

## **Transport Investment Programme Post 2016 Comment and Suggestions**

The drafted paper is excellent, it covers all the main points very well, clear on what good policy means and applies a good dose of common sense, which is particularly welcome. My comments and suggestions are intended to develop a few points in line with the thrust of the paper. I have taken the Shannon region as an example to illustrate my suggestions.

Before getting into the detail of the paper I think we should include an acknowledgement of the good work undertaken by the Department of Transport and its agencies in bringing about substantial improvements in transport since the late 90's, for example, through the planning, managing and implementation of the NDP and Transport 21 Programmes. We could argue about some details but in fairness a lot has been achieved and road infrastructure and public transport has improved greatly in that time. The challenge going forward is that we are now living in different times, economically, socially, and policy wise with public outlook and viewpoints different because of the financial and banking crises.

There are to me two central themes running through the document, importance of consistency and co ordination in policy and economic factors.

### **Policy – Consistency and Cohesiveness**

The paper very well and rightly outlines that policy is not about “ fancy” words, it has to be concrete and practical. Your policy is not well developed if you are being pulled in different direction and you do not have a strategy if your plan is not consistent and cohesive.

Reference is very well made to consequences of motor way development on rail business and travel and the interaction and inconsistencies between the policies for these modes. In addition bus licensing policies on motor ways in favour of more direct end to end services has taken business from the rail. Likewise, it also has had consequences for bus services serving locations along the corridors. It is resulting in services to towns and villages along such corridors, many of them provided on a commercial basis, being either cancelled or reduced. In addition the integrated network, is being diminished and reduced as policies are not compatible with each other.

A good example of the need for joined up thinking is Shannon Airport . What is the strategy for Shannon? Is Shannon airport to be a local airport serving Limerick and Clare and to a lesser extent Galway or an airport for a wider area , serving the greater Mid West region and along the west coast? The direction Shannon takes is very much dependent upon a range of policies and how they all link up and support each other in a cohesive way. The retention of landing slots in Heathrow for Shannon flights would be important. This is in turned linked to decisions made by Aer Lingus. There is a direct connection and interdependency with tourism and industrial policy and its development for both the Mid West and the western seaboard. Could Shannon airport become a logistics base for transporting goods,

including perishable fresh food products. If Shannon Airport is to serve a wider area than Limerick and Clare it will have to have good transport connections. Let's look at the bus services as an example, and a similar argument could apply to car travel. Shannon has up till now benefited from a high frequency bus and coach services and has been part of an integrated network of services that has extended Shannon's reach throughout the country. People arriving in Shannon have, for examples, travelled by bus to a host of locations, such as, Kenmare, Bellmullet, Cliften, Dingle Charlestown, Dungarvan, Donegal etc. Much of this would be linked to tourism travel. Recent developments, however, in motorway expansion and in the approach to bus /coach services has consequences for Shannon airport under three headings;

- Direct and frequent motorway coach services are sucking people into Dublin airport from both Galway and Limerick cities and from along these corridors and significantly reducing the original catchment area for Shannon Airport.
- Direct services between Galway and Limerick means that diverting coaches off this corridor on a frequent basis to service Shannon Airport is no longer viable. These services are operated on a commercial basis, some have already been cut and the likely hood is that more will be cut.
- Arising from above and the head running of original bus services the existing integrated network is being diminished which reduces the range and suitability of connections to and from Shannon airport.

The above is an example of policies pulling in different directions, the present approach to bus and coach services is not compatible with maintaining Shannon airport as a substantial airport or with the provision of an integrated network of services.

You can argue the pros and cons of different policies for a particular area but in all cases it is important to recognise shortfalls, downsides, tradeoffs, and whether the proposed policy ties in and is consistent with other policies and the broader picture. In other words there has to be a cohesiveness and a consistency across policies and a common sense of direction.

Transport, whether it is for people or good/ mail, cannot be looked at separately. It is a service, a system and infrastructure that is both necessary and in support of a country's economic and social development. People do not travel for the sake of it, they do so for a reason, going to work, to school, on holidays, for social purposes, etc. Transport policy, therefore, has to in line with and supportive of industrial, tourism, educational, health, social, regional development, disadvantaged areas, etc. policies. Because of the range involved transport has to meet a wider range of objectives than would be normal for a business. Sometimes these objectives may not be well aligned with each other. Many of the objectives are set out legally, in government programmes, guidelines, or through public expectations. Transport in many cases cannot be run purely on a commercial basis, but it does need to be run along good business lines of effectiveness and efficiency. In this regard some of the guidelines and expectations placed on state services, while desirable, can be

cumbersome to apply and need to be more streamlined and business like. What is also important is that necessary and same standards, procedures and returns are applied across the board.

## **Economic Factors .**

The paper very well sets out that the primary objective is economic recovery and increase in employment levels and transport is very much secondary to these objectives. How can transport policy support such developments, a few suggestions:

- Much of the growth is in the service industry, which does not involve the carriage of goods but good people services are important, good airline services, convenient airports, good access, public transport and road network. Many of the multinational service industry investors are setting up their European headquarters in Dublin and this means that transport services and facilities have to be to a necessary standard. This may not mean a metro to Dublin airport but a lower cost rail link off the Dublin Belfast line or a BRT service may be considered . Upgrading existing high frequency bus services along a number of the busiest corridors to a BRT service would also be a positive development that would be both low cost and practical.
- Equally important is appropriate policies that will support similar industrial and service industry development throughout the country. Economic recovery will not be achieved by concentrating on Dublin. A balanced national plan is therefore required.
- Similar issues relate to tourism, another economic driver, and very much intertwined with transport in all its modes. It is particularly important to economic activity in rural areas. While city breaks are important, particularly for off peak business from a purely economic point of view it is also important to get visitors to travel out from the main cities, particularly Dublin,. City visitors are short stay, whereas those who venture out stay longer. One of the key tricks in tourism development is to give visitors reason to extend their stay. The development of Bunratty and a day trip on the ring of Kerry were all shrewd policies in the past of holding visitors and maximising returns
- Education is important to economic growth and transport is an important supporting service in this area. In the good times, for example, many third level students had the funds to purchase their own car, or rent student accommodation and in some cases do both. A move back to staying at home and greater use of bus services is more appropriate in the present economic environment.
- Agriculture and the food industry in Ireland is an important growth industry for Ireland, Getting fresh or chilled prepared products to the market is important. In the forties churns of fresh cream was transported overnight

from West Cork to be in the London market, first thing in the morning. Should we look at using, let's say Shannon or Cork airport as a transport base for transporting high quality, perishable or short shelf life food products to high end markets.

- We cannot rebuild our economy on the service industry alone. We need a balance. The whole chemical and medical device industries, for example, is important for Ireland. The development of green industries is and will become more important, it is a growth industries with many advantages for Ireland, Many of these industries are by their nature based outside cities. Good logistics, transport services and infrastructure is important for goods to be exported from locations throughout the country.

We have already mentioned the Shannon/ Mid West region as our example. Previously the development of the Shannon area, was built around the Airport, the Industrial Estate, tourism and in later years new IT industries, new third level educational bodies and transport services. This lead to economic growth in the Mid West and employment growth. Presently the region is in decline and an integrated policy linking all the relevant areas will be important in its rejuvenation, . This area has been the subject of some well prepared transport papers by the Institute in recent times,

**Other comment:**

- The importance of education for economic recovery is already recognised. Likewise for transport and logistics, reference should be made to the need for ongoing investment in educational programmes in this area, whether as part of third level courses, professional qualifications, ongoing course for those involved in the industry, entry level requirements for the industry etc.
- Greater use of IT goes without saying , however, there should be a coordinated plan that ensures that systems interlink with each other. IT systems need to practical and tightly specified to meet actual customer and operation needs. Unfortunately some IT project have a tendency to promise more and deliver less.
- Make best use of existing skills and resources. Agree with the papers approach regarding the need to invest in maintaining existing infrastructure and rolling stock. Presently it would not be appropriate to expand or putting additional structures in place, in fact the move is very much towards reducing bodies and overheads. The focus should be about ongoing improvement to effectiveness and efficiency and of course ensuring safety and proper standards are applying. This means trying to get more services from existing resources or the same service from a reduced level of resources. This in turn links you back to the significance of training and educational programmes in transport and logistics being in place so as to improve skill levels.

- Some of the investment decisions made in good times and in line with very positive economic forecasts would be hard to justify today, such as the Western Rail Corridor and the Midleton line. Regarding the latter I welcome the rail line as I am from the area, but in practical terms the industrial and land use developments never took place along the corridor to justify it. I feel that the policy should be to build things up, such as, good bus service, quality bus corridor, BRT/LRT, rail service. In the case of the Midleton line a high frequency double deck coach service along the new dual carriageway and using the hard shoulder as bus lanes where appropriate, could have been put in place first to both test and build the market.

Finally, unfortunately I do not agree with Brendan's comments regarding bus networks outside of Dublin as I feel they do not reflect the facts. They are very different to the assessments and views expressed in two independent reports, the BAH Value for Money report and the Deloitte report, both of which made very positive comments. I cannot comment on Dublin as I would not have the same awareness of the situation there.