

## **Response to Public Consultation on Draft Transport Strategy 2016-2035 for the Greater Dublin Area and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment**

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### **1. The Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment fails to supply the information which is required.**

Although quantified predictions of environmental impacts are available to the National Transport Authority and contained in other documentation, they are not supplied in the Environmental Report as required.

Baseline data on the current state of the environment, such as transport-related emissions data and ambient air quality data are also not supplied.

This information is legally required to be contained in the Environmental Report. See Annex I of the SEA Directive.

### **2. The Environmental Report fails to consider alternatives.**

The alternatives reportedly considered are "uneven provision of transport" and "under provision of transport". Actual alternatives to various elements of the strategy have not been considered. This is despite the fact that the detailed transport modelling carried out would make it quite practical to model the environmental impact and report on the different environmental impacts of different options.

This information is also legally required to be contained in the Environmental Report. (Annex I of the SEA Directive)

### **3. The Environmental Report does not evaluate the draft Strategy against the Strategic Environmental Objectives.**

Valid Environmental Indicators and Targets are not specified. In a credible Environmental Assessment process, Indicators would typically be types of pollutants and Targets would be the emissions or ambient concentrations which would be required to be met.

The Environmental report states that:

Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) are methodological measures developed from policies which generally govern environmental protection objectives established at international, Community or Member State level e.g. the environmental protection objectives of various European Directives which have been transposed into Irish law and which are required to be implemented.

The SEOs are set out under a range of topics and are used as standards against which the provisions of the Draft Strategy and the alternatives are evaluated in order to help identify which provisions would be likely to result in significant environmental effects and where such effects would be likely to occur, if - in the case of adverse effects - unmitigated.

The SEOs are linked to indicators which can facilitate monitoring the environmental effects of the Draft Strategy as well identifying targets which the Strategy can help work towards.

It includes the following objectives, indicators and targets for air, climate and human health:

**Table 5.1 Strategic Environmental Objectives, Indicators and Targets**

Environmental Component	Strategic Environmental Objectives	Indicators	Targets
Air and Climatic Factors	C1: To facilitate a reduction in travel related emissions (including pollutants, noise and greenhouse gas emissions) to air	C1i: Compliance with Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (CAFE) Directive and associated legislation C1ii: Greenhouse gas emissions from transport	C1i: To contribute towards compliance with legislative air quality limits and target values C1ii: To facilitate a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport
	C2: To encourage modal change from car to more sustainable forms of transport	C2: Percentage of population travelling to work, school or college by public transport or non-mechanical means	C2: An increase in the percentage of the population travelling to work, school or college by public transport or non-mechanical means
	C3: To facilitate a reduction in energy use by the transport sector	C3: Energy use by the transport sector as a percentage of Total Final Energy Consumption	C3: To facilitate a reduction in the percentage of energy use by the transport sector as a percentage of Total Final Energy Consumption
Population and Human Health	P1: To develop transport infrastructure and services closer to urban/suburban areas	P1: Extent of urban/suburban areas within the catchment of transport infrastructure and services	P1: To maximise the extent of urban/suburban areas within the catchment of transport infrastructure and services
	HH1: To protect populations and human health from exposure to incompatible landuses	HH1: Occurrence (any) of a spatially concentrated deterioration in human health arising from environmental factors resulting from development provided for by the Strategy, as identified by the Health Service Executive and Environmental Protection Agency	HH1: No spatial concentrations of health problems arising from environmental factors as a result of implementing the Strategy

So some of the specific legal obligations in relation to air emissions have been identified in outline. Others, such as the Convention on Long Range Transport of Air Pollution have not. The requirements of none of the various legal instruments have been set out.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment process should compare predicted emission levels and predicted ambient concentrations with the various legal limits applicable as well as with health guidelines adopted at national, EU or international levels (e.g. by the World Health Organisation.) These should be found as the indicators in the table above.

In fact, the assessment does not compare predicted results with legal or scientific thresholds. Instead, this is what is offered as analysis:

**Table 7.5 Effects Arising from Alternative developed as the Draft Strategy**

Environmental Component	Significant Positive Effect, likely to occur	Potentially Adverse Effect, if unmitigated	Residual Adverse Effect
Air and climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates contribution towards a shift from car to more sustainable and non-motorised transport modes</li> <li>Facilitates contribution towards managing traffic flows and associated adverse effects on air quality</li> <li>Facilitates contribution towards reductions in travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air</li> </ul>	• Emissions to air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An extent of travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air. This has been mitigated by provisions which have been integrated into the Strategy, including those relating to sustainable mobility.</li> </ul>
Population and human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates contribution towards the protection of human health as a result of contributing towards the protection of environmental vectors, especially air</li> <li>Provides for the development of transport infrastructure and services in locations which will facilitate use by those living and working in urban/suburban areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential interactions if effects upon environmental vectors such as air are not mitigated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An extent of travel related greenhouse gas and other emissions to air. This has been mitigated by provisions which have been integrated into the Strategy, including those relating to sustainable mobility.</li> </ul>
Biodiversity	Facilitates lower overall emissions arising from both		Loss of an extent of

These off-the cuff unquantified assessments then immediately become Overall Findings:

## 8.1 Overall Findings

The overall findings of the SEA are that:

- Compliance with Legislation and Guidelines – Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development**

The National Transport Authority have integrated all recommendations arising from the SEA and Appropriate Assessment processes into the Transport Strategy, facilitating compliance of the Strategy with various European and National legislation and Guidelines relating to the protection of the environment and the achievement of sustainable development.

- Improvements in Sustainable Mobility and Associated Effects (emissions, noise and energy usage)**

The Strategy facilitates improvements in sustainable mobility (reducing and limiting increases in the number of journeys by car taken as a percentage of all journeys taken), thereby facilitating a reduction/limit of increases in greenhouse gas emissions, noise emissions, other emissions to air and energy usage. Such emissions would occur otherwise with higher levels of motorised transport and associated traffic.

- These stated predictions are contrary to the estimates derived from the modelling which are that emissions will increase, although the exact quantity of the predicted increase has not been reported.

Despite not being included in the Environmental Report, quantified emissions predictions were generated as part of the modelling of the draft Strategy. On the next page after the Overall Findings quoted above, the Environmental Report states:

The NTA also undertook environmental assessment as part of the modelling which was undertaken in conjunction with the preparation of the Strategy. Detailed consideration was given to emissions, noise and severance as follows:

- **Modelled Emissions**

All types of vehicle emissions (Carbon Monoxide, Carbon Dioxide, Nitrous Oxides and Hydrocarbons) reduce under the Transport Strategy. This highlights the air quality improvements for the GDA associated with the introduction of the GDA Transport Strategy provisions

Inexplicably these emissions predictions aren't presented in the Environmental Report. Some sparse information is supplied in the Modelling Report.

[https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Transport\\_Modelling\\_Report.pdf](https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Transport_Modelling_Report.pdf)

That report contains a single table on emissions:

#### 5.6.1 Emissions

Table 5-12 details the comparison of vehicle emissions for the GDA for the AM, Inter Peak (IP) and PM peak hours, for the Do Minimum and the Do Strategy scenarios. The model outputs indicate that all types of vehicle emissions reduce in the Do Strategy scenario.

Table 5-12: GDA Network Emissions

Pollutants	AM		IP		PM	
	Do Min	Do Strat	Do Min	Do Strat	Do Min	Do Strat
CO	32,582.	31,318	17,121	16,396	29,748	28,804
CO2	344,288	337,624	204,462	198,866	322,848	316,549
NOX	7,318	7,178	4,506	4,327	6,883	6,644
HC	5,855	5,637	3,118	2,987	5,359	5,188

No information on current/baseline emissions levels is given.

All these differences comparing 'do nothing' and implementing the strategy are of between 2% and 4%, so the strategy has almost no impact on total emissions. Neither the Environmental Report nor the Transport Modelling Report uses the predicted emissions to estimate compliance with legal obligations or to evaluate impacts on human health.

I requested a copy of the "environmental assessment" undertaken "as part of the modelling" as referred to in the Environmental Report. However, at the time of preparing this submission I have not received a response.

Given that there is no baseline data in the emissions table, the big outstanding question which the documents don't even address is how does the predicted level of emissions compare with current emissions.

There is some baseline data in relation to some of the modelling itself. Total car trips will increase in both the Do Minimum and the Do Strategy scenarios - by about 15% in the Do

Minimum, and 8 or 9% in the Strategy scenario. Given that, contrary to what is stated in both the Environmental Report and the Modelling Report, vehicle emissions will not reduce.

This data shows that the difference between Do Minimum and Do Strategy is 5%. So the impact of the strategy on the number of car trips is greater than its impact on emissions. This suggests that each trip in the Strategy Scenario is slightly more polluting than it would have been.

The Modelling Report also has predictions for total road distance travelled. The impact of the strategy here is a mere 1% lower total pcu.km than the Do Minimum. So the strategy reduces the number of car trips by 5%, makes the average very slightly longer, leading to a mere 1% reduction in km travelled and makes each trip slightly less polluting per km, resulting in an overall emissions level 2 to 4% lower than the Do Minimum.

But the key message is that the Strategy envisages 8 or 9% more car trips than we have now, probably 10 or 11% more pcu.km travelled. (Baseline pcu.km are also not given in the documentation.)

And this will mean more pollution than now, exactly how much more depending on the modelling of the individual journeys.

5. **The draft Strategy is not designed to meet the Strategic Environmental Objectives. This is clear from the draft Strategy itself, the results of the emissions prediction exercise and associated information on the Strategy from the NTA.**
6. **Insofar as the Strategy will lead to a breach of Ireland's EU law obligations as regards emissions and ambient air pollution concentrations, it is illegal.**
7. **The Strategy is not compatible with the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development adopted by the Government in 2014.**  
<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/Environment/FileDownload,37827,en.pdf>

This is most surprising as the National Policy Position is stated in the Strategy to be “Primary Policy”:

## 2.2 Primary Policy

### 2.2.1 Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development National Policy Position

In the absence of, and in advance of the development of a set of climate change policies and action plans / roadmaps, it is clear from existing international agreements that Ireland is required to radically reduce dependence on carbon-emitting fuels in the transport sector. The Strategy must therefore, promote, within its legislative remit, transport options which provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This can most effectively be done by promoting public transport, walking and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.

Despite this declaration of primacy, the objectives of the National Policy Position have not

been set out in the Strategy. The Policy Position sets out a long-term vision for decarbonisation:

The low-carbon roadmapping process will be guided by a long-term vision of low-carbon transition based on –

- an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and
- in parallel, an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.

Given that this draft Strategy envisages an increase in transport-related emissions in the period to 2035, it is not in keeping with the transition to an 80% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. The NTA has acknowledged that the draft Strategy was designed to meet objectives of modal split and traffic movements, and not emissions objectives.

**8. It will not be possible to adopt this draft Strategy when the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill is enacted.**

The fact that the draft Strategy is not designed to meet climate change objectives is significant. When the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill is enacted, the NTA will be required to comply with Section 15 of the Bill. At that time, it will not be legal for the NTA to adopt or implement this draft Strategy.