



Galway City Community Network
Líonra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

Galway City Community Network

Galway City Transport Strategy

Submission

Straitéis Iompair na Gaillimhe Galway Transport Strategy



An Integrated Transport Management Programme for Galway City and environs



Galway City Community Network is the Public Participation Network in Galway. We welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the draft Galway Transport Strategy and hope that our observations make a useful contribution.

Preamble

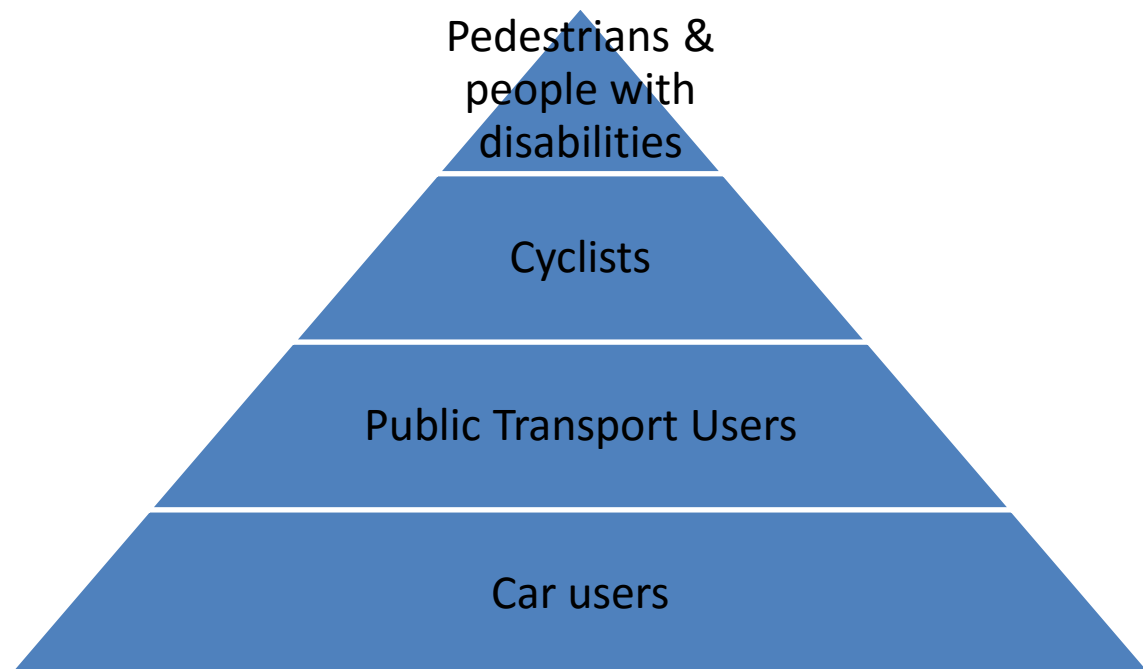
On behalf of the GCCN Transport and Environment Linkage Group we wish to make the following observations on the proposed Galway Transport Strategy. For brevity we are focussing on pedestrian issues. We have an interest in other transport areas but there are other strong interest groups dealing with those.

Overall position: There are numerous measures suggested by the GTS that would enhance walking and which have no obvious connection to any new road or outer bypass proposals. As an example the filtered permeability proposals do not have any impact on available road capacity in the city.

Introduction

The Galway City Community Network's (GCCN) vision for transport in Galway is a city that is people-friendly and investment is given primacy towards this priority.

GCCN's vision for transport in Galway is based on the principles of sustainability, safety, social inclusion, accessibility and social justice. It recognises and advocates for priority to be given to the right of pedestrians, people with disabilities and cyclists to access roads and footpaths in a safe way across the lifecycle. It gives pre-eminence to sustainability and the advocates for the need to make immediate progress towards reducing carbon. It advocates for priority to be given to investment in sustainable, accessible, affordable public transport above all other forms of transport.



Observations

We note the following census statistics relating to walking in Galway

- 24% of people (aged 5 years and over) in Galway City walk to work, school or college (2011 statistics)
- These figures are far behind Dublin (29%), Cork (32%) and Limerick (32%)
- Walking levels in Galway has been falling continuously from 30% in 2002 to 27% in 2006 and 24% in 2011
- Analysis at the electoral division level shows that newer areas of the city are not walkable, e.g. 4.7% walking modal share in Knocknacarra

This analysis also shows that older areas of the city are losing their traditionally high levels of walking, e.g. between 2006 and 2011 walking modal share lost 8 percentage points in Wellpark, -6pp in Taylor's Hill and -5pp in Dangan.

Walking as a form of transport fell at a time of high fuel costs and high unemployment. This is counter-intuitive and confirms a serious problem has developed with the walking infrastructure in Galway. We welcome the fact that the GTS documents reference and reflect the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and the NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide. We welcome the GTS comment that DMURS will guide localised proposals. However, this does not go far enough there is a requirement to review all major junctions in the city with regards to DMURS. While some roundabouts were removed in recent years the pedestrian provisions do not match current best practice. Staggered crossings and unnecessarily disjointed crossing paths are seen. In some cases pedestrians must always push a button and wait for a green man even though the traffic on that arm will not be moving for over a minute. The pedestrian has been de-prioritised even though the roundabout has been removed.

Point of concern: Appendix H Smarter Mobility

In appendix H there are various references to the Urban Traffic Management Centre (UTMC) which links traffic signals to a central controller. The recommended projects section proposes to link circa 60 signalised pedestrian crossings to the UTMC. This raises two issues.

1) The overwhelming predominance of signalised versus zebra crossings in the city suggests that pedestrians are being managed and controlled for the benefit of motor traffic. In the whole of the GTS documents the word "zebra" only appears in relation to zebra mussels.

2) Linking all signalised crossings to the UTMC has the implied purpose of further restricting pedestrian travel in favour of motor traffic. Although there is talk in the discussion of "green waves" for pedestrians this is not viable in our view. There is already comprehensive evidence, provided in other submissions, that the city council has been using UTMC in a manner that removes priority and network capacity from cyclists. This is seen at most of the junctions connected to the UTMC, there is no provision to detect cyclists and cyclists are apparently expected to wait for cars come along to trigger the lights. Connecting the crossings to the UTMC implies a furthering of the practice of removing system capacity from vulnerable travel modes.

Point of concern: Reducing Vehicle Speeds

The GTS documents contain many references to reducing vehicle speeds, this is laudable. However, there is a marked absence of reference to 30kph zones this is a matter of concern as this is a core GCCN policy.

In section 7.2.2 "Supporting Measures for Walking" the GTS Technical Report proposes evaluating lower speed limits in conjunction with An Garda Síochána. It is clear that, at this time, the Garda lack a capacity to enforce the existing speed limits in the city and there is a widespread perception of a general lack of speed enforcement. As this is a key policy area for rebalancing travel patterns in the city it cannot be left to an institution that does not have the apparent capacity to deliver.

In 2010 the Galway City Community Forum lobbied for amendments to the Road Traffic Legislation to allow local councils to operate their own traffic enforcement and speed cameras. This requirement still stands and as an enabling measure for the GTS. New legislation should be moved to allow this to happen otherwise there is little point in some of the substantial investments being proposed.

Point of concern: Roundabouts

The challenges and risks that current roundabout designs impose on vulnerable users are a key concern within GCCN policy. In the GTS, Appendix H acknowledges that these roundabouts are a barrier to pedestrian and cyclist mobility. The GTS documents propose to replace many roundabouts with signalised crossings. This is welcome but is likely to be a long-term project. Short-term remedial measures are needed pending the delivery of more complicated solutions. In the case of the roundabouts it should be possible to quickly apply raised table zebra crossings on all the entries and exits. There is precedent for this in other Irish cities and it does not require complex engineering.