



Galway City Community Network  
Lónra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

### Galway City Community Network CLG

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## Galway City Community Network, The Public Participation Network in Galway City

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### Galway City Council Proposed Bus Connects Galway Dublin Road and Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road)

#### GCCN Submission

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January 2021

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## Preface

Established in 2014, **Galway City Community Network** (GCCN) is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City. The twin objectives that GCCN pursues are to:

- Advance the values of sustainability, equality, culture, community, empowerment and inclusivity and embed these in the policies, programmes and practice of local government, state organisations, national government and civil society.
- Develop and implement progressive models of and approaches to representation, participation and engagement for civil society in informing and shaping policy development and implementation.

## Context

GCCN welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on the proposed Galway City Council Bus Connects Galway Dublin Road and Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road), made after consulting with GCCN members and on the basis of two workshop with members of the appropriate GCCN linkage groups.

### GCCN Policy and Positions

In developing this submission, GCCN has drawn on its Policies and Positions document, the relevant sections of which stated:

- GCCN policy on transport is based on a Hierarchy of Road Users in the following order:
  1. Pedestrians and people with disabilities
  2. Cyclists
  3. Public transport and
  4. Private motor transport.
- GCCN believes that all projects, initiatives, policies, programmes and services in Galway City should be universally accessible enabling the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of disability, age, literacy or linguistic considerations.
- GCCN endorses the European Charter of Pedestrian Rights and the Road Danger Reduction Charter.
- GCCN notes that documents such as the National Cycle Policy Framework, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide seek to address inappropriate and unsuitable roads management and town planning practices. The network endorses the overall approach advocated in these documents.
- Speed limits of 30km/h or lower are the default option for all non-arterial roads in the city.
- Roundabouts be replaced with signalised crossings and in the short term raised table zebra crossings be established on all entries and exits recognising that the challenges and risks that current roundabout designs impose on vulnerable users are a barrier to pedestrian and cyclist mobility.
- Future development is mixed-use and orientated to public transport and other key facilities especially schools and workplaces;

- Safe travelling routes to amenities and recreational grounds are provided including for example, bike routes away from traffic, pedestrian crossings, traffic calming systems, lowering of speed limits and addressing ‘rat-runs’.
- Safe areas are established in residential areas which; favour pedestrians and children’s play areas over traffic, have speed limits of walking speed and separate roads with access for bicycles, buses and pedestrians from those open to motor vehicles.
- Existing bóithríns and greenways in the city and its environs are protected and connected where possible and further routes developed with the twin aims of promoting ecological corridors for wildlife and active travel routes for humans.
- A strategy is developed that recognises the crucial role of public green spaces such as parks, forests, meadows, seashores, rivers and wetlands in the area of personal and community health;
- An inventory database of habitats, fauna and flora using the Galway City Habitats Inventory 2006 as a baseline is established monitored and regularly updated with the addition of a status/risk assessment element.

## Submission

GCCN welcomes the focus of both schemes to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure. GCCN supports the stated intention of the Dublin Road scheme to provide ‘the infrastructure to reduce reliance on private motorised transport, promote walking and cycling and support improved frequency and journey time reliability of bus services’ and the Cross City scheme of ‘providing bus priority through the city centre core’ and prioritise walking, cycling and public transport along its length.

GCCN’s transport policy is based on a Hierarchy of Road Users in the following order: Pedestrians and people with disabilities, Cyclists, Public transport and Private motor transport. The road design and road management practices in both schemes should reflect this hierarchy of road users by prioritising the safety of more vulnerable road users.

Both schemes should align with universal design principles and ensure universal accessibility enabling the full and equal participation of all people, regardless of disability or age. All plans should be accessibility and equality proofed to ensure accessibility for all road users including people with disabilities, older people and children.

## Dublin Road Scheme

### Prioritisation of Pedestrians, Cyclists and Bus Passengers

Design details should reflect the hierarchy of road users. There are a number of areas which could be amended to improve safety and permeability for pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers.

- **Safe Crossings for Pedestrians and Bus Passengers**

The addition of traffic lights at Merlin Park hospital junction is to be welcomed as it will make this junction much safer and more attractive for walkers and cyclists. Some bus stops being positioned on the east of the GMIT junction are also helpful to avoid the overcrowding which currently takes place at the bus stops at GMIT.

However, some amendments to the scheme which would further increase the safety of pedestrians and bus passengers. There are only two pedestrian crossings in the scheme which covers four kilometres. The number of pedestrian crossings should be increased to ensure safe crossings for pedestrians particularly for people with disabilities and more vulnerable pedestrians like older people and children. There will be a high level of pedestrian traffic at the bus stop at GMIT so a pedestrian crossing would be required to ensure the safety of bus passengers. Due to the large volume of bus traffic in this area a bus bay with bus shelters at this location would also increase the attractiveness of bus transport.

- **Segregated Cycling Facilities for Cyclists**

Objective 2 of the National Cycle Policy Framework is to ‘Ensure that the urban road infrastructure (with the exception of motorways) is designed / retrofitted so as to be cyclist-friendly and that traffic management measures are also cyclist friendly.’<sup>1</sup> Amendments to the proposals could support this objective to ensure ‘urban traffic control systems designed to recognise cyclists and give them priority’.

It is vital that there is safe dedicated road space for cyclists through segregated cycling facilities rather than the prioritisation of road space for cars. CYCLOPS (“Cycle Optimised Protected Signals”) junctions should be used to fully segregate cyclists from general traffic and increase cyclist safety. This junction design also benefits pedestrians as it reduces pedestrian crossing times and gives more waiting space for pedestrians. Incorporating free left turns for cyclists at junctions to allow for ‘by-passes for cyclists at traffic signals’<sup>2</sup> and signalised jug handle turns at T junctions into the scheme would also increase safety for cyclists. Segregated cycle lanes are also necessary as oppose to stacking lanes, for example at Skerrit Junction. Feeder cycle lanes are also required to feed into advance stop lines for cyclists.

The off-road cycleway is welcomed however there currently does not appear to be coherent access for cyclists approaching from the opposite side of the road for example to access to cycleway from the Coast Road. Without this access and due to the level of cycling commuter traffic from Oranmore a segregated cycle lane on the opposite side of the road is recommended to connect the Coast Road to Galway Crystal.

There is also potential for two-way cycling from the Roshill Road junction to the Merlin Park Hospital junction on the south of the corridor using existing sections of path, verge and residential access roads to provide safe cycling routes from Oranmore to Rosshill. A short, two-way cycling and walking route along the southside of the corridor from the Merlin Park Junction to the site of the Galway Crystal Plant would also be beneficial. These measures could support safer cycling routes for all cyclists including children accessing school safely.

### **Protection of Priority Habitat**

In the scheme the off-road cycle and walkway goes through the Meadows which is a priority habitat. An Environmental Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken to assess the impact on this habitat and to develop measures to ensure this habitat is protected. One such measure to protect the meadows would be to have a barrier such as a wall or a low hedge between the path and the meadows. It is recommended that the design team engage with Friends of Merlin Woods as part of this process.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Transport, *National Cycle Policy Framework*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The width needs to be sufficient for people walking and cycling which would mean it would need to be 5m-wide to be suitable for a busy shared-use path. The impact this width path would have on the habitat of the Meadows also needs to be assessed.

### **Universal Design**

The scheme should be accessibility and equality proofed to ensure universal access. Universal design standards ensure accessibility for all road users including people with disabilities, older people and children.

The scheme should include measures to ensure the safety of vulnerable road users. Pedestrians with disabilities need to be able to access and cross the road safely to access amenities on both sides of the road. More pedestrian crossings need to be included in the scheme to ensure this and there should be a minimum distance between pedestrian crossings. Pedestrian crossings also need to be added to ensure access to bus stops. Permeability should also be improved by removing obstacles like kissing gates. Features such as the off-road cycle and walkway should be designed to ensure accessibility for wheelchair users. Also attention needs to be paid to where signage is placed to prevent signs from obstructing pedestrians, particularly people with disabilities.

### **Cross City Link Scheme**

The proposed restrictions to traffic creating a circulatory system for vehicular traffic around the city centre core is welcomed. These measures will make the city centre a more liveable place which is more accessible for active transport options like walking and cycling.

### **Access for People with Disabilities**

The proposals need to be assessed in terms of universal access to ensure they do not result in making access to the city centre more difficult for blue badge holders. In the current proposal provisions for blue badge parking in the city core are not evident. Provision of blue badge parking is required adjacent to pedestrian areas for example the pedestrian plaza on the North of Eyre Square and in Wood Quay.

There are very few pedestrian crossings in the scheme however more are required to ensure safe access for people with disabilities. There also needs to be continuity in tactile markings which is not currently evident in the drawings.

### **Hierarchy of Road Users**

#### **▪ Pedestrian Access**

The junction designs including raised crossings are welcomed for pedestrian access. Zebra crossings rather than push button crossings are recommended for these crossings so pedestrians using these crossings are prioritised as opposed to cars. The number of zebra crossings should be increased to ensure safe crossings for pedestrians particularly for people with disabilities and more vulnerable pedestrians like older people and children. Pedestrian crossing should also be wider than in current designs to accommodate the increase in pedestrian traffic.

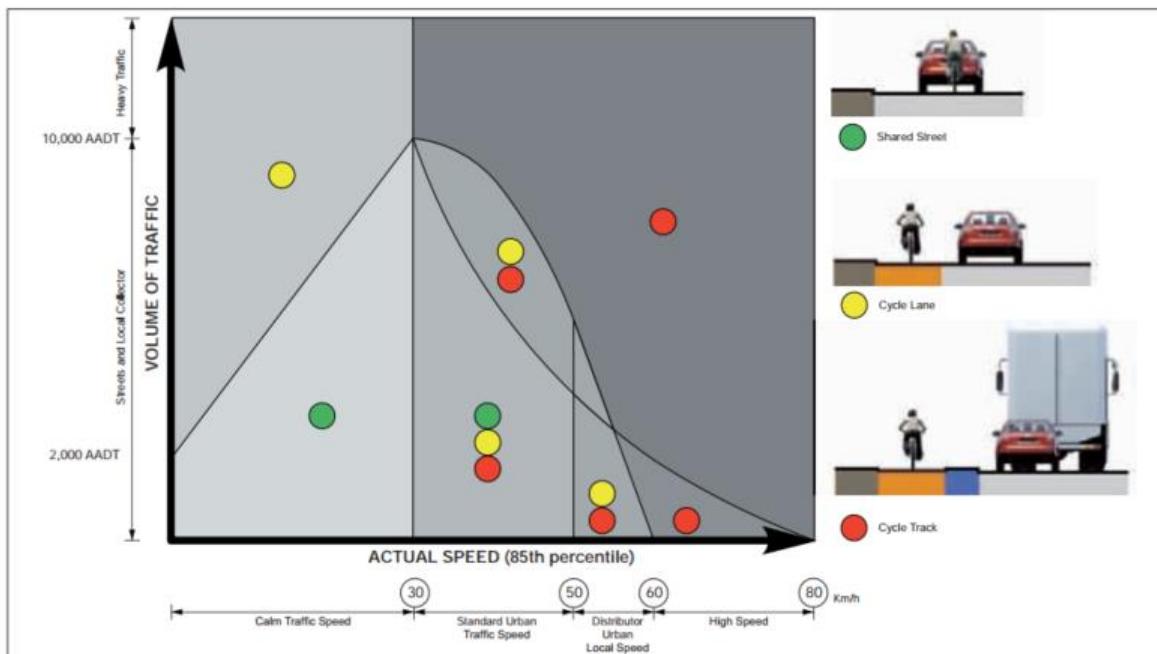
#### **▪ Cyclist Access**

There does not appear to be access through pedestrian plazas for cyclists so measures to ensure connectivity for cyclists through the scheme needs to be ensured. For example, these could include a two-way cycle track at the edge of the plaza at Wood Quay. The new one-way system would also

create long diversions for cyclists. One measure to address this is a path across The Plots to restore access inbound from Dyke Road to The Plots.

### Cyclist Safety - Shared Space

The scheme is based on shared space between cyclists and other road users. Between 7am and 7pm this includes buses, taxis and local traffic. Outside of these hours it would include other car traffic. There are concerns that this is unsuitable for cyclist safety. Have projections for traffic on these roads been developed to show that this mixing is suitable? Please see the Guidance Graph from the National Cycle Manual<sup>3</sup>:



There is a need to prioritise cyclist safety and to incorporate segregated cycling infrastructure in the scheme where possible. In several location the proposals are to convert one-way traffic to two-way (Prospect Hill, Forster Street, Bóthar Uí hEithir) rather than maintaining these as one-way arrangements for motor-vehicles, with two-way, segregated cycle tracks proved in the additional space. On College Road there is a raised cycle track on one side however for safety a cycle track on both sides is needed rather than cyclists sharing the bus lane.

The College Road Bus Gate it will not be wide enough for buses to safely overtake cyclists and signage should alert road users of this. There should be a separate signalised system for cyclists to ensure swift and safe access through the bus gate.

As highlighted in the Dublin Road section of this submission it is vital that there is safe dedicated road space for cyclists through segregated cycling facilities rather than the prioritisation of road space for cars. CYCLOPS ("Cycle Optimised Protected Signals") junctions, left turns for cyclists at junctions and signalised jug handle turns at T junctions should be incorporated into the scheme. For example a jug handle turn and free left turn for cyclists onto Lough Atalia from the bottom of College Road. There should be an increase in road space allocated to cyclists rather than a reduction, for example, the reduction of space where Bóthar na mBan meets the Headford Road.

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<sup>3</sup> National Transport Authority, *National Cycle Manual*.