

CHAPTER 6 – TRANSPORTATION

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CHAPTER 6: TRANSPORTATION

AIM: To facilitate the economic and social development of the county through the provision of adequate transport infrastructure and optimise the return of investment on infrastructure while preserving our natural and built heritage.

INTRODUCTION

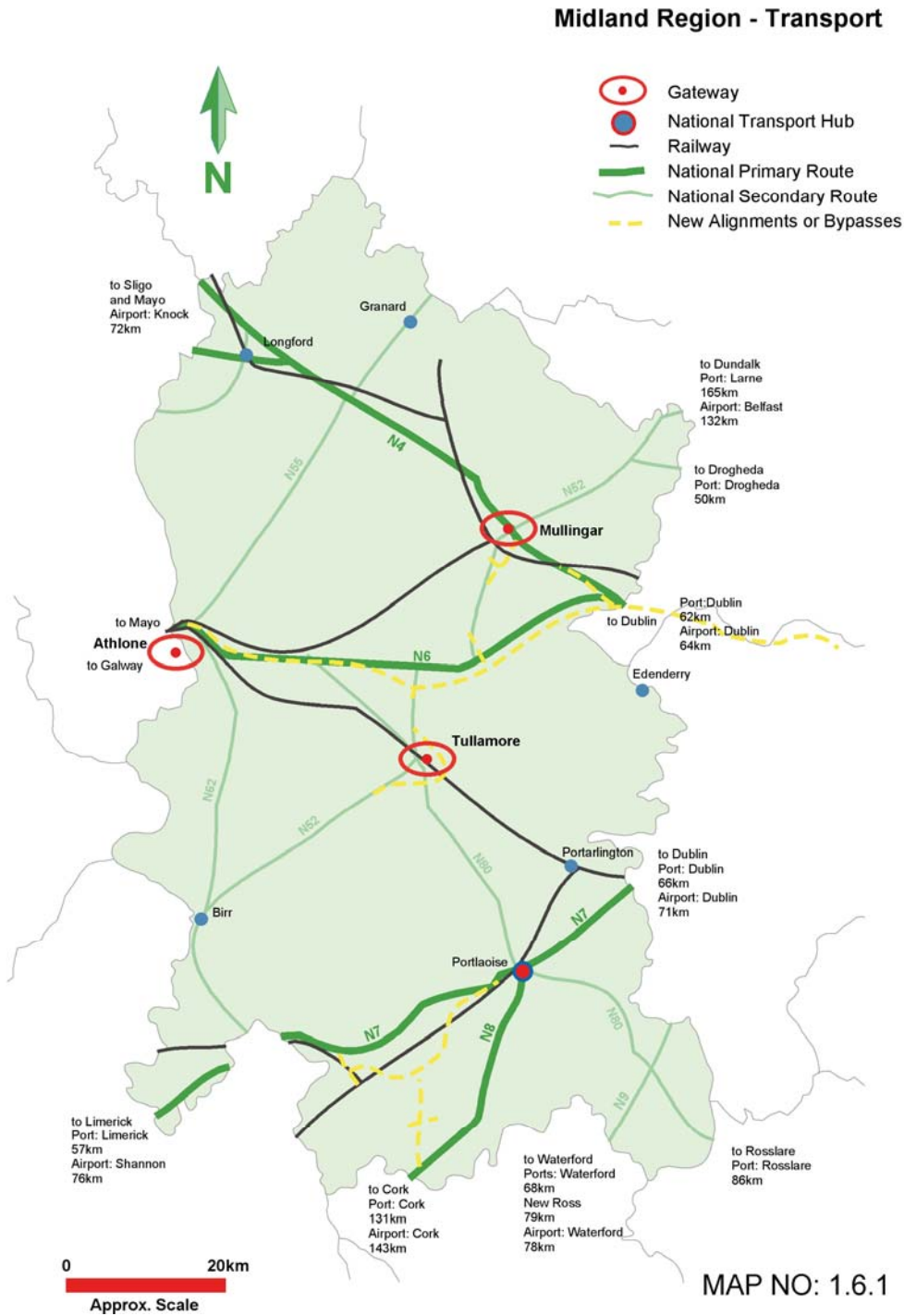
- 6.1 County Laois is centrally located in the Midlands of Ireland. Strategically positioned close to Dublin, Laois has excellent road linkages to the rest of Ireland, which include the N8, M7/N7 and N80 roadways and a subsidiary network of regional roads. Laois also has a major strategic asset in the form of railway lines which connect the South and East of Ireland to Dublin and stations in Portarlinton Portlaoise and Ballybrophy. This presents a significant opportunity for the future development of the county (See Map 1.6.1).
- 6.2 The distance by road from Laois to Shannon Airport, Limerick, Galway, Rosslare Harbour, and Waterford is approximately an hour and a half. Cork is approximately two hours drive from Laois, while the journey to Galway takes an hour and a half. Laois is also within commuting distance of Dublin.
- 6.3 Laois is therefore within reach of the majority of Ireland's population and economic activity. The following objectives seek to achieve an efficient and effective transport network to serve the County and to assist in taking full advantage of its location.

OBJECTIVES

- To improve road safety;
 - To improve the capacity of the road infrastructure within the county in accordance with national and regional policy and the principles of sustainable development;
 - To advance the route selection of bypasses through towns by preparing detailed proposals which take account of the natural and built heritage of the areas involved;
 - To ensure that all new developments have adequate transport services;
 - To have a well maintained road infrastructure;
 - To manage traffic more efficiently;
 - To encourage greater use of public transport;
 - To improve access for all to all modes of transport;
 - To encourage walking and cycling as an alternative mode of transport;
 - To encourage the provision of car parking in off street locations so as to improve the environmental conditions of the County's towns and villages;
 - To reduce car dependency by encouraging mobility plans and park and ride opportunities at various locations throughout the County;
 - To encourage links with the surrounding colleges and institutes and market their skills and courses to the advantage of the County in attracting inward investment;
 - To encourage the development of transport or transit orientated development at appropriate locations;
 - To encourage the development of walkable centers and neighbourhood transit villages at appropriate locations in the County.
- 6.4 The provision of transport infrastructure has profound implications for the future economic, social and physical development of County Laois. The choices as to the development of transport infrastructure and the mix of public and private transport employed, determines where population and employment opportunities locate. The Council is committed to developing a sustainable transportation strategy and this includes cooperating with relevant bodies in the delivery of land use and transportation strategies for Portarlinton and Portlaoise. The

National Transport Node and Inland Port at Portlaoise interchange is an initiative aimed at clustering development to enable the development of transport orientated activities.

6.5 Land use and Transportation Studies have been carried out for Portlaoise (2000) and Portarlinton. These studies have identified strategies for integrated development of both towns identifying opportunities and addressing the issues of roads and transportation management.



TR1 Land Use Strategies

It is the Council policy to:

- Co-operate with the relevant Bodies in the delivery of the land use and transportation strategies for Portarlinton and Portlaoise.

ROAD TRANSPORT

6.6 The completion of the motorway between Dublin and Portlaoise and the future provision of the Dublin - Limerick and Dublin - Cork motorway (respectively the M7 and M8 Motorways) will make the county more accessible.

6.7 The provision of Regional and County roads is an issue of profound importance for the county. The Council must ensure that provision for future roads in County Laois is protected from premature development.

TR2 Primary Road Transportation Network

It is the Council policy to:

- Facilitate and develop, in association with Central Government and the N.R.A., the provision of a Primary road transportation network, which does not require passage through towns and villages.
- Ensure the provision of the primary road transportation network protects natural heritage designated areas (see policy NH2) together with any landscape features of special interest (see policy NH12) and any features of archaeological interest (see policy BH3).

TR3 Roads Network Policy

It is the Council Policy to:

- Preserve the road lines for the future M7 and M8 and to ensure that all roads in the county that are used in connection with the construction of these motorways will be reinstated and repaired to a minimum of their current condition after the completion of the construction work on the motorways;
- Ensure that the routes of major by-passes, road realignments, and new roads are kept free of development;
- Ensure that the study corridors of roads, whose routes have not been finalised, are kept free from development;
- All developments shall comply with the Council's standards for roads as set out in this document and no development shall take place which would prejudice or interfere with possible future road plans or negate investment in the programme;
- Encourage and facilitate investment in the road network at national, regional and local level;
- Maximise the beneficial return of public investment in the national transportation network by protecting the carrying capacity of such routes in the interests of public safety;
- Provide in association with other agencies, both statutory and commercial, an integrated, efficient transportation network commensurate with the economic development of the County;
- Be proactive in the protection of the existing road network;
- Provide a full interchange at Cullahill on the M8 and a full interchange at Cuffsborough on the M8 and an half interchange at Aghaboe on the M7;
- Refer all planning applications that impact on the national road network to the NRA.

- 6.8 The council will continue its road building programme in order to facilitate the provision of a county wide road network which does not require passage through towns and villages.

New Development Accessing the Existing Road Network

- 6.9 As a general principle it should be noted that the intensification of use of an existing access is normally preferable to the creation of new access onto a public road. Where new entrances are necessary, the Council Roads Standards will be applied. Such road standards are required to guarantee the safety of the general public in the County and protect the carrying capacity of the road network. The Council will co-operate with the National Roads Authority (NRA) to enable the provision of a safe and efficient network of national roads.

TR4 Accesses onto National Routes

It is the policy of the Council:

- To restrict development requiring access onto National Primary or National Secondary routes in areas where the maximum speed limit applies. This prohibition will not necessarily apply to full time farmers, and in the case of national secondary routes to:
 - Farmers who derive a substantial proportion of their income from farming;
 - Sons and daughters of farmers;Permission may be granted in these cases, subject to the following provisions:
 - An alternative site with access onto a minor road is not available;
 - The proposed development can be accommodated without the creation of a specific traffic hazard;
 - Where possible an existing entrance is used;
- That developments concerning established farm activity along national roads or extensions to commercial or industrial development outside the speed limits on such roads shall be subject to the requirement that no increased road safety hazard is created;
- That all proposed developments in urban and rural areas accessing the road networks will comply with the road standards of Laois County Council.

- 6.10 Specific Policy for categories of roads are detailed below.

TR5 Regional Roads

It is the Council policy to:

- Restrict, unnecessary, new accesses on Regional Roads, where access could be provided off a nearby local county road;
- Ensure that necessary new entrances are located in such a manner as to provide effective visibility for both users of the entrance and users of the public roads so that opportunities for conflicting traffic movements are avoided;
- Avoid premature obsolescence of Regional Roads through creating excessive levels of individual entrances;
- Prohibit ribbon development outside statutory speed limits and development boundary of towns or villages;
- Ensure new developments, in rural areas, are located so as to avoid endangering public safety by way of a traffic hazard.

Strategic regional roads

- 6.11 The Strategic Regional Road Network is made up of County Regional Roads linking County towns to the future M7 and M8 motorways and National Routes. Strategic Regional Roads are particularly important transport links for the economic development of the County. The

Strategic Regional Road Network will contribute to the economic development of Laois. The Strategic Regional Road Network is as follows (See Table 10).

Table 10: Strategic Regional roads in Laois

Road No.	Road Description
R419	Junction with R445 (Rathbrennan) to County Boundary (Portarlinton)
R420	Junction with R419 (Portarlinton) to Junction with N7 (Killinure)
R421	County Boundary (Ballynahown) to Junction with R422 (Coolagh Cross Rds)
R422	Junction with R419 (Coolagh Cross Rds) to Junction with N7
R423	Junction with N7 (Mountrath) to Junction with N80 (Derryclooney)
R425	Junction with N8 (Abbeyleix) to Junction with R445 (Rathbrennan)
R427	Junction with R425 (Cashel) to Junction with N80 (Stradbally)
R428	Junction with N80 (Stradbally) to County Boundary (Blackford)
R430	Junction with N7 (Mountrath) to County Boundary (Carlow)
R433	Junction with N8 (Abbeyleix) to County Boundary (Knockahaw)
R434	Junction with N7 (Sentryhill) to Junction with N8 (Durrow)
R435	Junction with N7 (Borris-in-Ossory) to County Boundary (Rosssdaragh)
R445	Junction with M7 (Ballydavis) to Junction with N7 (Clonboyne)

TR 6 Strategic Regional Routes

It is the policy of the Council to restrict unnecessary access on strategic regional routes in areas where the maximum speed limits applies where accesses can be provided off a nearby local road.

Permission may be granted in these cases, subject to the following considerations-

- The carrying capacity of the route is not adversely affected;
- An alternative site with access onto a minor road is not available;
- The proposed development can be accommodated without the creation of a specific traffic hazard;
- Where possible an existing entrance is used.

Specific Objectives

6.12 The primary focus of the Council is to protect and enhance the physical road infrastructure of the County to satisfy local, regional and national aspirations. It is the Council's objective to design, and reserve land/corridors in respect of the following Schemes and to make provision for the incorporation of grade separated junctions where deemed necessary.

- A. All routes included in the Portlaoise Integrated Land-Use and Transportation Study.
- B. All routes included in the Portarlinton Land Use and Transportation Study.
- C. Mountmellick Northern By-Pass.
- D. Mountmellick Inner Relief Road.
- E. Mountmellick Western By-Pass.
- F. Mountrath Circular Road.
- G. Abbeyleix Inner Relief Road / Circular Road.
- H. Stradbally By-Pass.
- I. Rathdowney Inner Relief Road / Circular Road.
- J. Emo Inner Relief Road / Circular Road.
- K. Durrow By-Pass.
- L. Extension of Carlow Northern Relief Road southwards.
- M. N80 Portlaoise / County Bounds Improvements.
- N. N80 Park / Stradbally Improvements.

- O. N80 Arles / Carlow Improvement.
- P. N80 Oughaval / Crannagh Improvement.
- Q. N80 Stanney / Graigue Realignment.
- R. Milltown / Simmon's Cross / Ballycorman junction.
- S. N78 Kilcruise / Ballylehane Realignment.
- T. Kilmullen Railway Bridge, Ballybrophy Railway Bridge, Tinnahinch Bridge.

6.13 During the course of this Plan it is the Council's objective to commence construction or complete the following Schemes:-

- R1. Portlaoise Northern Orbital Relief Road.
- R2. Portlaoise Western Circular Clonroosk Link
- R3. Portlaoise Western Circular Clonminam Link
- R4. Portlaoise Southern Circular Link.
- R5. Mountmellick Inner Relief Road.
- R6. N80 Improvement at Park.
- R7. N80 Improvement Mountmellick / Portlaoise and Mountmellick / County Bounds.
- R8. N80 Improvement / By-pass Arles / Ballickmoyler.
- R9. Improvements on sections of the Strategic Regional Road R422 Clonaslee to Mountmellick and eastwards to New Inn Cross.
- R10. N77-M8 Link at Durrow.
- R11. Junction improvements on existing N7 / N8. These roads will be reclassified post completion of the M7 / M8 Motorways.
- R12. Provision of speed-cameras on the N7/N8 National Primary routes.
- R13. Traffic-calming through N7 Mountrath, N8 / N77 Durrow, N78 Ballylynan and R433 Ballacolla.
- R14. Resurface Main Streets in Portlaoise, Mountrath and Durrow.
- R15. M7/M8 Motorway Portlaoise – Cullahill – Borris in Ossory.

6.14 It is an objective of the Council to implement the objectives contained in the multi-annual strengthening and realignment programme for Regional and County Roads, including road works for Non-National Road co-financed under the E.U. Scheme.

6.15 Additional specific objectives which the Council intend to pursue include the following:-

- To co-operate with adjacent County Councils and the National Roads Authority in implementing specific road proposals;
- To continue and participate in the Scheme of community involvement in road works;
- To undertake a study of road pavement throughout the County;
- To introduce, where appropriate, approved traffic calming measures in towns and villages;
- To regulate the flow and speed of traffic;
- To provide traffic route lighting in all settlements on the national route network and at all high accident and major intersections where deemed necessary;
- To make provision for car parking as indicated in the individual town plans, and
- To continue a programme of quality pavement improvement at locations on the National Routes where deemed appropriate.

Rail linkages

6.16 The presence of two rail lines in County Laois offers a tremendous resource to the county. The presence of a rail link to Dublin allows Laois to benefit from the economic dynamism of the capital. The rail linkages to the west and south of the county, principally Limerick and Cork are also of strategic importance.

- 6.16 The provision of good quality rail links allows for more sustainable forms of transport which reduce pollution and combat traffic congestion.

TR7 Rail

It is Council policy to:

- Protect existing rail capacity and to facilitate its extension.

Bus Services

- 6.18 County Laois is well provided with bus services. It is Council policy to foster existing bus services and to encourage the extension of such routes in both frequency and number of destinations.
- 6.19 The provision of appropriate facilities for passengers and bus stops will be facilitated as the provision of high quality street furniture for bus services are an intrinsic element towards the creation of quality urban environments.

TR8 Bus Services

It will be Council Policy to:

- Have cognisance of the needs of the public bus transport through the provision of appropriate infrastructure. To support rural public transport initiatives through Laois TRIP.

Cycling and Walking

- 6.20 Cycling and walking have many benefits including promoting healthy lifestyles, environmental sustainability and community development. Cycling and walking is more environmentally sustainable as it reduces the stress on the environment from mechanised transport and also reduces incidents of traffic congestion. Community development benefits from encouraging people to walk or cycle. Walking and cycling keeps people fit and healthy and in doing so improves their quality of life. All new development proposals shall be required to provide for well integrated pedestrian and cycling networks.

TR9 Cycling and walking

It is the policy of the County Council to:-

- Create urban environments appropriate to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists;
- Encourage more people to engage in cycling and walking in urban and rural areas by accommodating cycle ways and walkways when and where possible;
- Encourage the provision of walkways along the banks of the River Barrow, subject to the protection of natural and built heritage and inter connecting paths to join up walkways of the County, and
- Improve facilities for pedestrians and access facilities for people with special mobility needs in line with the aims of the European Charter of Pedestrian Rights.

Parking

- 6.21 The accommodation of vehicular traffic with minimum disruption to the County's towns and villages is recognised by the Council as being imperative. The provision of adequate parking is a major element in the achievement of this objective. Car parking standards related to the various land uses is referred to in Chapter 10: Development Control Standards.

TR10 Parking

It is the policy of the Council to:

- Provide necessary levels of car parking in accordance with the social and economic needs of the county;
- Require all developments to provide off-carriageway parking in compliance with the road standards of Laois County Council. Developments which cannot provide parking to the requisite standards will be refused planning permission unless a relaxation of parking standards is deemed appropriate. In such circumstances the payment of a contribution towards the cost of providing public car parking will be levied;
- Facilitate development of suitable car parking areas;
- Introduce traffic management systems, which are considered necessary to regulate vehicular movement within the urban areas.

The Council will address the issues of long term car parking in Portlaoise and identify areas in the context of the Local Area Plan for Portlaoise for the provision of long term car parking. The importance of car parking for people with disabilities will be highlighted and car parking for people with disabilities will be provided in line with national standards. It shall be an objective to encourage the provision of coach and bus parking in appropriate locations in all towns where resources allow.

Petrol Filing / Service Stations

- 6.22 In addition to any traffic considerations, petrol filling stations will not be permitted in locations where by their appearance, traffic noise or fumes would have a serious impact on the amenity of the area or adjoining properties. In dealing with applications for petrol filling stations, the Council will have regard to the existing level of service in the area concerned. The type of and volume of traffic regulates the location and layout of petrol service stations.
- 6.23 The design and location of petrol filling stations shall meet the standards set out in the current "Road Geometry Handbook" issued by the National Roads Authority and the dangerous Substances Regulations 1979 (S.I. 311) relating to the storage of petrol. (See Chapter 10 on Development Control Standards).

Improving Road Safety

- 6.24 Improving Road Safety is of national importance and is essential to the overall quality of all people's lives. In order to achieve the objective of improving road safety, a number of measures will be applied to new developments and when improving the quality of existing settlements and networks. In assessing road safety implications for new developments a Road Safety Audit will be required, in certain circumstances.

TR11 Improving Road Safety

It is the policy of the Council to:

- Enhance the existing road network in terms of improving safety, eliminating traffic hazards, safeguarding and increasing traffic capacity to accommodate anticipated traffic flows, and improving deficiencies in surface quality, drainage and alignment;
- Investigate the provision of approved traffic calming measures for urban areas;
- Require Road Safety Audits (RSA's) as a proactive approach to improving transportation safety. An RSA is an examination of a roadway as regards safety issues. The Traffic Management Guidelines Manual 2003 should be consulted to indicate the types of development which require road safety audits;
- Implement, where appropriate, traffic calming systems through the County's towns and villages using physical speed reducing measures;
- Participate in the Road Safety Remedial Measures Scheme wherein road safety issues are examined and methods of improving road safety formulated;
- Implement, where appropriate, improvement of school routes in order to encourage more children to walk and cycle to school;
- Implement, where appropriate, traffic management systems for the enhancement of the County's towns and villages.