



# All Island Rail Review Submission

21 January 2022

## *About Us*

Rail Users Ireland is Ireland's National Rail Users Organisation. We are objective observers and customers of Ireland's rail transportation network. We want the provision of excellent customer service to rail transport users and international best practice applied to the development of Mainline, Suburban, Metro and Light Rail transport in Ireland. We are ordinary rail users just like you, and we aspire to being your voice in the media and at Operator / Government level. We are a member of the European Passenger Federation and are thus recognised at EU level.

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## **Response To Consultation Paper**

***In 100 words or less, what is the desired role of rail in your area of interest/geography?***

Where sufficient demand exists rail should provide a frequent, journey-time-competitive option linking population centres with well-timed connectivity options into the core radial route network. Using existing lines already in place minimises the cost, environmental impact, and speeds delivery without complex planning challenges.

***In 100 words or less, what are the key gaps in rail provision in your area of interest/geography?***

Nationwide, the service frequency is poor. Connectivity between routes is badly coordinated and made worse by a lack of fare integration, especially cross border. Secondary routes have been run down to the point of being effectively pointless - services that benefit few if any. End-to-end journey times remain poor and uncompetitive.

Overall, the offering is unattractive beyond key commuter routes.

***Please list specific investment options you would expect to be considered***

See document below.

***Are your policy priorities for rail adequately captured within the Consultation Document?***

Mostly.

However, there is no consideration of the end user. No reference to 'value' in terms of the price / service provided. No reference to quality and attractiveness of the rail service offered.

Overall, a goal to support the 'passenger experience' is required in terms of cost, frequency, and comfort. We see this as being key to generating the modal shift required and needs to be supported by aggressive performance targets and compensation for passengers when the service does not meet expectations to ensure the passenger have confidence in the offering.

***How would you rank the importance of Goals 1-6 (outlined on page 5)?***

Goal 2: Improve All Island Connectivity Between Major Cities

Goal 3: Enhance Regional And Rural Accessibility

Goal 4: Encourage Sustainable Mobility

Goal 6: Achieve Economic And Financial Feasibility

Goal 5: Foster Economic Activity

Goal 1: Contribute to Decarbonisation

# Proposals For Investment

## ***Establish Sustainable Economic Model & Funding***

Politics has played an unhelpful role in rail development - decisions are have not been made on the basis of financial return and benefits to passengers. As a result, money is spent on poor choices e.g. WRC was re-opened while funding cannot be found for projects which have strong economic cases, e.g. DART Underground. Funding is reactionary, typically following a safety issue, e.g. *On Track 2000* followed the Knockcroghery derailment, or the Mark 3 fleet was ordered after the accidents in 1981/1983.

Only Dublin-Cork and Dublin-Belfast can lay claim to meeting European levels of comfort and speed and even that is questionable. All other route service levels are poor and inconsistent. Some people claim this is a tactical move to run down routes to setup closure by default, or a reaction to the dismal passenger demand and high operating costs. Either way the passenger is not provided with an effective rail service meeting their needs.

We do not believe an adequate service can be provided with less than a train every 2 hours. Much of the current Irish Rail long distance timetable can be traced back to the McKinsey reports of the 1970s of three trains a day. We need to break away from the 9-5 assumption and that all travel is to Dublin in the morning and back in the evening. We need to build a network of routes with extensive and well-timed connections to open up journey opportunities to expand the potential customer base and generate demand.

We are very much of the view of either provide a good service at a fair price at times to meet need or not bother at all. Such an approach based on cold numbers and facts will face political resistance despite the outcome being of more effective service and return on taxpayers' contribution. A poorly performing route drags the entire network down and draws resources which could be better applied elsewhere.

Rail is a component of a public transport system, rail will not always be suitable or the optimum solution. As a representative group of rail passengers, we are realistic that rail will not offer an economic solution for all situations and we therefore will not support routes which are deemed uneconomic as these routes will suffer from infrequent, poor service, leaving passengers with an ineffective service. The passengers' interest and needs would be better addressed through other means.

So

1. Establish an economic model to determine what is the maximum level of revenue support acceptable, with a minimum service level of every 2 hours on each route.
2. Determine the operating costs assuming full refurbishment, enhancements to deliver an optimised clock-face timetable and automation of each route.
3. Create a model to estimate demand, on a local basis and also on a basis of travel to / from nearest cities/large urban centres via the offered connections.

Any route which fails the analysis should be closed and replaced with a bus service. The rail assets being distributed elsewhere. Routes which succeed in the analysis should be fully upgraded in accordance with the outline above.

## **An Island-wide Consistent Fare Structure**

A consistent Island-wide fare structure is required with proper through ticketing. For local trips, a nationwide zonal system is required like those in central Europe, as is the case Germany and Austria. The current ticket products and structures vary by location, which is confusing.

The current structures are complex, hidden and punish passengers who make journeys which require changes, which impacts heavily on journeys from regional routes to primary routes. There is no consistency between Irish Rail and Translink policy or methods of sale. Translink offer app-based ticketing, but Irish Rail does not. Despite being able to do so, Irish Rail refuse to sell tickets beyond Belfast. Translink cannot issue reservations.

For the passenger, the experience is disjointed, confusing and contradictory owing to different prices for the same journey under different conditions. This results in passengers purchasing multiple tickets for a journey and thus lose the protection of EC1371/2007 and passenger charter protections for missed connections. Translink as a matter of policy refuses to acknowledge that connecting trains exist.

For Dublin-Belfast, the pricing of €38/£30 single and €40/£35 day return makes no commercial sense as the tickets are valid on all trains. This prices passengers who need to make a single journey off the railway into the hands of other transport providers. What passengers need is a fare structure where there is a clear relationship between distance travelled and the quality of service (journey time, frequency, on-train services). There is no justification for return tickets, every return journey should be considered two single fares.

Child fares are inconsistent and fail to follow the industry norm of 50% of adult fares - an open return Dublin-Cork is €92 adult but only €31 child. There are even circumstances where a student ticket is more expensive than the adult fare.

There is a need for a multimodal fare allowing the customer to add on local bus, coach, and tram services to complete the last section of long-distance journeys, like the Plusbus offering in the UK or City-Ticket in Germany.

## **High Speed**

The question which must be addressed is “What is fast enough to ensure rail is competitive and can remain competitive in the medium to long term?” Given the size of the Island, the population and business needs, at 200 km/h we see rail being competitive against all other modes including air.

A brand-new high-speed line looks impressive but ultimately it is a question of do we need this? Compared to a 200 km/h upgrade of the existing line, a high-speed line would reduce non-stop Dublin-Cork journey times from approximately 1.75 hours to 1.25 hours. The cost to build, maintain and operate a dedicated high-speed line, in addition to the existing line, are not justified in our opinion. The costs would be in the order of tens of billions - more than the sum cost of all other rail investment proposals combined. Any proposal put forward is likely to drag attention and funding away from the network at a time when significant investment is needed.

Is a 30-minute reduction in journey time between Dublin and Cork against the 200 km/h option worth approximately €10 billion euro? This amount would cover the cost to build DART Underground, Metro and commuter rail in Cork, Limerick, and Galway.

Dublin-Cork and Dublin-Belfast may justify 200 km/h operation, but we would see this as a must do in the context of electrification. The marginal cost to include Limerick in the scheme especially if commuter services around Limerick are electrified would appear justified.

While attractive from a cost perspective to defer major infrastructure works involved in electrification, hybrid traction options are costly, complex and a compromise, a pure electric train offers significantly lower cost of ownership, better acceleration and most importantly for passengers, greater reliability.

### ***Dublin - Cork***

The lack of a consistent onboard offering as train types are mixed has undermined the product offering with varying catering offerings and inconsistent first-class experience. Walk up single fares are extremely expensive compared to alternative transport options. Train failures are not uncommon. The lack of a pre-9am arrival in Cork undermines the entire offering.

With only an hourly service to Cork currently it would be impossible to justify construction of a dedicated high-speed route. We view implementation of 200 km/h between Dublin and Cork to be straightforward undertaking given the current alignment is mostly straight and combined with electrification could offer a below 2-hour timing with three stops, which would be unbeatable by any alternative and commercially attractive.

Some major infrastructure interventions may be required to address geometry related restrictions at the Curragh, Portarlinton and in North Cork, but overall, we see this as a worthwhile goal. Its timing aligns with the end of life of the current locomotive fleet and thus is an appropriate time to execute the program of investment.

### ***Dublin - Belfast***

This must rank as the worst cross border service classified as 'intercity' in Europe. Service frequency is poor, journey time Dublin-Belfast is the same as it was in 1947. Infrastructure condition within Northern Ireland is now poor. While the onboard experience is good, the high frequency of delays, breakdowns and substitution with commuter trains leaves passengers confused, delayed, and disappointed. The lack of a pre-9am arrival in both Dublin and Belfast renders the service useless for many.

Outwardly, the service appears to be managed by committee, with Irish Rail and Translink blaming the other. This results in a confused experience, multiple websites, and multiple different ticketing offerings. Customer experience is vastly better when staffed by Translink who are visible throughout the journey, Irish Rail staff appear to perform a single revenue check, and anything further is unusual. There is a case for an independent railway company to operate this service.

Belfast Central station is anything but central, renamed recently to Belfast Lanyon Place to hide this fact but Great Victoria Street station is a far more attractive location. Current frequency and passenger numbers fall well short of justification of a high-speed route. Passenger flows are weak when compared to other European city pairs.

200 km/h Dublin-Belfast is desirable but the congestion on the route restricts opportunities for high-speed running to the Drogheda to Portadown section without significant interventions particularly

between Dublin and Drogheda. The high level of commuter service at each end suggests electrification of the entire route may be feasible and given the gradients in the Drogheda to Portadown section could offer significant journey time reductions.

A practical issue arises around stopping patterns, we see the restoration of scheduled services on the Lisburn – Crumlin – Antrim line likely and thus the fastest way to get to Derry from Dublin would be to change at Lisburn, this would require elimination of the Portadown stop as an additional stop adds time and further undermines the offering which is already slower than both bus and car.

## **Re-imagining Regional Rail**

The current Irish Rail long distance timetable can be traced back to the McKinsey reports of the 1970's. The network is focused on radial services towards Dublin. While this captures the primary flows of traffic it leaves a large gap where travel even between adjacent towns by rail is either impossible or impractical by timetable. Considerable passenger demand is effectively ignored, in part due lack of capacity but also a result of long-standing policy.

Journey times remain uncompetitive across all routes. While rail journey times beat those by car in many cases, motorists always base expectations on an ideal traffic free trip. Rail not only needs to equal journey time by car but must go further and establish a significant margin of advantage as a train station is rarely the final destination.

A long-established rail industry trend is that a 1% reduction in journey time yields a greater than 1% return in revenue. Passengers benefit from quicker journeys and the sooner a train reaches its destination the sooner it may return. Fewer carriages are required to maintain capacity and frequency or provide an opportunity to expand capacity and / or frequency without additional resources.

The simplest approach to reduce journey times in the Irish context is to make fewer stops, this incurs no capital cost and can be implemented tomorrow, but to implement this would have significant impacts on secondary stations. To offset this the common practice in Europe would be to provide a regional all stopping service, which has never been provided, apart from the limited all stop every 2-hour service Dublin-Limerick in 2006/7. An opportunity exists to both reduce intercity journey times but also to provide an effective regional service. Significant investment would be required to address capacity constraints to enable this mode of operation.

## ***A Radical Reconfiguration***

1. Start from the future timetable and work back, focus on specific measurable outcomes. Similar to the 'takt' approach in Germany and Austria
2. End to end journey times, to remain competitive, fewer station stops is the quickest way to reduce end to end journey times,
3. The current approach of patch and mend - sold as investment and improvement - is merely the 'do least' option to avoid the closure of the line. We need a new 10-20-year vision with investment sequenced to maximise benefits. This would require allocation of a consistent and guaranteed capital budget to eliminate the current 'feast and famine' approach to funding.

## **Goals**

1. Minimise journey times on the key Dublin-Cork service, and Limerick via connections, by elimination of stops at secondary stations. Similar applied on Dublin-Galway, Westport, and Sligo services.
2. Provide high-quality regional services offering well-timed connections at key junctions and stations - Athenry, Athlone, Waterford, Mallow, Limerick Junction, Thurles and Portlaoise. This would enable journeys which are not possible today or are so slow or infrequent as to be pointless. This market segment is completely ignored currently.
3. Provide direct services not possible today, e.g. Cork-Galway, Waterford-Ennis.
4. Divert short distance passengers onto these new regional services thus releasing capacity.
5. Provide a higher quality experience for Dublin-Tralee, the longest journey by distance.
6. Offer passengers a choice, where regional and non-stop options are available, regional will be cheaper.

## **Outline Timetable**

1. Dublin-Belfast, hourly. Possibly with fewer stops than currently.
2. Dublin-Cork, hourly and 3-4 stops only, Portlaoise (every second hour), Thurles, Limerick Junction, Mallow.
3. Cork-Limerick-Galway, regional service, calling all stations, every 2 hours (opposite hours to the Dublin-Limerick regional service).
4. Cork-Tralee, regional service, every 2 hours, calling all stations (opposite hours to the train above, eliminates poor connections at Mallow).
5. Dublin-Killarney-Tralee, direct three times a day express with few if any stops.
6. Dublin-Limerick, regional service, every 2 hours calling all stops Hazelhatch to Limerick.
7. Limerick-Nenagh-Ballybrophy (new terminus at Portlaoise) regional service, every 2 hours.
8. Dublin-Portlaoise, regional service, every 2 hours calling all stops Hazelhatch to Portlaoise.
9. Dublin-Waterford every 2 hours, hourly at peak, timed to connect to / from Waterford-Limerick-Ennis services at Waterford.
10. Waterford-Limerick-Ennis, regional service, calling all stations, every 2 hours.
11. Dublin-Galway, every 2 hours, calling only at Portarlington, Athlone, Athenry, Galway.
12. Dublin-Galway, regional service, every 2 hours calling at stations Hazelhatch to Galway, to run hourly at peak.
13. Dublin-Westport, every 2 hours, calling at Portarlington, Athlone and then all stations to Westport. Connecting service to Ballina at Manulla Junction.
14. Dublin-Sligo, every 2 hours calling Maynooth, Mullingar and all stations to Sligo.
15. Dublin-Mullingar, regional service, every 2 hours, calling Drumcondra, Glasnevin (assuming Metro is built), Broombridge, Clonsilla, Maynooth, Kilcock, Enfield, to run hourly at peak.
16. Dublin-Rosslare every 2 hours.
17. Dublin-Arklow, regional service, every 2 hours, alternating with the above

## **New Stations**

### ***Dunkettle***

Creation of a new major station at/near the former North Esk freight yard in Cork, this is adjacent to the major Dunkettle interchange. This station would include a large Park and Ride site with the aim to draw demand from South, West and East Cork, avoiding the need to enter Cork City to access both local and long-distance services. This considerably shortens the end-to-end journey time experienced by the passenger.

This would be a major station with 4-6 platforms. All services northwards to Mallow and beyond would start here and also serve Cork Kent as happens currently. There is potential to relocate the train maintenance and stabling in Cork Kent to this location.

Cork Kent platform capacity towards Mallow is a challenge currently due to Dublin services occupying platforms for long periods each hour. Starting Dublin bound services at Dunkettle would solve this issue and eliminate the need for a third through platform at Cork Kent.

### ***Ballysimon / M7***

Creation of a new station at Ballysimon, this is adjacent to a major M7 interchange in Limerick. This station would include a large park and ride site with the aim to draw demand from all major road corridors approaching Limerick, avoiding the need to enter Limerick City to access both local and long-distance services. This considerably shortens the end-to-end journey time experienced by the passenger.

The extended journey time between Limerick Junction and Limerick by this extra stop could be offset by double tracking the line between Limerick Junction and Limerick and increasing the line speed limit to 160 km/h.

### ***Drogheda North***

As the largest town in Ireland, its single station is not well positioned to address needs of the local area. Access from the north bank of the river is circuitous. Options either on the Dublin-Belfast line or to relay in part the former Boyne Cement factory spur. The key challenge would be providing adequate road access, an extension of the N51 to provide access from the M1, approaching from the north, park and ride users would not be hit with the toll on the M1 bridge.

### ***Manulla Junction***

While this station exists, it has no public access. While local demand is undoubtedly extremely low provision of access would be a one-time cost and there is no impact in terms of journey time, so any revenue gained is not abstracting revenue elsewhere.

## **New Lines**

### ***Dublin - Dublin Airport - Drogheda***

Dublin Connolly to Howth Junction is the most heavily trafficked route and requires urgent intervention to increase capacity. The cost, impact, and disruption to provide a 4-track line from Connolly to north of Howth Junction would be very significant, with the need to rebuild every station, every overbridge and try to maintain current service levels during construction. This would provide no increase to catchment area and will struggle in economic assessment.

An alternative approach which requires assessment, 4-track section between Connolly and Killester, diving into twin tunnels under Clontarf Golf Club to a 4-platform station underneath Dublin Airport with the line turning back towards the existing line at a point north of Donabate to re-join the Dublin-Belfast mainline with an expanded station at Rush and Lusk. Malahide DART services would be extended to Rush and Lusk.

This would address the severe capacity constraints between Malahide and the city, all trains traveling to north of Rush & Lusk would travel Dublin-Dublin Airport offering significant journey time reductions. It would allow for 200 km/h running between Dublin and Drogheda. There may be scope for other stations on this line between Dublin and Rush & Lusk, provided they do not compromise the core intention of the line, which is to provide higher speed services to key destinations.

As Dublin Airport is a major transport and employment hub, significant EU funds are likely available to fund such a project.

*Alternative:* an alternative after Dublin Airport would be a more inland, cross-country route, taking a more direct route from Dublin Airport or Swords to just south of Drogheda, with the existing line providing an enhanced commuter service. This would make a Dublin-Drogheda-Navan route competitive with a Dublin-M3 Parkway-Navan route on capital cost and journey time.

### ***Cork - Ringaskiddy - Carrigaline***

With the moving of most of the Port of Cork's services to Ringaskiddy, there may be scope for a Cork-Ringaskiddy-Carrigaline rail line. Instead of replicating the historical route on the west side of the harbour, services would connect to the Cork-Cobh line north of Rushbooke station. Stations would be provided at Shanbally and Carrigaline. There would be scope for connecting to the new port facilities at Ringaskiddy. This line would require a bridge more than 400 metres long, likely with an opening section for any remaining shipping. A tunnel is a possible alternative to a bridge, but in both cases cost may be prohibitive.

## **Reopened Lines**

We do not foresee any lines where reopening could be justified at this time. We believe the investments required in the existing network will be significantly beyond the financial resources which might be available and that the return on investment in the existing network will exceed that of any possible reopening.

While we do not believe funding would be available, if funding were available, we believe the following options (in the presented order) should be considered and routes protected in local planning and zoning considerations.

### ***M3 Parkway - Navan***

Navan is covered by the GDA plans, however reopening the M3 Parkway to Navan line appears to be marginal at best in business case terms. An opportunity exists at Drogheda to extend some services from Dublin to Navan via Drogheda using the existing line and provide a regional service linking North Dublin, Louth, and Meath with these services integrated with cross border services. See *Alternative* at Dublin-Dublin Airport-Belfast above.

### ***Waterford - Rosslare***

Waterford-Rosslare was closed despite evidence that a three train a day service could be provided without additional funding owing to the increased patronage, thus drastically improving the subsidy per passenger metric. The line does have a strategic purpose and offers the shortest by distance journey from Waterford into South Wexford. Operated as a through service to Limerick Junction and beyond the route has potential. The traditional business of foot passengers to Wales is a fraction of its historical peak, but with a train every 2 hours, reasonable connections could be afforded.

### ***Sallins - Naas***

There is scope for a short spur to connect Sallins to the centre of Naas town, thereby increasing catchment. However, the station would not benefit directly from passing services on the mainline and would be fully dependent on services terminating at Naas. A new alignment may be required owing to development on the former Sallins – Tullow line.

### ***Portlaoise - Kilkenny***

From a regional connectivity perspective, the closed line between Portlaoise and Kilkenny is a route not considered previously and links two major centres. The journey times pre closure in 1962 are still competitive against cars today. There is potential for an interesting regional circle line, Portlaoise-Kilkenny-Waterford-Clonmel-Limerick Junction-Limerick-Nenagh-Portlaoise.

### ***Thurles – Clonmel – Waterford***

From a regional connectivity perspective, the closed line between Thurles and Clonmel is a route not considered previously. Current road options are indirect. Limerick Institute of Technology has campus sites in both Thurles and Clonmel which may drive (limited) student travel. There is some evidence of long-distance park and ride being undertaken from South Tipperary to Thurles to access Dublin bound rail services. A two hourly service would result in an hourly service Clonmel – Waterford, which may be attractive as a commuting option.

## **Multimodal Integration**

Rail cannot stand on its own, it needs to coordinate with local bus services, in timetabling, fares and routes. Often rail and bus are seen as being in competition with each other despite both being public services. With a limited demand, splitting across multiple modes is not efficient.

### ***Timetabling***

A coordinated approach to ensure local bus services are timetabled to meet trains at stations.

### ***Fares***

A nationwide simple add-on in the same way as Plusbus in UK or CityTicket in Germany where at time of purchase a small additional surcharge can be paid on long distance tickets to access local bus/tram services. For regional journeys, all tickets should be valid on all public service operators.

### ***Routes***

It is wasteful of public funds to duplicate - a review of bus and rail services is required to ensure where rail can meet needs that bus services are recast into bringing passengers into towns with stations for onward connections.

## **Urban Rail**

While this consultation process is not targeting urban rail, urban rail is where rail shines as a solution owing to its high capacity and low footprint.

We see significant synergies between urban rail development and regional, long-distance services. Few if any journeys start or end at a major railway station, providing as near to a door-to-door service is essential to break car dependency.

For Cork-Limerick and Limerick-Galway urban rail services stretch out to a point where the gap between them in distance is small and thus operation as an end-to-end regional service comes at minimal cost but dramatically expands connectivity.

### ***Dublin***

DART Underground, provides a regional link allowing single seat journey from North Kildare as far as Louth, the time saving compared to current of at least 30 minutes. Heuston station is finally accessible which breaks down a barrier to use of long-distance trains.

### ***Cork***

Support plans for additional stations, capacity, and potential electrification, building on the success of Cork-Midleton. Electrification in Cork helps with the business case to electrify Dublin-Cork.

### ***Limerick***

Support studies into the feasibility of commuter rail services in Limerick including potential use of the line towards Patrickswell/Adare/Foynes for commuter services.

### ***Galway***

Support the plans for additional stations, double tracking of the Athenry-Galway section. This also benefits Dublin-Galway service as this single-track section is congested.

## **Interventions**

### ***Quick Wins***

Current timetable lacks consideration of customer needs, as a result much business is lost as it is not possible to reach key destinations before 9am. The cost to address this is minimal. As an urgent action the following needs to be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Pre-9am arrivals from Dublin into Cork, Limerick, and Belfast.
2. Pre-9am arrival from Belfast into Dublin.
3. Later evening services Dublin to Athlone, Arklow.

### ***Infrastructure Enhancements***

Focus on addressing capacity pinch points. Raise speeds to reduce journey times and increase frequency to implement a nationwide clock-face timetable. This addresses a gap that rail must address to compete with bus and car alternatives. Previous proposals focused on journey times which is a small part of the picture, we need to focus on the timetable and work backwards to determine what infrastructure is required.

#### **Limerick (Killonan Junction) - Limerick Junction**

Two tracks and upgrade to 160 km/h where possible, line was built for two tracks originally, this route is heavily congested.

#### **Mullingar - Maynooth**

Restore second track and upgrade to 160 km/h where possible, second platforms at Enfield and Kilcock to eliminate scheduling constraints. This route is heavily congested at peak times.

#### **Mullingar - Sligo**

Upgrade to 160 km/h where possible, journey times on this route remain slow, no motorway competition today but only a matter of time.

#### **Portarlington - Athlone**

Two tracks and upgrade to 160 km/h where possible, second platform at Clara to eliminate scheduling constraints. Increase platform lengths to at least 215 metres.

#### **Athenry - Galway**

Restore second track and upgrade to 160 km/h where possible. This should form part of the proposal for commuter services in Galway with multiple additional stations between Athenry and Galway.

#### **Mallow - Tralee**

Upgrade to 160 km/h where possible. Second platform at Millstreet to eliminate scheduling constraints. A consistent sub-3-hour timing Dublin-Killarney would mean the PSO grant for flights between Dublin and Kerry would no longer be permitted.

#### **Kildare - Waterford**

While this is already a 160 km/h route, many restrictions exist south of Kilkenny. Upgrade Cherryville Junction to at least 100 km/h. Constraint at Kilkenny limits trains to 6 coaches which limits capacity, a platform extension here would allow an increase in capacity. Double track

between Lavistown Junction and Kilkenny to address a constraint.

## **Dublin - Rosslare**

Despite the recommendations of the report commissioned we strongly support provision of a second track from Bray Head Tunnel 4 through Greystones to provide flexibility and recovery from delay. Upgrade to 160 km/h where possible. The best approach to capacity at peak hours is to run longer trains, currently the platform limit is 128 metres, this needs to be increased to 170 metres.

## **At 'Risk' Routes**

We believe the financial situation of these routes is tied to the expensive manual Victorian era infrastructure which results in a high fixed cost and inflexible operating hours. Should a full upgrade of these routes be undertaken combined with a good frequency of service the circumstances may be significantly different.

The key to increasing passenger numbers is to maximise the journey opportunities available through direct and well timed connections.

## ***Limerick-Waterford***

This is a poorly performing line owing to combination of high operating costs, limited local demand and no service on Sundays. Services have been heavily cut back and thus provide no real options for passengers traveling for work and education as they are focused on through traffic to Dublin. Journey time by rail even in its poor state is still faster than bus alternatives owing to the lack of motorways or dual carriageways between Waterford and Limerick.

A full economic assessment is required based on a minimum service of a train every 2 hours Monday-Friday. The status quo is unsustainable and provides little if any benefit to the local community. There exists a high level of car dependency owing to the blight of one-off housing developments. Sizeable towns of Tipperary, Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir have untapped potential for commuting services to both Limerick and Waterford.

The lack of a motorway and generally poor roads hands an advantage to rail. Success will require tight integration of services at Limerick Junction with Dublin-Cork and at Waterford with Waterford-Dublin services to maximise journey options.

## **Options to Consider**

### ***1. Close the line***

As the second greatest loss per passenger of any route its retention it is hard to justify large scale capital investment.

Expand local bus services which are comparable to journey time.

### ***2. Upgrade line Waterford-Limerick Junction***

Re-signalling and level crossing upgrades / closures as well as reconstruction of Tipperary, Cahir, Carrick-on-Suir with second platforms, accessibility upgrades at these stations and Clonmel. This would considerably reduce fixed operating costs and provide a 24/7 railway.

## **Nenagh Branch**

This is a poorly performing line owing to combination of high operating costs, limited local demand and slow journey times. Efforts to stimulate demand such as a direct service to / from Dublin failed, with single digit passenger numbers. Timings are of no use to daily commuters as the last train of the day leaves Limerick at 16:55.

A full economic assessment is required based on a minimum service of a train every 2 hours Monday-Friday. The status quo is unsustainable and provides little if any benefit to the local community. The only settlements of note are Nenagh and Roscrea. There exists a high level of car dependency owing to the blight of one-off housing development.

## **Options to Consider**

### ***1. Close the line***

As the greatest loss per passenger of any route its retention it is hard to justify large scale capital investment. The Nenagh Branch has no strategic importance as the Dublin-Limerick Junction-Limerick route exists.

Expand local bus services which are already faster.

### ***2. Close the line between Nenagh and Ballybrophy***

Focus on commuter services in the Limerick Area in line with the proposals currently for Limerick city.

Re-signalling and level crossing upgrades / closures as well as reconstruction of Nenagh and Birdhill with second platforms, accessibility upgrades.

### ***3. Upgrade the line between Limerick, Nenagh and Ballybrophy***

Re-signalling and level crossing upgrades / closures as well as reconstruction of Nenagh, Birdhill and Roscrea with second platforms, accessibility upgrades.

### ***4. Upgrade the line between Limerick, Nenagh and Ballybrophy, direct curve at Ballybrophy***

Re-signalling and level crossing upgrades / closures as well as reconstruction of Nenagh, Birdhill and Roscrea with second platforms, accessibility upgrades. New station at Borris-in-Ossory, close Ballybrophy to all services.

Realign track to allow direct access to / from the branch towards Dublin. Operate services at least as far as the unused bay platform at Portlaoise.