

**MINUTES OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION &
EMERGENCY SERVICES SPC**

**HYBRID MEETING HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE
ON MONDAY 16th June 2025 AT 11.30am**

I Láthair:

Baill: Comh. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire (Chairperson)
Comh. Tomás Ó Curraóin
Cllr. Seán Broderick
Cllr. Michael Connolly
Cllr. Peter Feeney
Mr. Mark Green

Baill ar Líne: Cllr. Siobhán McHugh Ryan
Cllr. Martin McNamara

Oifigí: Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Director of Services
Mr. Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer
Ms. Mary-Esther McHugh, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Mr. Aodán MacDonncha
Ms. Anne Mitchell

Comh. Mac an Iomaire commenced the meeting by offering his condolences to Geraldine Byrne, Administrative Officer, and her family on their recent bereavement following the loss of her father.

It was proposed by the Chair to take item 3 *Gluas light rail for the Galway MASP* presentation to be heard first and this was agreed.

Item No. 1: GLUAS – Light Rail for the Galway MASP

The Gluas committee gave a presentation to the SPC on a zero emissions light rail transit line in the context of Galway City and County, the potential impact of the Gluas light rail system was introduced with a focus on how it could enhance access to essential services and opportunities across the region. Areas such as healthcare, education, housing, amenities, and sporting events were explored to illustrate the wide ranging benefits for constituents.

The proposal was aligned with the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and referenced the findings of the Atkins Réalis and National Transport Authority feasibility study. This study assessed the viability of light rail in the region, identified possible routes, outlined next steps, and concluded that there were “no technical constraints” to implementation.

Current transport mode shares in the Galway Metropolitan Area were examined, revealing a heavy dependence on private vehicles and underscoring the need for more sustainable alternatives. Routes such as Knocknacarra to Parkmore and Salthill to GMIT were considered, with attention given to key user groups including students, commuters, and tourists.

A comparative analysis of inflation adjusted light rail costs across 18 countries was presented to emphasize the importance of strategic financial planning. Innovative technologies, such as battery-powered trams that operate without overhead wires, were discussed for their potential to reduce infrastructure costs and enhance operational efficiency.

The broader benefits of Gluas were reflected upon, including reduced traffic congestion, lower carbon emissions, and economic revitalization. The concept of Transport Oriented Development (TOD) was introduced as a framework for integrating transit infrastructure with urban planning. A

range of advantages for both Galway City and County were outlined, along with proposed next steps to advance the Gluas initiative.

Committee Members raised the following points and queries:

Committee members expressed appreciation for the Gluas presentation and acknowledged its vision for improving transport in Galway. The discussion included reflections on the ongoing Galway Ring Road process and the potential challenges of advancing two major infrastructure projects simultaneously. Some members raised concerns that pursuing both initiatives in parallel could risk delays or complications in delivery.

There was interest in ensuring that areas earmarked for large scale development, such as Ardaun, are well integrated into future transport planning, with suggestions for direct connectivity through central zones. Overall, the concept of Gluas received broad support, with several members emphasizing its potential to complement the ring road rather than compete with it.

In response to queries, the Gluas committee clarified that they view the ring road and Gluas as serving distinct but interconnected purposes: the ring road facilitating movement around the city, and Gluas enhancing mobility within the urban core. They stressed that both projects could work in tandem to address Galway's transport needs.

Following the presentation, the Director of Services provided an update on the Galway Ring Road and existing public transport options. It was reiterated that these initiatives are part of a wider strategy to tackle mobility challenges in Galway, and that a multifaceted approach, incorporating both road infrastructure and sustainable transport systems, is essential for long term success.

Item No. 2: Minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services SPC Meeting held on 03rd March 2025

On the **Proposal** of Comh. Ó Curraoin, and **Seconded** by Cllr. Broderick, the minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation and Emergency Services meeting of the Strategic Policy Committee held 03rd March 2025 were agreed.

Item No. 3: Matters Arising

A welcome was extended to Mary-Esther McHugh, and best wishes were offered to Sajil Elwood in her new role. Reference was made to the previous meeting minutes, which had noted that a workshop on speed limits was scheduled for April. It was confirmed that these workshops have since taken place. The speed limit review is now set to begin, and once further information becomes available, the potential outcomes and the proposed extent of revised speed limits will be brought forward to the SPC for consideration.

Item No. 4: Galway County Council paid parking – report to SPC

Information was presented regarding parking arrangements in municipal towns, with the aim of facilitating discussion and gathering feedback. Existing traffic management plans were outlined, including the relevant byelaws, parking controls, and operational rules currently in place across various areas.

Details were shared on parking fees and the maximum time limits in car parks. A comparative analysis was provided, highlighting differences between Galway and other western councils. It was noted that while parking rates in Galway County have remained unchanged, operational costs have continued to rise. As a result, a review of parking rates was recommended.

Further information was also shared on income, revenue, and the services supported by parking operations.

Committee Members raised the following points and queries:

The meeting included a wide-ranging discussion on parking policies, operational costs, and potential reforms. Historical context was provided, noting that paid parking was introduced in 2003 to address issues such as abandoned vehicles and improve town accessibility and promote short stay parking in town centres and thereby generate more economic activity. However, concerns were raised by members that current parking charges may now deter shoppers, especially when competing with retail areas offering free parking.

The operational cost was discussed with queries about whether warden expenses are included in the figures presented. Clarification was also sought on whether the reported parking costs reflect gross income or net profit. Rising operational costs, unchanged rates, and the need to balance revenue with accessibility were highlighted, prompting suggestions for a review of parking fees.

Several proposals were put forward to support specific groups and improve town centre access:

- Introducing free parking for care workers on duty, with suggestions to define eligibility through byelaws or link permits to properties.
- Considering a free parking window (e.g., 9 - 11 a.m.) to encourage short visits and support local businesses, particularly for parents and caregivers.
- Exploring the feasibility of designated spaces for those with mobility issues and short-term shoppers, while addressing concerns about misuse of free parking zones.

The broader conversation emphasized the need to rethink how parking is managed, including payment methods, the role of coin operated machines, and the potential for digital solutions. Issues with malfunctioning machines and resulting fines were noted, along with calls for greater flexibility during school drop off times.

Examples from other councils were shared, including the implementation of care worker parking passes during the COVID19 period. It was suggested that Galway County Council consider similar measures to demonstrate leadership and compassion for those supporting vulnerable members of the community.

Overall, the discussion reflected a desire to balance economic sustainability with accessibility, fairness, and community support.

Committee Members queries were responded to as follows:

Revenue generated from parking operations contributes to overall budget expenditure, covering the costs associated with wardens and system maintenance. A surplus is generated, and the specific figure can be confirmed if required. All pay parking machines were replaced approximately two years ago and now feature contactless payment options, including tap functionality, allowing for convenient, coin free transactions.

Concerns were raised about introducing short term free parking through byelaws, as this would result in a direct loss of income and present enforcement challenges. Verifying the duration of parking under such arrangements requires a minimum of two observations, complicating enforcement. In relation to proposals for a morning free parking period, it was noted that a minimum fee of 20c is modest, and affordable parking options are available near shops in towns.

The availability of parking spaces to support town centres was highlighted, with Council rates considered affordable compared to other operators such as Irish Rail, hospitals, and private car parks. However, space availability remains limited. A "town centre first" approach was recommended to ensure a balanced strategy that supports local businesses and accessibility and encourages town centre living.

Regarding seasonal initiatives, a review of free Christmas parking was suggested. A survey conducted in a sample town revealed that many vehicles remained parked on the main street for

the entire day when fees were suspended, raising concerns about turnover and space usage during Christmas peak shopping period.

Support for care workers in terms of parking access was acknowledged as a positive measure. Consideration will be given to whether this can be addressed through a formal review of existing byelaws or by introducing a supplementary addendum. The potential to assist care workers through targeted parking provisions will be explored further.

Item No. 5: Any Other Business

Concerns were raised regarding roadside safety and maintenance, particularly the presence of wires along roadsides that are preventing hedge cutting contractors from completing work. In some areas, hedges remain uncut due to unidentified cables, and it was requested that action be taken ahead of the hedge cutting season to address this issue. Related concerns included wires hanging low and becoming entangled in grass, further complicating roadside maintenance.

The Safe Route to School programme in Barna was discussed, with a proposal to allow a delegate to attend the upcoming July Conamara meeting. It was also requested that updates be provided to schools currently at Stage 2 of the programme, ensuring they are informed of the latest developments. Additional queries were raised regarding the ring road project and its progression to public consultation.

Attention was drawn to a new Road Safety Authority (RSA) training initiative focused on licensing for heavy machinery. It was suggested that this programme be extended in collaboration with Teagasc to support young drivers, particularly in preparation for the summer silage season. The increasing size and weight of agricultural machinery on roads was noted, and the need for a structured framework around training and licensing was emphasized.

Bus stops were also discussed, with a proposal to include the bus stop enhancement programme under the Active Travel Scheme as an item on the next Strategic Policy Committee agenda.

Committee Members queries were responded to as follows:

It was confirmed that An Bord Pleanála has released additional information regarding the ring road project for public consultation. Submissions may be made to the board until the end of July, after which a decision will be made on whether an oral hearing is required.

Queries raised concerning roadside cables and the operation of heavy machinery were acknowledged and scheduled to be addressed at the joint Road Safety Committee meeting taking place later in the day, with engagement planned with the Road Safety Authority (RSA).

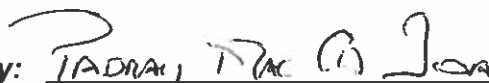
It was agreed that the Active Travel team would provide updates to schools and councillors within the week. A report will also be issued to the Conamara Municipal District, outlining the latest progress and communications with schools and elected members.

It was suggested that the next physical development, transportation and emergency services SPC will take place Wednesday 10th September 2025 at 10am, confirmation to follow.

The meeting concluded.

Críochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Signed &
Approved by:


Comh. Bádraig Mac an Iomaire
Cathaoirleach

Date: 10/9/2025