

## **IEA Submission: Answers to Consultation Form on Strategic Rail Review**

*Irish Exporters Association submission to the Department of Transport and Department for Infrastructure*

21 January 2022

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### **Overview: The Irish Exporters Association**

The Irish Exporters Association (IEA) is the leading independent representative body and voice for exporters based in Ireland. The IEA represents exporters and supply chain operators across the country and works at regional, national, and European level, representing its members in front of legislators to create a regulatory and legislative framework that supports, drives, and fosters Irish exports.

We assist our members to grow their exports to world markets and drive the growth and development of all exporting businesses based in Ireland. We provide a set of highly relevant business services and products to assist our members with international trade.

- We **represent** the needs of members in the development of policy, lobbying, intervention at Government and EU level and in the media. Brexit and the Diversification of Export Markets, Trade Compliance, Climate Change & Sustainability and their impact on Irish exporters are core to our work.
- We offer **trade services** in the form of practical training, support, and advice right across the supply chain including our Certificate in International Trade, customs awareness, GDP, export and import compliance, consular, business travel support (visa and export documentation), route to market and general assistance with trade related queries.
- We have created **knowledge networks** among our membership to support our members in exploring new markets, route to market scenario planning, understand customs and supply chain challenges and provide thought leadership through a series of events and webinars. Networking and connectivity remain an important part of membership benefits. Our Export Industry Awards programme is our flagship event that celebrates the achievements of exporting companies and highlights the importance of the export sector to Ireland.

The IEA represents the whole spectrum of companies within the export industry including SME's who are beginning to think about exporting for the first time right through to global multinational companies who are already extensively exporting from Ireland as well as the providers of key services to the sector. The IEA is the connecting force for Irish exporters, providing practical knowledge and support across the Island of Ireland and in foreign markets.

## **All Island Strategic Rail Review**

**Of the goals listed below, please rank them in terms of importance to you (by clicking and dragging), with the first being most important and the last least important.**

Improve All Island Connectivity Between Major Cities

Foster economic activity

Encourage sustainable mobility

Contribute to Decarbonisation

Enhance Regional and Rural Accessibility

Achieve economic and financial feasibility

**Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of a group/organisation?**

Organisation.

**What is your personal or organisational vision for the future of rail in your area, or across the island?**

The Irish Exporters Association represents a wide range of businesses from all around Ireland, encompassing most industries. As such, we are deeply invested in the future of rail in the country, as it directly impacts our members' ability to conduct their business successfully. Secondly, a key policy priority for the IEA is sustainable trade and investment and we therefore welcome the Department's efforts to place sustainability at the centre of its strategy.

Our vision for the future of rail in Ireland includes suggestions of various topics:

First of all, we must note that the overall strategy and the underlying plans for the elements within it must conform to the policies of the EU, not only to ensure as far as possible a seamless transport community, but also to enable the sectors to secure the maximum possible grant and other financial assistance being made available under Community "Green" programmes. The primary function of each of the 5 Goals is to enable the population of the island to move both themselves and the goods they produce and consume, in an economical and environmentally friendly manner.

Around 18% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions now come from the transport sector, the second largest polluting industry in the country after agriculture, and this number needs to be reduced significantly in order for Ireland to achieve its goal of reducing emissions by 51% by 2030. Rail freight generates 76% less emissions (per tonne-km) than road haulage. However, there has been a decline in the volume of freight transported by rail over the last 3 decades<sup>1</sup> and we therefore need to work on developing the freight routes currently only accessible to road haulage.

Another crucial factor to consider when seeking to plan infrastructure development must be the steady increase in population throughout the island. The Covid pandemic has changed people's living and working patterns, with more of them returning to rural areas or living further away from city centres. These changes must be taken into account when developing new infrastructure to ensure they correspond to the needs of people across the island.

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the 2040 Rail Freight Strategy

Furthermore, while it is a fact that rail transport emits far less greenhouse gas emissions compared to road transport, we must still consider where the energy used to power the system is coming from and how it is used. As such, we recommend sourcing as much as this energy from renewable or clean energy providers. The IEA supports the climate action related objectives of moving the rail service provision throughout the island onto an electric and/or a hydrogen powered system.

Secondly, with regards to incentivising more people to use rail services for personal or business use and whilst doing so contribute to decarbonisation, we believe the following points are key to achieving that:

- The creation of large parking structures outside of cities, where people can leave their personal vehicles and take the train into town. Such structures would lower the number of cars in cities, therefore improving parking issues, decreasing air pollution, and bringing Ireland closer to achieving the 2050 national target of climate neutrality. While there is limited provision of such facilities in Belfast, some cities, such as Bordeaux in France, already have similar systems in place and have seen great improvements in terms of traffic and use of rail services.
- Connecting all international airports on the island of Ireland to the rail network would allow both residents and visitors to access not only the cities themselves, but in particular, any part of the country at a higher speed and at a lower carbon footprint, as it would alleviate the need for personal transportation or bus services.
- Further promoting awareness of the benefits of using rail service amongst the public would also be advisable, potentially showing how much money would be saved for customers using rail services vs personal transportation being one benefit, but as public awareness of Climate Change grows, emphasising the more environmentally friendly nature of taking the train over the bus or the car is a very important message to get out there.

Lastly, working on making the Irish Rail app more user-friendly would likely incentivise people to use the service at a higher rate. Current feedback includes the need for more accurate real-time updates on services, as well as the request for a simpler way to book and purchase tickets, and a more reliable app in general.

**Are there any key gaps in rail provision in in your area, or elsewhere where you would like to travel by rail?**

We believe that more “secondary” cities should be linked to the capital. It would allow for more connectivity and for improved transportation for business, students, social and family visits, especially as demand begins to rise again, as we emerge from the pandemic.

Furthermore, if the objective set out in the current Rail Freight 2040 document is of increasing rail freight volumes to four to five times those currently being carried, whilst at the same time increasing passenger traffic significantly, then it becomes crucially important that parts of the services currently underused or not used at all are programmed for further development.

Additionally, we think that inter-city travel outside of Dublin needs to be developed further, it would also help students, workers, etc to stay connected with each other, and for businesses to be able to rely more strongly on the rail system for freight.

Improving access to the North-West and South-West areas, as mentioned in Goal 3, is urgent and necessary in order to promote further economic development in the area.

Another factor to consider is improving accessibility for people with limited mobility or parents with young children: a more inclusive service is important to ensure more people feel comfortable leaving their cars at home. There is a large number of elevators out of service around Dublin stations, some stations need more ramps, seats, or restrooms.

**Would you consider the area of your main place of residence:**

Urban.

**Would you consider the area of your main place of work:**

Urban.

**Please select your Council/Council Area:**

Dublin City Council.

**If you have any further comments, which have not yet been captured that you feel may be of value in the development of Review, please add them below:**

To derive full value from the island of Ireland's physical transport infrastructure including roads, rail infrastructure, ports, and airports, the scope of the current document should be extended to include all these elements and their integration.

The current document includes Goal 5 seeking "to support the efficient movement of goods to and from economic centers and international gateways". In this regard, the recently published Irish Rail "Rail freight 2040 Strategy" should be taken fully into account. It is only with the passenger and freight rail development activities being implemented in parallel, that the overall objectives can be achieved.

To strengthen both documents, further study should be undertaken of how the rail and ports infrastructure in Northern Ireland could be developed to meet the "Goal 5" noted above.