16 EV Charging Infrastructure:** Increase the number of publicly owned EV charge points through delivering EV “Fast Charge” points or EV “High Powered Charge” points in strategic and accessible locations as part of the planning and design of projects and the public realm.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 92 and 160-164.

3.7.3 Low Carbon Fueling Infrastructure

The SRA welcome the emphasis on climate change and transition to a lower carbon society and economy in the NIFTI. Decarbonisation across different modes of the transport sector will be a key influence on successful implementation of Local Authority Climate Adaptation Strategies.

The RSES has a significant emphasis on the climate crisis at the outset of the strategy and through the transport sector seeks initiatives that will achieve the de-carbonisation of the transport sector, moving to the use of clean generated electricity bio-gas, hydrogen and other non-fossil fuels for private and public transportation and provision of clean energy and lower carbon fueling stations by 2030.

- **Recommendation No 17 Lower Carbon Fuels:** Support a greater level of ambition in actions in the development of clean energy fueling station infrastructure of all transport sectors (private, public, commercial freight, international) and strengthen the commitment to the decarbonisation of transport across all sectors to meet our national commitments under the National Climate Action Plan and the EU’s New Green Deal. In particular, prioritise implementation of actions under the DTTAS National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport 2017-2030.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 91, 93, 139.

3.7.4 Nature Based Design Solutions

The RSES recognises the important role of integrating Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI) and Nature Based Solutions (NBS) as a key component of placemaking. Both are important in addressing the urgency of Climate Change and planning our settlements sustainability with transport infrastructure across all modes to reduce carbon emissions.

The SRA are currently collaborating with Local Authorities and other stakeholder agencies on the Interreg Europe “Blue Green Cities” project (<http://www.southernassembly.ie/eu-projects/blue-green-city>). This project is seeking, through good practice learning in the EU and our Region, to improve policy making and the implementation of projects that integrate GBI and NBS at national, regional and local levels.

A positive example in our Region is the current preparation of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy by Cork City Council, which will include recommendations for the integration of walking and cycling infrastructure, active travel networks, the wider transport networks under the Cork Metropolitan Transport Strategy and networks of parks, recreational areas and natural habitats with green and blue infrastructure corridors that incorporate NBS. A Blue Green Infrastructure strategy has recently been commenced by Limerick City and County Council for Limerick City.

Through the MASPs for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford, a specific objective is identified for such strategies to create city and metropolitan wide networks for recreation and open space integrating with walking and cycling routes.

GBI and NBS is particularly applicable to the design, construction and on-going maintenance of transport infrastructure at all scales. It needs support and prominence through the NIFTI as a requirement for transport projects to integrate GBI and NBS at all stages of transport project cycles and used as a principle in the consideration of funding to advance our planning and design for lower carbon , climate resilient sustainable places.

The planning system is predominantly designed to examine the impact of development on protected habitats and species. Often, the presence of these species and habitat at a project site is only identified during the environmental impact assessment. This type of defensive conservation very often is a source of conflict between project development and species conservation, rather than taking a more proactive approach to finding solutions that promotes the creation of BGI.

The incorporation of BGI considerations, biodiversity improvements, sustainable drainage and NBS at the earliest stages of project preparation will provide a more proactive approach to finding solutions

that promotes the creation of BGI. By doing this right and making these elements an integral part of the design option process, the time-delays between initial project development and the consideration of biodiversity impacts will be avoided.

- **Recommendation No 18 Nature Based Design Solutions and Transport:** To ensure biodiversity improvement and greater climate resilience, the NIFTI should incorporate the consistent consideration of Nature Based Solutions in the design options stage for all transport projects. This should be consistently reflected in the planning, tendering and implementation stages. The requirements for Blue Green Infrastructure, biodiversity improvements and sustainable drainage should be key considerations and elements of all project. The NIFTI should encourage good practices and reward funding for transport projects, especially active travel, that are part of the delivery of green and blue networks across our Region, metropolitan areas and settlements.

This recommendation aligns with and achieves RSES RPOs 110, 122-128, 200-201, 218, Cork MASP Objective 17, Limerick-Shannon MASP Objective 20, Waterford MASP Objective 21.

Section 4.0, Challenges and Opportunities for our Transport Sectors.

The NIFTI consultation survey looks at key challenges and opportunities for transport under:

- Decarbonise the Transport Sector.
- Protect and Renew Existing Transport Networks
- Improve Mobility for People and Goods in Urban Areas.
- Enhance Regional and Rural Connectivity

To a large extent, these challenges and opportunities have been addressed in Section 2.0.

There are three key overarching challenges faced.

Firstly, is the lack of, or hard to gain access to, adequate levels of funding that follow through on the objectives, actions and projects identified by stakeholders in pursuit of the NIFTI investment priorities, modal hierarchy and intervention hierarchy.

Second, is the need for greater enforcement of the principles at a local level for the effective integration of land use and transport planning, which are critical for demand management, consolidation and distributing future growth in a sustainable infrastructure led manner.

Thirdly is behavioral change. In hand with infrastructure provision, to change habits and behavior patterns, the multiple benefits of a well-functioning, integrated transport systems and sustainable mobility to our health, environment, economy and quality of life need to be communicated and tangible for people at the local level to encourage greater levels of modal change to low carbon transport.

The following recommendations are made to leverage the opportunities of our transport infrastructure and services through funding, project co-ordination for effective land use and transport planning integration and demand management incentives for behavioral change. These recommendations support and build upon similar themes raised in the draft NIFTI consultation report. They are relevant for other parallel process frameworks for transport investment and decision making, including Strategic Assessment Reports, consideration of spatial implications of transport proposals and review of the Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes (CAF) for different transport sectors.

Recommendation No 19 Funding Mechanisms: Our Local Authorities need support and pathways to funding to deliver on NPF, NDP, RSES and MASP priorities. This allows all our stakeholders and communities to retrofit infrastructure and plan for future growth to achieve the structural and transformative change required through Project Ireland 2040 at the regional and local level. The SRA identify that:

(i): New funding structures are needed to achieve funding for infrastructure and projects at the local level. Local Authorities need to be assisted to deliver on City and County Development Plan objectives and Core Strategies, especially the delivery of housing and employment targets aligned with national and regional projections and objectives. While there is merit to the competitive bid process, more direct partnership and support to assist Local Authority initiatives is also needed to achieve NPF and RSES objectives.

(ii): The establishment of dedicated long-term budgeting mechanism (10-year strategic fund) to drive the achievement of the accelerated growth of our three Metropolitan Areas and funding support for Key Towns, including the implementation of Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies and Local Transport Plans is a key recommendation.

Recommendation No 20 Sequencing Land Use and Transport Planning Integration: To enable transformative regeneration projects across cities, towns and rural areas at the scale required to achieve NPF and RSES targets and compact growth, we need to accelerate infrastructure provision so that it is sequenced successfully to retrofit deficits and is put in place first for infrastructure led development. The SRA identify:

(i) The NIFTI, as a framework tool to deliver for the NPF and NDP, needs to support resources towards project management and project co-ordination teams across Local Authorities, the Land Development Agency and transport agencies inter alia as an integral part of transport infrastructure delivery, so that land use and transport projects are sequenced successfully for early delivery of transport infrastructure and close integration with land use planning, especially for large scale urban regeneration projects and delivery of transport infrastructure under metropolitan area transport strategies.

Recommendation No 21 Demand Side Behaviour Change Initiatives : To achieve greater levels of demand side behaviour change for transition to low carbon transport, the NIFTI needs to support complimentary initiatives across Departments in parallel with infrastructure funding. The SRA identify:

(i) Support financial incentives and rewards for going green in transportation, across private, commercial and public transport sectors.

(ii) A positive example of a pro-active initiative was the Department of Transport's recent consultation on the Five City Demand Management Survey (undertaken by Systra in September 2020) to identify effective policy measures to achieve demand side behaviour change for greater transition to low carbon transport in each of our cities and metropolitan areas across:

- Taxation and Fuel Measures
- Clean Air Measures
- Parking Measures
- Planning Measures
- Energy Management Certification
- Integrating Ticketing and Mobility as a Service
- Local Toolkits

Progress and actions on such measures will be a positive step. Funding should also target behavior change initiatives and communication initiatives in addition to infrastructure as a priority for achieving greater levels of modal change to lower carbon mobility.

(iii): Support the initiatives of the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) and Local Authorities for the implementation of sustainable transport measures under Climate Adaptation Strategies. This includes support for projects in Local Authorities, highlighting good practice pilots and demonstrator projects for learning, to help all Local Authorities achieve greater results in modal change, climate mitigation and adaptation. In addition to infrastructure, resources that can assist communication, coordinate projects across internal departments and agencies and coordinate with local communities such as the roles of dedicated Local Authority Cycle Officers and Climate Action Officers inter alia, are positive.

Section 5.0 NIFTI Investment Priorities and Alignment with the RSES

The NIFTI will require that future transport projects must align the four priorities for:

- Decarbonisation
- Protection and Renewal
- Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas
- Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity.

These priorities are aligned with the RSES and MASPs. Chapter 5 of the RSES (Environment) sets out our Region's commitment to climate action, transition to a low carbon economy and society and priorities for decarbonisation in the transport sector, including the infrastructure and facilities to integrate electric vehicle charging, use of bio-gas, hydrogen and other non-fossil fuels for private and public transport.

Chapter 6 of the RSES (Connectivity) sets out the framework of our Regional Transport Strategy, developed in coordination with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and in consultation with the Department of Transport (DoT) and other stakeholders. It seeks to deliver the strategic outcomes of Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Regional Accessibility and High-Quality International Connectivity. It sets a statutory framework to integrate transport planning with spatial planning in all lower tiered plans in our Region and seeks transport infrastructure led compact growth for sustainable development.

NIFTI Priority 1, Decarbonisation, aligns with RSES transport investment priorities for:

- Smarter and lower carbon technologies, low carbon fuel sources and infrastructure including more accessible services for electric vehicles.
- Smart and Sustainable Mobility projects, multi modal travel integration and sustainable mobility targets.
- Walking and Cycling Infrastructure.
- Public Transport, maintaining and expanding our rail and bus networks in region wide.

NIFTI Priority 2, Protection and Renewal, aligns with RSES transport investment priorities for:

- Managing the Region's transport assets through Steady State Investment of existing infrastructure and optimising our network assets including road and rail.
- Consolidation and higher densities to maximise accessibility of developments by walking, cycling and public transport.
- Enabling Access for All with socially inclusive, accessible design to meet all societal needs.

NIFTI Priority 3, Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas, aligns with RSES transport investment priorities for:

- The implementation of multi modal Metropolitan Transport Strategies for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford.
- The implementation of multi-modal Local Transport Plans for our 14 Key Towns and other settlements.
- The implementation of sustainable mobility, active travel and 10 Minute City and Town projects for infrastructure led compact growth in settlements of all scale.

NIFTI Priority 4, Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity, aligns with RSES transport investment priorities for:

- Maintenance of existing road infrastructure in addition to new road infrastructure for economic interaction (multi-modal freight movement between our cities, ports and airports) and public transport (rural public transport services such as Local Link connecting towns, villages, rural communities and tourism corridors).
- Maintenance and expansion of our Region’s rail networks with improved intercity services, feasibility of rail electrification, leveraging the asset of underused lines, new station and interchange facilities and potential for rail freight.
- Completion of Ten-T Core and Comprehensive Corridors and a Regional Freight Strategy.

Principles of the Regional Transport Strategy address the NIFTI Modal Hierarchy (priority to Active Travel, Public Transport and Private Vehicles in that order) through:

- Supporting compact and smart growth through the achievement of mutual consistency between land use and transport planning, investment and service provision.
- To manage sustainably the existing and future demand for travel, in particular by private car and other passive travel modes, primarily through appropriate integrated land use planning to reduce the distance between origin and destination of the greatest proportion of trips generated.
- Ensuring that future developments are planned and designed to maximise their accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling.

Principles of the Regional Transport Strategy address the NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy (ensuring that investment is proportionate to the problem identified by assessing, in order of priority, the case to maintain, optimise, improve and new) through:

- Protecting the strategic capacity and safety of the Region’s multi-modal transport networks.
- Improving walking and cycling provision in towns and villages, including the re-distribution of street space and upgrade of public realm and urban design.
- Strengthening inter- regional connectivity through the improvement of inter-urban road and rail connectivity, particularly between the largest urban centres and access to ports and airports for the movement of people and goods.
- Managing, enhancing and expanding the existing rail infrastructure in the Region to maximise future level of rail service for passengers and freight.
- Managing and enhancing the national and strategic road networks to address the Region’s multi-modal intra-regional, inter-regional and international connectivity.

Conclusion

The SRA welcome this consultation opportunity with the Department of Transport on the NIFTI and are a committed stakeholder and key consultee for the Department in the final NIFTI and its implementation as an enabler for the implementation of strategic transport projects across all modes in our Region.

The objectives of the RSES and MASPS for Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford align with the priorities for investment under the NIFTI, the principles of its Modal Hierarchy and Intervention Hierarchy.

Implementation of our RSES and MASPs, supported by the NIFTI as a framework to enact the NPF and NDP in the Regions and in our Local Authority areas, will achieve well-functioning, integrated transport systems, enhancing competitiveness, sustaining economic progress and enabling sustainable mobility choices for all with benefits to our environment, health economy and quality of life. Properly realised, the NIFTI can play a key role in the structural change required under Project Ireland 2040 including the achievement of '50:50 distribution of growth between the Eastern and Midland Region, and the Southern and Northwestern Regions, with 75% of the growth to be achieved outside of Dublin and its suburbs.'

NIFTI is also important to the work of the SRA in ensuring the delivery of investment through the NDP and the European Regional Development Fund co-financed programmes, including the 2021-2027 programme for the Southern and Eastern & Midland Regions which we in the Southern Regional Assembly are responsible for managing.

Through this submission, the SRA support the NIFTI and to assist the process we have provided insight into the example measures that can be undertaken to advance the thematic priorities and in so doing, achieve the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and the strategy statements of the RSES in turn.

Where projects and programmes align with such measures, they will help build the case that they align successfully with the NIFTI and NPF, assisting their project strategic assessment, business case and appraisal procedures.

Continued engagement between the SRA and the Department of Transport as the NIFTI is completed and implemented will be encouraged and welcomed. I trust the above recommendations can be taken on board to help strengthen the final NIFTI from the Region's perspective. The SRA would welcome the opportunity to engage with the Department of Transport on these recommendations and are available for future consultation and clarities as required.

Mise le meas,



David Kelly,
Director