

National Infrastructure Summit 2025

Minister Jerry Buttimer T.D. Address

Good afternoon, everyone,

Let me begin by thanking the organisers for the kind invitation to speak here today at the National Infrastructure Summit. As Minister of State in the Department of Transport, It's a pleasure to be among such a distinguished audience of planners, engineers, economists, public servants, and policy professionals — the people who turn Government ambition into ground-level action.

We meet at a time of great opportunity. The decisions we make now — about what we build, where we build it, and how we build it — will shape not just the Ireland of 2030 or 2040, but the Ireland we pass on to the next generation.

And make no mistake — this Government takes this responsibility very seriously.

As committed to in the Programme for Government, we are actively reviewing the National Development Plan — not just to check in on what's working, but to re-double our efforts where delivery needs to be faster, sharper, and more joined-up. It's a moment to reflect, yes, but it's more importantly a moment to act.

The ongoing review of the National Development Plan, due for completion by July 2025, is a central part of this agenda. It will prioritise key sectors – energy, water, transport and health digitalisation – while demanding value for money and a clear focus on timely delivery.

We are also reforming how infrastructure is planned and delivered, through the new Infrastructure Division within DPENDR and the work of the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, chaired by Minister Jack Chambers. These reforms are grounded in practical, real-world challenges and focused on removing barriers to delivery, streamlining processes, and strengthening accountability.

Strong infrastructure builds strong communities. From better transport links and digital healthcare to clean water and energy security – the work we do today shapes the Ireland of tomorrow.

This is a key priority for me, An Tanaiste Simon Harris and Fine Gael.

Because for all of you in this room — and certainly for us in Government — delivery is the name of the game.

Now, if infrastructure were a dinner party - transport would be the guest who arrived early, stayed late, and brought dessert. It features in nearly every national challenge we're facing: housing, climate, productivity, rural development, and social cohesion. So, today I'll focus my remarks primarily on transport — from buses and bikes to battery chargers — and touch briefly on energy and aviation before we wrap up.

Transport: Progress on the Ground

We've seen tangible progress over the last five years — not just plans and paper, but projects completed and open for use:

- The N22 Baile Bhuirne to Macroom,
- The Dunkettle Interchange,
- The Listowel and Moycullen Bypasses.

In our towns and villages, we've supported active travel and Greenway projects. In cities, we've seen construction begin — or in some cases, complete — at major rail stations in Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford. And across the country, fleets of new buses and trains are rolling out.

This momentum is no accident. It is the result of planning, political will, and partnership — and we are now entering the delivery phase for the next generation of transformational projects.

Planning permission is in place for 11 of the 12 BusConnects Dublin Core Bus Corridors. Construction on DART+ West and DART+ South West is moving forward. We await a planning decision on MetroLink — a project that has the potential to reshape public transport in the capital for generations.

And work continues on major interurban roads — including the N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge and the M28 to Ringaskiddy where we have just committed half a billion euros.

But here's the truth: investing in transport is about far more than just tarmac and track. It's about investing in communities — connecting people to jobs, services, and opportunities.

It's also about unlocking housing potential. That's why the alignment between the Department of Transport, the Department of Housing, and the Land Development Agency is so important.

We are actively progressing Transport Oriented Development (TOD) — ensuring that high-quality public transport supports high-quality housing, especially in areas where scale and density make sense. The first TOD report on Dublin was published last year, and further reports on Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, and the Eastern Region are expected shortly.

These reports don't just point to what's possible — they point to what's necessary. And crucially, they show how smart transport investment can unlock tens of thousands of new homes, and more sustainable urban development.

Smarter Strategies for Smarter Cities

Our Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies are helping to guide development in each of the five cities. These 20-year strategies, aligned with the National Planning Framework, ensure that transport and land use are pulling in the same direction. They're evidence-informed, regularly reviewed, and offer a consistent framework for collaboration across agencies — from Irish Water to TII to the Housing Delivery Coordination Office.

This kind of whole-of-Government approach is essential — because infrastructure isn't delivered in silos. It's delivered in real places, by real people, with real constraints.

We know that. That's why, as part of the NDP review, we're also identifying and tackling the barriers to infrastructure delivery — from statutory processes to procurement, from skills capacity to planning delays. We owe it to taxpayers to get better at this. And we will.

Sustainable Mobility

Our commitment to sustainable mobility is bearing fruit. Since the launch of the Sustainable Mobility Policy in 2022:

- Nearly 700km of walking infrastructure,
- 400km of cycling infrastructure, and
- 300km of Greenways have been delivered.

Under CycleConnects, we're developing county-wide cycling networks across 22 counties. And Transport Infrastructure Ireland's National Cycle Network will connect over 200 towns and cities across 3,500km of corridor.

This isn't just about infrastructure — it's about changing how people live. We've seen public transport passenger numbers bounce back post-COVID, with a remarkable uptick in rural areas thanks to Connecting Ireland and Local Link.

A Greener Fleet for a Greener Future

Over 100 zero-emission double-deckers are now in service in Dublin, with more on the way. Our new DART+ Battery Electric Fleet is set to enter service by 2026. And we're working to electrify rural transport fleets, commercial vehicles, and specialist vehicles under the next EV Charging Strategy.

Speaking of which — the ZEV programme is rolling out a comprehensive network of public chargers — from motorway hubs to town centres — and partnering with local authorities to deliver EV infrastructure plans tailored to community needs.

It's not just about powering cars. In the future, EV infrastructure may help power the grid, through bi-directional charging and battery storage. It's a vision of mobility and energy working hand-in-hand.

Ports, Power, and the Sea

Briefly, I want to highlight the role our state ports are playing in enabling offshore renewable energy.

- Cork's offshore berth at Ringaskiddy,
- Rosslare's upcoming ORE facility,

- Shannon Foynes and the ambitious Foynes Island development, and
- The Port of Waterford's expansion plans.

These are not just port projects — they are national infrastructure investments with global consequences for Ireland's clean energy future.

Aviation and Regional Growth

And finally — a quick note on aviation. Yes, we are all aware of the challenges around capacity at Dublin Airport, and Government is committed to resolving them. But we also recognise the regional dimension of connectivity.

Cork Airport's new €200 million capital plan is an exciting vote of confidence in regional growth. And the Regional Airports Sustainability Programme is funding real climate action — from solar farms to energy efficiency upgrades — at Shannon, Cork, and others.

Closing

So, to conclude:

Whether it's a BusConnects corridor in Dublin, a Greenway in Mayo, a wind berth in Waterford or an EV charger in Westmeath — these projects all share something in common. They are part of a coherent, connected, and climate-conscious vision for Ireland's infrastructure future.

We have momentum. We have ambition. And most importantly, we have a country that is ready to build.

Thank you very much — and I'll now hand back to Ivan to kick off the panel discussion.

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