

Irish Academy of Engineering – Southern Region

June 2019

**Submission on draft *Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy***

**General:**

- *Enabling legislation should be enacted such that the strategy can be put on an equivalent statutory basis to that of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Transport Strategy with a delivery office of the National Transport Authority or equivalent based in Cork to ensure delivery and monitor progress.*
- *Early development of the high capacity East-West Transit Corridor is more important than the choice between mode (LRT, BRT, etc.).*
- *Implementation of the Strategy must be the catalyst for sustainable development in accordance with the underlying land use.*
- *A more detailed implementation plan with greater granularity on timeframes should be prepared. Timeframes should be reviewed and shortened for many of the elements. The plan should be reviewed and monitored on an annual basis.*

**1.0 Introduction:**

- 1.1 The Academy welcomes the publication of the draft Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) and the detailed proposals which are aimed at supporting the development of the Cork Metropolitan Area, prioritising sustainable transport, increasing connectivity, enhancing the movement of goods and having the potential to act as a catalyst and blueprint for the development of the City over the next critical 20 years and beyond. The strategy document is very well presented and laid out and we are generally very supportive of the strategy, and more importantly of its early and orderly implementation. We have a number of comments on some aspects of the draft and these are outlined in the sections hereunder.

**2.0 Implementation & Land Use**

- 2.1 The timely delivery of the elements of the strategy is vital to the development of the Cork Metropolitan Area and indeed the Southern Region. We strongly advocate that enabling legislation should be enacted such that the strategy can be put on an equivalent statutory basis to that of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Transport Strategy with a delivery office of the National Transport Authority or equivalent based in Cork to ensure delivery and monitor progress.
- 2.2 As discussed below, the strategy must integrate with land use and implementation must not be left to “follow” after “sufficient” development has taken place. The elements of the strategy must be phased and implemented early to enable and promote the orderly and sustainable development of the city region (refer also to Timeframe below).

- 2.3 Land use and transport strategy are two sides of the same coin and must be in sync with each other. While land use is dealt with in a general way (and presumably underpins the analysis), there is a need to identify the land use criteria that are essential to the success of the strategy and to ensure that there is a mechanism to monitor and evaluate these in tandem with the Transport strategy and to ensure that they have the visibility and enforcement that they require. For example, it is clear that high density (residential, employment, leisure, etc.) is necessary along the spine of the proposed high-volume transport link – the LRT. This needs to be inextricably linked to implementation of the strategy.
- 2.4 An essential part of this implementation is the affordability of housing / apartments / residential space. Currently, few developers are creating living space because it is unaffordable for the target market and therefore unviable. This was emphasised by Ann Doherty, Chief Executive of Cork City Council, in an opening statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government where she stated that *“the adequate supply of affordable accommodation to rent or to purchase is still challenging and will pose socio economic risks ... if not resolved”*. This may require a non-transport related intervention, but such an intervention will be an essential part of the delivery of the strategy and should be addressed – at least in parallel. It may also, in part, rely on planners steadfastly sticking to living space zoning such that comparative returns from commercial or retail space are irrelevant.
- 2.5 We note the statement that *“CMATS is considered to be a ‘live’ document and will be subject to a periodic review process (typically 5 years) over the lifetime of the Strategy”*. We question whether 5 years is too long and whether there should be a more dynamic element to the strategy? While we believe that there must be a clear and carefully maintained vision of land use and its interaction with the transportation strategy, there needs to be an understanding and measuring of the land use policy, development patterns, and thus of population shift throughout the period of implementation. The need to develop the strategy implementation in tandem with (or ahead of) the associated or underpinning land use is vital, but it should be accompanied by the ability to measure and adapt to change – which may be in land use, technology, working practices, etc.

### 3.0 Timeframe & Phasing:

- 3.1 While it was explained at a consultation by a member of the team that the “Timeframe” dates in the Phased Implementation Plan on Page 27 for Short Term, Medium Term and Long Term should read “Before 2026”, “Before 2031” and “Before 2040” respectively, it is considered that the 2026 and 2031 are NOT “short” term or “medium” term and the dates need to be reviewed significantly. It is noted that, in discussing phased implementation, the main document suggests “Short Term” is 1-5 years and Medium Term is 5-10 years. We believe that the strategy implementation needs to favour the lower end of the timeframes to act as a catalyst for the necessary and appropriate development.

- 3.2 As an example of an inappropriate timeframe, the indicative timeframe suggests that the M28 has a “medium term” timescale (2031). Surely this must be delivered well in advance of that as it will cause huge issues for the Port, Carrigaline, and Cork County Council if not?
- 3.3 Also, reference is made in the same table to the delivery of "Docklands and Tivoli Road Network" in the medium term. According to the main document, this includes the Eastern Gateway Bridge, Water Street Bridge and Mill Road Bridge. The availability of the Docklands area in Cork presents a unique opportunity to develop the city in a sustainable way for the future and the advance development of these pieces of connecting infrastructure is considered to be vital to that opportunity. We strongly recommend that some or all of these connections should be brought forward to “short term” and developed before 2026.
- 3.4 It is also noted that the consultation document does not reference the three docklands bridges, nor does it show them on mapping/figures. This should be corrected.
- 3.5 The Academy strongly supports the implementation of a capacity East-West Transit Corridor at the earliest possible opportunity to drive development. The strategy document states that *“following detailed analysis of projected travel demand within the CMA, this Strategy proposes that the East-West Transit Corridor is best served through the provision of a new Light Rail Transit (LRT) tram system”*. This would indeed be a welcome benefit to the City region and an impetus for sustainable growth. There is, however, a concern that such a solution could be difficult to justify and/or be significantly delayed in implementation (which would be counter-productive). It is strongly recommended that a detailed feasibility study and business case be undertaken immediately to definitively inform the strategy and to enable the ultimate solution to commence as soon as possible. If it is found that justification (or likely implementation) of an LRT would be some way off and trailing development, an early implementation of BRT using sustainable technology in may deliver a far greater benefit. The East-West Transit Corridor is absolutely vital to the development of the city and it must happen (phased or in its final configuration) as early as possible in the timeframe.

#### 4.0 Technology & Social and Economic Change

- 4.1 The strategy appears to focus on current transport solutions and, indeed, current working and commuting practices. We consider that the strategy should include consideration of future transport modes and needs. This could include autonomous vehicles (perhaps fleets replacing private cars), personal rapid transit, agile working, virtual meetings and work groups, etc.

#### 5.0 Messaging:

- 5.1 There is a Public Transport initiative currently being proposed which includes the reconfiguration and widening of the Wilton Road to facilitate new and improved bus and cycle lanes. This is meeting significant opposition from residents and others. We question

whether it is wise to advance such initiatives in the absence of clarity on the final light rail route and bus corridors - people may be more accepting of proposals which are advanced in the context of an overall master strategy. There is also a concern that the LRT route shown, although indicative, may generate opposition in terms of its feasibility – particularly from Victoria Cross to CIT. These factors add support to the need to engage in the detailed feasibility and planning at a very early stage. Again, are there more futuristic solutions than BRT and LRT?

- 5.2 Implementation of development and of the transport schemes will have a potentially significant impact on existing traffic and transport. For example, Ballintemple and the Blackrock Road will be at the entrance to the proposed Docklands development. A traffic management plan for such a development will be significant and, it is suggested, significant enough to be included in the strategy.
- 5.3 It is noted that part of the old Cork Blackrock & Passage railway line has been designated a primary route for the LRT corridor. The current use of the railway is a vital local and city amenity, and the strategy needs to address how the cycle and walking route will be maintained.

## 6.0 Specific Comments:

- 6.1 It is recommended that water-based transport options be considered from Cork's lower harbour to the city centre having regard to the availability and accessibility of the River Lee. Even if such mode of transport is small in terms of volume and/or of limited viability, it should be considered – including the possibility of improved technology, reliability and viability in the future. It is recommended that market studies and a pilot should be implemented.
- 6.2 The proposal to expand the bicycle sharing scheme is welcomed and it is understood that the expansion will include the high capacity public transport corridor from Blackrock village and Mahon in the east to CIT in the west.
- 6.3 Douglas Village is a particular bottle neck, and it is not clear from the strategy document how this will be alleviated, for access to Rochestown and beyond. Has an extension of the public transit corridor from Mahon to Rochestown been considered? Could water-based transport be part of the solution?