

BRIEFING NOTE

Transport Aspects of 2016 General Election Manifestos

The purpose of this note is to provide a brief factual summary of the commitments relating to transport in the General Election manifestos/policy principles published by the main parties and other political groupings. It is drawn from election material published on their websites as of 15 February. Some parties previously published transport policy proposals but this note concentrates on the commitments made in the specific General Election context. Costings are included where provided in the election literature.

The focus is on transport. There are no evident references to logistics or supply chain matters in the manifestos. The coverage of transport is also distinctly patchy: some manifestos have specific transport chapters, while others only have brief references to transport in chapters dealing primarily with other matters. The overall impression is that transport is not a major policy priority for most of the political parties/groupings.

Roads

Fine Gael emphasises the commitment in the existing Capital Plan to spend €4.4 billion on roads in the period up to 2022. As part of the mid-term review of the Capital Plan it will examine if funding allows for the progression of the M20 (Cork-Limerick). It will also provide annual funding for Community Schemes and Local Improvement Schemes and give local authorities greater discretion over how they spend money on regional and local roads. It will leverage technology to improve road safety, enforce legislation against driving under the influence of drugs, establish a third payment option for fixed penalty notices and consolidate all existing road safety legislation into a single Act.

Fianna Fail says that it will prioritise the M20 from Cork to Limerick. It also commits to boost spending on regional and local roads by €50 million per annum and to re-invest in the Local Improvements Scheme for non-public roads at an annual cost of €4.5 million.

Labour commits to complete the national motorway network by better connecting Dublin to the North-West and further developing the Atlantic Corridor to improve connectivity between Cork, Limerick and Galway.

The **Social Democrats** promise to significantly increase investment in productive infrastructure, including transport links. They will deliver new road infrastructure

where there is a critical need, mentioning a high grade connection between Cork, Limerick and Galway.

Sinn Fein undertakes to provide a funding package for improving the condition of rural roads and to restore funding to local authorities for the Local Improvements Scheme for non-public roads.

Renua states that it will complete the Western Corridor Route from Cork to Letterkenny.

The **Green Party** says that it will bring an end to the policy approach which for the last fifty years has favoured the development of private car transport over walking, cycling and public transport alternatives.

Public Transport

Fianna Fail says that it will continue to invest in public transport services and increase the Public Service Obligation subvention to CIE to 2011 levels. This will cost €28.5 million per annum and will be subject to a requirement that public transport fares are adjusted accordingly. It promises to make public transport more reliable, affordable and attractive by a range of measures including targeted investment in bus lanes, removing pinch points on roads, providing priority signalling at junctions and real time passenger information, freezing fares for three years, introducing heavily discounted fares for third level students and people up to age 25 and introducing easier fare payment methods and a tax saver package for park+ride. It also commits to prioritise DART Underground in future capital plans, recommencing it as soon as additional resources allow within the fiscal space. It will also protect the free travel scheme and increase funding for it by €8 million.

Labour promises to bring forward the commencement of construction works on Metro North to 2021 and to draw up a new rail transport strategy with a particular focus on improving the reliability and energy efficiency of the rail network, including exploring the electrification of inter-city rail.

The **Social Democrats** undertake to restore subsidies to public transport with all the extra funding being used to reduce fares to encourage increased use. Capital spending on roads will be at least be matched by public transport capital expenditure. DART Underground will be built at the earliest practicable date. They will examine ways to roll out smart ticketing nationwide and will maintain free travel for people over 66. They will focus on suburban and hinterland commuter transport in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and other urban centres, develop light rail and tram services where needed and roll out bus rapid transit (BRT) in specific urban centres. They will allow older people in areas with poor public transport to exchange their travel passes for travel vouchers.

Sinn Fein will stop the planned privatisation of 10% of Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann and oppose any future attempts at privatising public transport companies. It will also encourage off-peak commuting by introducing a toll saver incentive.

The **Anti Austerity Alliance/People before Profit** states that it will reverse the cuts to city bus fleets and reduce fares to encourage people out of their cars. **People before Profit** favours an extension of free transport and will oversee an increase in State investment in public transport. This will mean a significant increase in the bus fleet of both Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann and an expansion of the rail network. It will reverse the dramatic increase in the cost of public transport over recent years and stop any attempt to privatise the service. It proposes to abolish the National Transport Authority and to give a new State agency a remit to provide cheap and efficient public transport that can facilitate a dramatic reduction in the use of private cars and ensure ease of movement in towns and cities. It will increase the public transport subvention to the European average and oppose anti-worker measures in the public transport sector.

The **Green Party** proposes to reallocate €1.6 billion of the existing Capital Plan budget to invest in more sustainable solutions, with €1 billion of that being used to build high quality bus rapid transport systems. It also proposes a 5% reduction in fares and an increase in PSO subvention payments to 2013 levels at a total annual cost of €57 million. It will halve the price of the student Leap Card at a cost of €50 million per annum. There will be an independent review of all bus routes to ensure that the best possible service is provided. It also plans more park+ride facilities on routes into cities not adequately served by public transport at present, the designation of principal railway stations as transport hubs linking with buses, the simplification and integration of ticketing and fares structures and a new multi-user bus station west of Dublin city centre. On rail, it will give priority to the completion of the Kildare Route Project (Phase 2) and the Navan Rail line extension to Navan, advance the planning of DART Underground and Metro North, encourage greater use of rail freight, extend Luas to Finglas and develop a light rail service in Galway. It wants to see the targets for the implementation of the NTA's transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area brought forward or at least supplemented by interim targets for measures such as emissions, modal share, low cost non-infrastructure measures and minimising congestion.

Fine Gael restates the existing Capital Plan commitment to invest €3.6 billion in public transport. It will instigate a full review of public transport policy to ensure that services are sustainable and meeting the needs of a modern economy. It will support the NTA in determining the appropriate mix of direct award and competitive contracts for public service obligation bus routes. It will fast track the rollout of the Leap Card nationwide.

Cycling and Walking

Labour will strongly promote cycling by funding the rollout of a city cycleway system starting in Dublin. It will build on the Cycle to Work scheme and introduce a new Cycle to School scheme.

The **Social Democrats** promise to enhance cycling infrastructure in major towns/cities and to develop inter-urban cycleways and scenic greenways.

Renua commits to developing cycling and walking routes for tourism.

The **Green Party** commits to accelerate the development of a network of pedestrian and cycling greenways across the country, to introduce a bicycle maintenance and safe cycling programme in schools, to ensure that every local authority has a high quality cycling policy and that all road upgrades and new roads include proper provision for cycling. It also proposes to retrofit the top 50 most dangerous junctions in the country within two years, to ensure that cycle safety becomes a core part of the driving test, to allow contraflow cycling in one-way streets and re-programme traffic signals to give cyclists a head start and permit the making of a left turn on red while giving way to pedestrians. It will also require trucks to be fitted with a range of devices to improve safety for cyclists. Ten percent of the overall capital budget will be allocated for cycling. €100 million of the capital budget will be allocated to build footpaths on the approaches to towns. The safe routes to school programme will be reinstated and regulations will be introduced reducing the pedestrian waiting time at traffic signals to a maximum of 30 seconds.

Fine Gael's long-term vision is for greenways throughout the country and, as part of that vision, it plans to complete the Ashtown to Athlone section of the Dublin-Galway Greenway by 2017. It will support the extension of the existing public bike schemes and the rollout of additional schemes in other urban areas.

Fianna Fail undertakes to introduce a new national cycleway strategy and will provide €2 million in capital funding to extend greenways to encourage tourism.

Climate Change/Green Transport

The **Green Party** will advance the rollout of electric vehicles by directing the Commission for Energy Regulation and ESB to further advance the introduction of electric charging points.

Fine Gael promises to publish a climate change transition and mitigation plan which, in relation to transport, will focus on reducing emissions and increasing energy efficiency across all transport modes. It will implement the recommendations in the recent Energy White Paper to increase the number of low carbon vehicles on the road. It wants Ireland to become a leader in the uptake of electric vehicles and will,

within six months, establish a task force to work on this goal. It renews the commitment in the existing Capital Plan to spend €100 million on smarter travel and carbon reduction measures.

Fianna Fail will introduce measures to help reach a target of 10% electric vehicle usage over the lifetime of the next government, including motor tax and toll waivers for e-cars, free charging points and grants to boost e-car sales. The total cost of these measures is €8.7 million.

Labour plans to establish a Green Bus Fund to support the replacement of the State bus fleet with cleaner and greener vehicles over time. It will increase the grants available to purchasers of electric and hybrid cars and examine initiatives in other countries to increase the uptake of e-vehicles with a view to introducing similar schemes here. By end 2016 it will publish a target for the number of compressed natural gas filling stations required to make it a viable transport fuel, particularly for buses and HGVs.

Sinn Fein undertakes to set specific targets and create a roadmap to reduce CO2 emissions and to develop an interdepartmental strategy to meet carbon emissions reduction targets, including in the provision of public transport.

Rural Transport

Sinn Fein will ensure that the key consideration regarding investment in transport infrastructure in rural areas with declining population is not profitability. It promises to increase funding for the rural transport programme.

Fine Gael undertakes to ensure that the rural transport scheme is adequately funded to best meet rural transport needs. It will also improve the integration of the rural bus network, including public buses, school transport and HSE transport services. It will review the regulations governing rural hackneys to increase the uptake of licences and allow more areas to be served.

Fianna Fail promises to stop the decline in rural community services, including transport.

North/South Transport

The **Green Party** proposes to create an All-Ireland Walkways Development Plan to establish long distance off-road walking and cycling and walking routes.

Fine Gael states that it will deliver on the Government's commitment in the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements on the upgrading of the A5 road. It will also continue to develop further cross-border greenways and blueways. It will undertake,

with the Northern Ireland Executive, a review of the Narrow Water bridge project to identify options for future development.

Fianna Fail states that it will prioritise working with the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure that the A5 is built. It is also committed to building the Narrow Water bridge project and has earmarked €20 million for it. It also plans to focus on maximising the potential of the Eastern Corridor (Dublin-Belfast) as an engine of growth and will continue to develop the North-South railway line and to invest in bus services from Dublin/Dublin Airport to Belfast.

Sinn Fein is committed to the funding package for the A5 road in the Fresh Start Agreement and to ensuring that the Narrow Water bridge project is completed.

Accessibility

Sinn Fein promises to introduce a VRT/VAT refund scheme for taxi drivers who purchase wheelchair accessible vehicles, supporting the purchase of 1000 taxis and doubling the number of accessible vehicles. It will also roll out a major infrastructure programme to make all public transport services fully wheelchair accessible. It will invest a total of €187 million to replace non-wheelchair accessible vehicles in Bus Eireann subsidised services, to construct wheelchair accessible bus stops and to undertake accessibility work to bus and railway stations and the train fleet over the term of the government.

Fine Gael will continue to invest to make public transport services more accessible for people with disabilities. Taxi companies who wish to bid for State procurement contracts will have to ensure that a minimum of 10% of their fleet is wheelchair accessible.

Fianna Fail plans to include criteria for the award of government taxi contracts based on a percentage of the company's fleet being accessible to people with disabilities.

The **Green Party** proposes that new transport subsidy schemes provide for people with mobility needs and that a sufficient quota of the national taxi fleet should be fully accessible and available to people with disabilities by 2017.

Sea and Air Transport

Renua states that airport landing fees must be maintained at international levels, that there should be no airport tax and that support for new air routes should be provided for a fixed period.

The **Green Party** supports the relocation of existing storage facilities in Dublin Port's south docks to make way for new residential development. It also supports the development of existing and new port services on the east coast to reduce pressure on Dublin Port. It undertakes to lobby the EU to include the shipping and aviation sectors in either the Emissions Trading System or the Effort Sharing Decision and to work with the UK and France to declare all waters surrounding Ireland as a sulphur emissions control area. It maintains that passenger ferry use can be increased by improving transport links to ports and making timetables more convenient for users.

Fianna Fail is committed to ongoing Exchequer support for the four regional airports and will retain the three State airports in State ownership.

Fine Gael promises to implement the National Aviation Policy and the National Ports Policy in full and to continue to invest in a robust maritime safety strategy. It will develop Dublin Airport as a vibrant secondary hub, recognises Cork Airport's unique position as a gateway to both the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East and will support the development of an air cargo hub at Shannon Airport as well as seeking to increase the use of its preclearance facilities. It restates the Capital Plan commitment to provide €28 million to fund safety and security enhancements at regional airports and will continue to provide funding to assist in developing new routes to all airports outside Dublin. It also plans to implement measures aimed at growing the potential of maritime industries and will continue to invest strategically in the development of harbours.

Sinn Fein will support the development of Ireland West Airport Knock as a strategically important gateway to the region.

Other Proposals

The **Social Democrats** propose to reduce motor insurance costs by providing non-litigation methods to settle claims, improving data sharing within the insurance industry and reforming how claims costs are set by the courts.

Renua plans to abolish motor tax and replace it with a fuel levy, which would include a ceiling in the cost for hauliers and operators of public service vehicles. The estimated cost of this measure is €250 million.

Fianna Fail states that it will establish a new Department of Climate Change bringing together environment, flood defence, energy, transport, natural resources and heritage. It also proposes to establish a National Infrastructure Commission by reforming Transport Infrastructure Ireland and drawing from the Department of Transport, the NTA and the Sustainable Energy Authority to set out a new framework for the longer term development of transport in Ireland. It plans to set up a specific public transport police section within An Garda Síochána to ensure that public transport is a safe and secure way to travel.

Fine Gael proposes to add the Dublin Airport Authority, the CIE companies and the seaports of national significance to the list of commercial State companies under the NewEra portfolio. NewEra will provide Ministers with financial and commercial advisory services relating to the companies and will set out a new dividend policy for the State companies under its aegis.

Every effort has been made to fully and accurately reflect the policy positions of the principal political parties/groupings. Any errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of the Institute. The opinions expressed in this briefing note are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute.