

## Chapter 29. Transport infrastructure

Development Plan policy aims to promote sustainable transport systems through the integration of land use and transportation, the promotion of compact development to minimise journey length and maximise opportunities to use sustainable modes.

The requirements of the Climate Action Plan, the technological progress in the transport industry and the public attitude towards sustainable travel (e.g. the move towards electricity and other fuel sources, digital connectivity, autonomous vehicles, car and bike sharing etc) have obvious consequences for development plan policy.

Sligo County Council must respond in a pro-active and collaborative manner to ensure that the county is prepared for such changes and that all local communities will benefit from them.

The identification of transport infrastructure proposals in this Plan (including locations/routes and any associated mapping), that is not already permitted or provided for by other existing plans or programmes, is non-binding and indicative.

New transport infrastructure will be considered subject to environmental constraints, including those related to potential impacts on habitats. This will include minimising river crossings, avoiding sensitive habitats and disturbance from lighting, not increasing barriers to flood waters, and sustainable design and construction techniques.

Applications for transport infrastructure projects, including greenways and blueways that are not already provided for by existing plans/programmes or are not already permitted, shall demonstrate that they have been subject to feasibility assessment, considering need, environmental sensitivities and objectives relating to sustainable mobility.

Where feasibility is established, and where appropriate, applications for transport infrastructure projects shall demonstrate that they have been subject to a Corridor and Route Selection Process undertaken in two stages: Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection; and Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection.

By promoting sustainable mobility initiatives, the Development Plan will contribute towards a reduction in exposure to pollution from emissions to air, including unacceptable noise levels from traffic. Proposed interventions will be required to demonstrate that they are consistent with all relevant legislative requirements, including those relating emissions to air and noise.

### 29.1 Road network

Outside Sligo Town, County Sligo has a rather dispersed population living in rural areas and small settlements throughout the county. The road network is essential because private vehicles are the primary mode of transport for the majority of the population, as well as for commercial and industrial activities. The road network in County Sligo consists of 2,834 km of national, regional and local roads.

**Table 29.1 Composition of the road network in County Sligo**

Road type	Length (km)	Percentage of total road network
National primary	105	3.7%
National secondary	47	1.7%
Regional	241	8.5%
Local	2,440	86.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,834</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Funding and oversight

At national level, the Department of Transport (DoT) is responsible for transport policy, funding and oversight of transport infrastructure and services. Working under the remit of the DoT, the non-commercial semi-state body **Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)** is responsible for the maintenance, development and funding of the national road network. Local Authorities assist and act as agents for TII in this role, and are funded by TII with respect to works on national roads.

The **National Transport Authority (NTA)** is a non-commercial statutory body which operates under the aegis of the DoT. It promotes cycling and walking, it oversees the provision of public transport and it assists in the development of sustainable transport strategies in regional cities. The NTA also provides funding to local authorities for implementing these strategies.

The **Sligo Regional Design Office (Sligo RDO)** is responsible for the delivery of national road improvement and realignment schemes, national and regional greenway projects together with some active travel projects along the national road network. In 2022, the office also took over responsibility for the delivery of pavement renewal schemes and safety schemes.

Funding of regional and local road maintenance and improvement works is provided by the central government directly through the DoT, with some funding for maintenance coming from the Council's own resources.

### Road safety

Road safety continues to be a priority for all agencies involved, including Sligo County Council. The Road Safety Authority's *Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030* outlines specific actions, including the carrying out of minor realignment schemes on national roads and the implementation of safety schemes at high-risk locations on regional and local roads. The primary aim of the government's road safety strategy is to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries by 50% over the next 10 years.

In compliance with the requirements of the EU Directive 2008/96/EC on Road Infrastructure Safety Management (RISM), TII has implemented an advanced Road Safety Inspection and Management system for the entire national road network. Safety schemes are developed at identified locations, to reduce risk. The RISM Directive applies to roads which are part of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T), whether they are at design stage, under construction or in operation.

## Road safety policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-RS-1** Bring national roads up to appropriate standards, as resources become available, and continue improvement works on regional and local roads, so as to develop a safe and comprehensive road system for the county.
- P-RS-2** Continue to implement the actions of the Road Safety Authority's *Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030* in partnership with the Department of Transport and TII, and as resources become available.
- P-RS-3** Continue to progress safety schemes along the national road network, in accordance with the RISM Directive.

## 29.2 National primary and secondary roads

There are four national primary roads and one national secondary road in County Sligo. Considering the critical importance of the national road network for the Northern and Western Regions, their upgrade is vital, not just for Sligo's future growth, but for the entire region. Although national roads comprise just around 5% of the County's total road network, they carry the majority of its traffic.

### 29.2.1 Major road schemes

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 identifies **the N-4 Sligo to Dublin, the N-17 Sligo to Galway** and the **N-15 Sligo to Letterkenny** roads as providing enhanced regional accessibility to the North-West.

The NWRA's RSES also indicates that it will be necessary to pursue the enhancement or upgrading of the N-15 and N-17, as well as the strengthening of connections to the east coast via N-4 and N-16 (to Dundalk and Belfast). This would help the Region take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

The new **N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin** realigned route was officially opened in October 2021. At the time of drafting this development plan (2023), the other major road schemes were at various stages:

- An *Emerging Preferred Transport Corridor* for the **N-17 Knock to Collooney** road project had been identified and published for consultation. Once the preferred corridor is established, the project can move into the design and environmental evaluation phase in 2024, subject to necessary approvals.
- A Route Corridor for the **N-15 Sligo to County Boundary Realignment** had already been selected. However, given the lapse of time since this selection, which occurred in 2005, this may need to be reassessed prior to advancing to the statutory process when approval is given by the TII.

## 29.2.2 Minor road schemes

### N-4 / N-15 Sligo Urban Improvement Scheme

In 2015, the N-4 Hughes Bridge was widened to three lanes in each direction, along with the provision of footbridges for pedestrians and cyclists. Part of the widening of the N-4/N-15 from Hughes Bridge to Scotsman's Walk, including junction improvements, was completed in 2021 to just north of the R-291 junction (Rosses Point junction). Two further minor schemes are proposed to continue the N-15 widening to Scotman's Walk.

### National primary road N-16

Following the selection of a **Preferred Route for the full N-16** in County Sligo in 2017, the construction of the first of three minor schemes on the N16 commenced in 2023. The 2.5-km section from Drumkilsellagh to Lugnagall was expected to be completed by 2024. The other sections were envisaged to be developed as two minor schemes commencing in 2023, starting with a section from Sligo to Drumkilsellagh.

### National secondary road N-59

The **Emerging Preferred Route for the N-59 Corhawnagh to Crockacullion Road Improvement Project** was identified in 2019, after which the Sligo RDO went on to develop Phase 2 deliverables. At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), it was expected that formal approval would be sought from TII to move the scheme into Phase 3 (Design & Environmental Evaluation) in 2024.

## National roads policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-NR-1** Protect the traffic carrying capacity of national roads, the level of service they deliver and the period over which they continue to perform efficiently, by avoiding the creation of new access points or the generation of increased traffic from existing accesses onto the N-4, N-15, N-16, N-17 and N-59 outside the 50 km/h speed limit, in accordance with the DoECLG's publication Spatial Planning and National Roads -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- P-NR-2** Protect the route corridors necessary for the construction of new roads or the upgrading of existing national roads in Sligo, in accordance with the DoECLG's publication Spatial Planning and National Roads -Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- P-NR-3** Permit direct access to zoned lands along national roads inside the 50 km/h speed limit subject to normal planning considerations, including road safety, traffic assessment and design criteria.

Within **transitional zones** (between 50 km/h and 60 km/h speed limiting signs), access may be permitted, but only in limited circumstances, where it is in the interest of facilitating orderly urban development, and subject to road safety, traffic and transport assessment, and design criteria.

**Road Safety Audits (RSA), Traffic Impact Assessments (TIA) and Traffic and Transport Assessments (TTA)** shall be carried out in accordance with Transport Infrastructure Ireland's requirements.

## National roads objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-NR-1** Undertake programmed improvements to the national road network, including the programme of realignments and upgrades, as set out in Table 29.B and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.

**Table 29.2 National road projects in County Sligo**

Road number	Route	Description of work	Estimated completion time/status - subject to TII approval/funding
N-17	Knock to Collooney	Realignment and upgrading	No completion date
N-15	N4/N15 Junction to Leitrim County boundary (Initially planned to develop two minor realignments from north of Rosses Point Junction to Scotsman's Walk)	Realignment / upgrading / online improvements	no completion date
N-16	Sligo to Leitrim County boundary	Realignment / upgrading / online improvements	Part ongoing (2023)
N-59	Ballysadare to Mayo County boundary	Realignment / upgrading / online improvements	ongoing
All national roads	where required and prioritised	Maintenance including pavement overlays, pavement rehabilitation, safety interventions and minor realignments	ongoing

**Note:** the timeframe for all projects is subject to TII approval and available funding.

## 29.3 Regional and local roads and bridges

Regional and local roads make up almost 95% of County Sligo's road network. The Council strives to manage regional and local roads in an economic and efficient manner, with a particular emphasis on safety. Extensive improvements have been made to the network under the Council's Multi-Annual Restoration Programme. Road Restoration, Strategic and Specific Improvement Grants provide substantial funding for regional and local road improvements.

The **Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads**, listed as a Strategic Non-National Road project in the National Development Plan 2021-2030, will provide north-south access across the Garavogue River on the eastern side of Sligo. At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), it was envisaged that the construction of the scheme would commence in 2025 and would be completed in 2027.

As Sligo Town grows, it will be necessary to ensure that adequate links can be maintained between different parts of the city, north and south, east and west. In order to ensure this accessibility, it is proposed to develop a number of routes within the expanding urban environment which will be identified in more detail as part of the preparation of the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan.

**Table 29.3 Planned regional and local road improvements**

Road number	Route
R-284	Carrowroe to Roscommon County Boundary (serving Ballygawley, Sooey, Drumnacool and Geevagh)
R-290	Collooney to Crossboy via Ballygawley and Ballintogher
R-287	Sligo Town to Dromahair (serving Lough Gill)
R-292	Entire length from Sligo Town to Ballydrehid
R-293	Ballymote to Castlerea (serving Gorteen)
R-294	Cloonloo to Tobercurry to Lough Talt (on the Ballina to Boyle Road, also serving Gorteen)
R-296	Ballymote to Bunnannaddan to R-294
R-297	Dromore West to Enniscrone to Sligo County Boundary (linking the N-59)
R-286	Molloway Hill to Leitrim County Boundary
R-291	R-291/N-15 junction to Rosses Point
R-278	Ballinode to Leitrim County Boundary
R-296	N-59 junction in Dromore West to Enniscrone
R-279	N-15 junction in Cliffoney to Mullaghmore
R-870	Sligo Town
R-869	N-4 junction at Caltragh to R-292
S.N.N.*	Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads

\* S.N.N. = Strategic Non-National

### 29.3.1 Bridges

Over 800 bridges dispersed throughout the county support the regional and local road network. The Council continues to adopt a proactive role in maintaining, preserving and strengthening these bridges as necessary. The majority of the structures are of considerable age. The Council will have regard to the historical value of this component of the built heritage of the county in the manner and methods engaged in maintaining the bridge stock and associated structures. At least 10 structures have substantial repairs carried out annually, and a greater number have minor improvements or repairs carried out as required.

#### Regional and local roads and bridges policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-RLR-1** Implement the roads objectives of adopted town and village plans, subject to the availability of funding.
- P-RLR-2** Continue investment in local roads infrastructure in County Sligo, in order to improve access to peripheral areas of the County and promote social inclusion.
- P-RLR-3** Continue to maintain, repair, replace and preserve the County's bridges, the majority of which are over 150 years old and have a heritage value.

#### Regional and local roads and bridges objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-RLR-1** Carry out improvement works on regional and local roads, and in particular to the regional road network as set out in Table 29.3.
- O-RLR-2** Complete the strategic non-national road scheme – The Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads.
- O-RLR-3** Reserve a number of proposed intra-urban road links for development within Sligo Town in conjunction with the preparation of the Sligo and Environs Local Area Plan.

## 29.4 Active travel infrastructure

**Active travel** is defined as ‘travelling with a purpose, using your own energy’. It is an intrinsic part of a sustainable transport system, one that prioritises low-carbon transport choices. Active travel comprises walking, cycling (including use of e-bikes), public transport, and car sharing.

Sligo County Council established a dedicated Active Travel Team in 2022 and has received funding for works such as improved footpaths, pedestrian crossings and cycle parking facilities.

In 2023, the NTA allocated €3,000,000 to Sligo, under the Active Travel Investment Grants scheme, for a number of projects, of which the more significant are listed in Table 29.4 below.

The County Council will develop the NTA-funded projects as part of its Active Travel Programme. The further development of active travel infrastructure in the County will be informed by the Local Transport Plan (refer to Section 9.3.2 in **Chapter 9 Transport Strategy**).

**Table 29.4 Significant NTA-funded Active Travel projects in Co. Sligo (2023)**

Project	Funding
Pedestrian and cycleways in Enniscrone and Tobercurry	€280,000
Footpaths linking Collooney to Ballysadare	€550,000
Pedestrian and cycleways in Collooney	€380,000
Sligo City to Carrowroe Active Travel Corridor – <i>Pathfinder</i> Scheme	€155,000
Sligo City to ATU Active Travel Corridor – <i>Pathfinder</i> Scheme	€100,000
Shared e-bike enabling works – <i>Pathfinder</i> Scheme	€30,000
<i>Safe Routes to School</i> Scheme (four schools)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. John Primary School, Temple Street, Sligo Town</li> <li>• Scoil Ursula Primary School, Strandhill Road, Sligo Town</li> <li>• Scoil Asicus Primary School, Strandhill</li> <li>• Jesus &amp; Mary Secondary School, Enniscrone</li> </ul>	<p>€105,000</p> <p>€100,000</p> <p>€20,000</p> <p>€100,000</p>

In addition to the above, in 2023 Sligo Regional Design Office was advancing two *Active Travel* projects funded by the TII, associated with the national road N-4:

1. N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Active Travel Scheme,
2. N-4 Collooney to Toberbride Active Travel Scheme.

### 29.4.1 Cycle and pedestrian movements

The DoT’s 2022 **National Sustainable Mobility Policy** supports safe and green mobility by expanding cycling and walking options across the country, including greenways. At present (2023), cycling and walking play minor roles as modes of transport in County Sligo for long distances. For short trips, they are cost-effective, non-polluting and highly flexible modes of transport that foster improved health and wellbeing.



The Council will use its powers under the Planning Acts to preserve and maintain existing rights of way, to create new ones where appropriate, and to promote their greater use in amenity areas.

In addition, the Council may seek to incorporate the provision of pedestrian ways as a condition of planning permission to link amenities, facilities and points of interest. Sligo County Council is aware that providing such routes can cause concern, as these may give rise to anti-social behaviour, particularly along unsupervised and secluded laneways. Every effort shall be made to avoid such situations, through appropriate layout and design.

### 29.4.2 *CycleConnects*

The NTA's draft document *CycleConnects*, published for consultation in 2022, was expected to be finalised in 2023. The primary objective of this national cycle network plan, based on a route development methodology, aims to ensure that all relevant communities are connected in each county. The final document will include proposals for cycling links within cities, towns and villages in each county, in addition to interurban connections between the larger towns and villages.

For Sligo Town and County, the draft *CycleConnects* document contained proposals for primary and secondary cycle routes, greenways and interurban routes.

### 29.4.3 Greenways

Greenways are off-road trails dedicated to non-motorised transport such as walking and cycling. The Council actively supports the provision of greenway infrastructure within the county and acknowledges the benefits of such recreational amenities which encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.

At the time of drafting this Development Plan (2023), the following greenway projects were being advanced with the TII as the approving authority:

- **The Sligo-Leitrim-Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway - Collooney to Enniskillen**, managed by Leitrim County Council through Section 85 agreements with other local authorities in Ireland and a Memorandum of Understanding with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.
- **The Sligo Greenway - Collooney to Bellaghy**, directly managed by the Sligo Regional Design Office.

### 29.4.4 Active travel in the (draft) Local Transport Plan (LTP)

A SWOT analysis of the walking and cycling infrastructure in the LTP Study Area (focused on the Regional Growth Centre) indicated that the active travel network in Sligo Town is “fractured” because motor vehicles have priority at junctions, leading to a poor user experience for pedestrians and cyclists.

At the same time, there are many opportunities to improve walking and cycle links in the LTP Study Area, both for commuter and for leisure purposes.

The Draft LTP proposes ten *Walking Measures*, all relating to Sligo Town. Similarly, from a total of nine *Cycling Measures*, all but one relate to Sligo Town and its Environs. These measures will be included as objectives in the forthcoming Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs, thus allowing a further opportunity for improvements as part of the Draft LAP public consultation process.

## Inter-urban cycling network

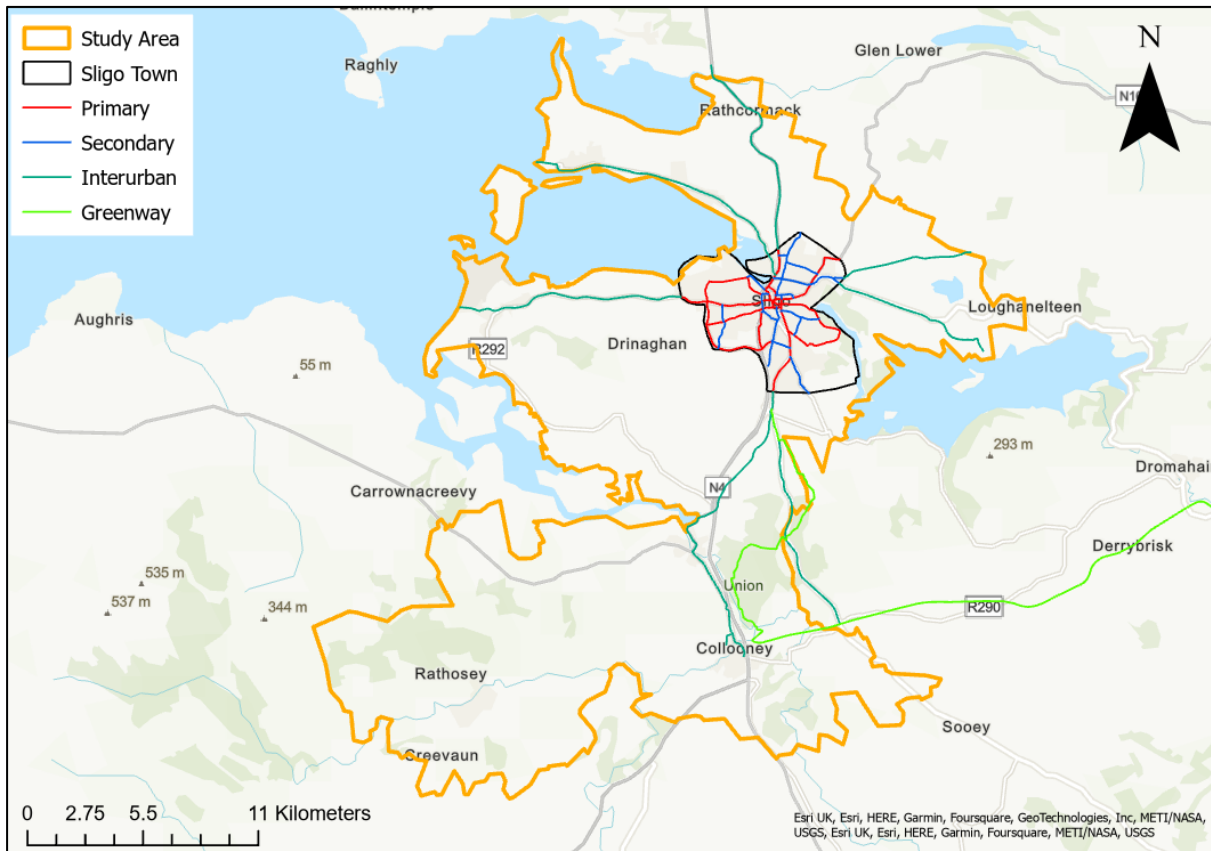
*Cycling Measure 6* recommends the development of an **inter-urban cycling network** “in line with the proposals presented in Table 6-6”. Figure 6-8 in the Draft LTP shows the extent of this cycling network, which links Sligo Town with Drumcliffe, Rosses Point, Strandhill, Ballysadare, Collooney, Ballygawley, Hazelwood, St. Angela’s College (along the R-286) and Calry (along the R-278).

**Table 29.5 Inter-urban cycle network proposals** (as per Table 6-6 of the Draft Sligo LTP)

No.	Route	Proposal for cycle tracks/lanes
1	<b>Cycle link From Sligo Town to Drumcliffe</b>	Extend the existing cycling infrastructure northwards along the N-15
2	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to St. Angela's College along Hazelwood Road</b>	Connect Hazelwood and St. Angela’s College to ATU and the east of the Town along the R-286.
3	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Calry</b>	Connect residents at Calry and along the R-278 to ATU and the east of Sligo Town.
4	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Ballysadare and Collooney</b>	Provide cycle tracks along the R-287, feeding into the Pathfinder Project proposals on Pearse Road. This link will run through Ballysadare village centre to Collooney along the R-290.
5	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Ballygawley</b>	Provide cycle tracks along the R-284, feeding into the proposed Pathfinder Project schemes on Pearse Road
6	<b>Cycle link from Sligo Town to Rosses Point</b>	Upgrade the existing cycle lanes to cycle tracks where possible and extend cycle tracks to reach Rosses Point Beach car park.
7	<b>Cycle link to Strandhill (upgrade)</b>	Upgrade existing cycle lanes along the R-292 and improve street lighting and signage along the route. Upgrade existing Shore Road/R-227 junction in Strandhill to include clear cycle paths.

The (draft) Local Transport Plan also supports the development and delivery of the SLNCR Greenway (see Section 29.4.3 above). This greenway is expected to enhance the level of active travel in the LTP Study Area by providing an attractive leisure route for cyclists and pedestrians, while also serving as a possible cycling commuter connection.

**Fig. 29.A Extent of the inter-urban cycle network envisaged by the Local Transport Plan**  
(corresponding to Figure 6-8 of the Draft LTP)



## 29.5 Alternative fuels infrastructure

The Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy (published in July 2023) sets a pathway for the delivery of such infrastructure capable of supporting “almost a million EVs on Irish roads by 2030”. The strategy focuses on the provision of publicly-accessible charging infrastructure for electric cars and light-duty vehicles. The process is to be co-ordinated by the Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland (ZEVl) office within the Department of Transport. ZEVl will collaborate closely with other Government departments, public sector bodies, and local and regional authorities to develop integrated policy and implementation approaches to EV infrastructure delivery.

Sligo County Council has already actively invested in infrastructure to support the use of alternative and renewable fuels, in particular EV charging points, and will continue to support the development and use of such fuels and low-emissions vehicles by the public and private sectors.

In 2023, there were sixteen EV charging locations in the County, with nine located in Sligo Town. There were only two fast charging points: one at Union Place in Sligo Town and one in Grange.

## Cycling and walking policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-CW-1** Promote cycling and walking as a sustainable and viable commuting mode of transport by making provision for the safe and efficient movement of cyclists and pedestrians at public transportation nodes and village/town centres, public car parks and Institutions.
- P-CW-2** Ensure that adequate cycle facilities are provided in all new institutions, employment centres, sports complexes and leisure facilities, in the form of sheltered bicycle parking and locker rooms with shower facilities.
- P-CW-3** Require that all new developments are designed to integrate into a cycling network linking with adjoining development areas and schools, and provide cycle and pedestrian-friendly development layouts, infrastructure and facilities.
- P-CW-4** Consider the use of off-road routes, such as disused railway lines and bridle paths, for both walking and cycling to improve access to rural tourist attractions. Where feasible, provide separate trails for walkers and cyclists in the interests of safety and convenience, with appropriate surfaces for each type of user and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.
- P-CW-5** Provide, improve and extend cycle and pedestrian routes on existing roads, proposed roads, roads being upgraded and green corridors (including river corridors), where feasible and practical and subject to compliance with legislative requirements.
- P-CW-6** Support the development of the cycling routes identified in the final NTA document *CycleConnects*.

## Cycling and walking objectives

It is an objective of Sligo County Council to:

- O-CW-1** Complete the development of the N-4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Active Travel Scheme using the infrastructure (combined cycle and footway) already constructed from Toberbride Td to Doorly Td.
- O-CW-2** Seek the development of a greenway from Collooney to Bellaghy (Sligo/Mayo county boundary).

## Cycling and walking objectives

- O-CW-3** Support the development of a greenway from Collooney to Enniskillen, with a connection from Collooney to Sligo Town, which can also serve as a Smarter Travel commuter route.
- O-CW-4** Develop the Inter-Urban Cycle Network routes listed in Table 29.5, as part of the implementation of the Sligo Local Transport Plan.

## 29.6 Public transport

Public transport plays a key role in sustaining the vitality and viability of rural communities in County Sligo. Alongside the promotion of cycle facilities and pedestrian movements, quality bus and rail services can reduce car dependency within and between settlements.

Responsibility for local public transport is divided between the public and private sectors. Sligo County Council is committed to supporting an integrated and accessible public transport system.

The Local Authority has a key role in the 'whole journey approach' to making public transport fully accessible to people with disabilities. This is achieved by implementing a *universal design* approach to the built environment, including footpaths, cycle paths, roads, pedestrian crossing points, town greenways and bus stops/shelters.

### 29.6.1 Bus services

Bus services play a vital social role in rural communities, linking rural areas with settlements and essential services, such as schools and healthcare.

There are five categories of bus transportation currently serving County Sligo:

- Bus Eireann expressway long-distance services, linking Sligo with Dublin, Dublin Airport, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Knock airport, Ballina, Donegal, Letterkenny, Monaghan, Cavan, Tralee, Waterford, Wexford, Dundalk, Derry, Enniskillen and Belfast;
- Bus Eireann local commuter routes;
- Bus Eireann school bus services operated on behalf of the Department of Education and Science;
- Private mini-bus services;
- Community bus routes operated under the Rural Transport Programme (RTP). The RTP is delivered in Sligo via the (Transport for Ireland) *Local Link* as two types of service: Regular Rural Bus Services and Door-to-Door Bus Services.

### Sligo Town

Town bus services rely on the street network to be able to get people to their destination. The **Local Transport Plan** recommends the protection of town-centre streets that currently carry bus services, as well as those that are earmarked for potential route changes or future additional services.

In the residential areas of the town, the lack of orbital roads and the large number of dead-end streets within existing housing estates significantly constrain any potential new route proposals.

The long-term development of the town requires a street network that is capable of accommodating quality bus services. The forthcoming Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs should address the issue of public transport in the extended town area and the detailed measures required to be put in place.

## 29.6.2 Railways

Rail infrastructure in County Sligo consists of:

- the Sligo-Dublin line, used mainly for inter-city services;
- the disused line from Collooney to Bellaghy/Charlestown, which forms the northern section of the Western Rail Corridor, potentially linking Sligo to Galway/Limerick, with onward connections to Cork, Waterford and Rosslare.

### **Sligo-Dublin line**

The Sligo–Dublin rail line is a key strategic transportation link for the North-West. The frequency of six-eight trains daily each way, together with the wi-fi service on these intercity routes, made this mode of transport more attractive for both business and leisure passengers.

The Draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review (published in July 2023) identifies key interventions in its final package of recommendations. Under the heading “Short Term and Decarbonisation”, the report recommends the upgrading of services on the Dublin-Sligo regional route to one train per two hours.

The construction of a new train station at Ballysadare, along with the provision of adequate car parking, would encourage commuters from west Sligo to ‘park and ride’ at Ballysadare, taking the train into Sligo City. Supporting population growth in Collooney and Ballysadare, designated satellite villages of the Sligo Regional Growth Centre, will serve to enhance the feasibility of local commuter rail services.

The Draft LTP proposes measures that aim to enhance the Collooney and MacDiarmada (Sligo) Train Stations, and also to support the connection between Collooney and Sligo, which can serve as a sustainable transport corridor.

Measures relating to Sligo Town will be addressed in the Local Area Plan for Sligo and Environs.

Proposals relating to Collooney Train Station are included as objectives in the Collooney Village Plan (refer to Chapter 16 in Volume 2).

### **Western Rail Corridor**

The feasibility of reopening the Western Rail Corridor has been considered in the Draft All-Island Strategic Rail Review as part of a “package” (option) to connect Athenry to Derry via Sligo.

“Package 3b West Coast” focused on the potential provision of a new 120km/h electrified line between Derry and Sligo, with hourly services along the whole line, complemented by a new 120km/h electrified line between Sligo and Athenry, with hourly Sligo-Galway services.

The Review states that “modelling undertaken for interventions on this corridor showed there would be very low demand for passenger rail services on this route and that building a railway on this corridor would have a significant adverse impact on the environment”. The option was “parked”, i.e. not included in the final package of recommendations.

## Public transport policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-PT-1** Strengthen Sligo’s function as a transportation node in the North-West and facilitate an easy interchange between different transportation modes.
- P-PT-2** Promote the consolidation of settlements on existing public transport routes.
- P-PT-3** Support the provision of public transport services by reserving land in suitable locations for public transport infrastructure and ancillary facilities, such as park-and-ride.
- P-PT-4** Support the provision of a local commuter rail service on the existing Sligo-Dublin railway line, in conjunction with the upgrading of services to one train per two hours, as recommended in the (Draft) All-Island Strategic Rail Review.
- P-PT-5** Protect the route of the Western Rail Corridor as a strategic transport corridor linking Sligo to Co. Mayo, for potential future transport-related uses.
- P-PT-6** Continue to work with the service providers, such as Iarnrod Eireann and Bus Eireann, to encourage the reduction in the need for car trips by improving the availability, reliability and quality of public transport.
- P-PT-7** Ensure that the design and layout of new developments facilitates circulation by public transport.

## 29.7 Airports

County Sligo is served by Sligo Airport (Strandhill) and Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) in County Mayo.

IWAK is of strategic importance as a means of access to the County and is critical to the success of the local and regional economy. The airport is located just 20 km from Tobercurry and a 45-minute car journey from Sligo Town. The promotion of Tobercurry and Ballymote as Support Towns is reinforced by their proximity to IWAK and the availability of direct access to an international business and tourism market.

Sligo Airport, located near the village of Strandhill, serves as the North-West base of the Irish Coast Guard Search & Rescue Helicopter. The Airport is owned and managed by Sligo North-West Airport Co. Ltd., which has developed a high-quality, successful business park on adjacent lands.

### Airports policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- O-A-1** Facilitate improved access to IWAK, so as to secure a better level and frequency of service and promote Sligo's accessibility to tourists and businesses, both nationally and internationally.
- O-A-2** Support proposals to upgrade facilities and improve the viability of Sligo Airport, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive.

## 29.8 Port and harbours

Harbours, piers and slipways along the Sligo coast provide marine access for the fishing industry and commercial or recreational boat users. Sligo Port is one of seven in the NW Region, and the most important in the County.

While the significance of Sligo Port in national terms is quite low, it remains important in the regional and local economy, supporting local industry and providing an import/export transportation facility. The primary cargoes into Sligo Port are timber, anthracite & fish meal.

Sligo County Council took over the running of the port in 2006, and in the process, inherited its vast landbank and leases from the Sligo Harbour Commissioners.

### Sligo Bay Lifeboat Station

Located in the picturesque village of Rosses Point, Sligo Bay Lifeboat Station (RNLI) operates an inshore B-class Atlantic 85 and covers the area between Downpatrick Head and Inishmurray Island. The station was established in 1998.



### 29.8.1 Harbour lands/Docklands

The Council is now the owner of a vast area adjacent to the Deep Water Quay, Ballast Quay and Finisklin Road. These lands are currently occupied by leasehold tenants. Some lands are vacant, underutilised or derelict.

This Development Plan, through **Section 4.3 Strategic Growth Areas** (Chapter 4 – Sligo Regional Growth Centre), acknowledges the importance of the Docklands for the future of Sligo Town, as reflected in the RSES, and recommends a redevelopment framework for this area.

The strategic objective **SO-RGC-5** indicates the Council's intention to prepare a masterplan for the Harbour/Docklands area, focusing on the provision of mixed residential, employment and recreational uses while retaining the functions of a fully operational Port.

#### Port and harbours policies

It is the policy of Sligo County Council to:

- P-PH-1** Continue to support the sustainable development and operation of Sligo Port, and improve road and rail access to the Port, in order to retain its viability as a freight port.
- P-PH-2** Support the role of harbours, piers and slipways in facilitating fishing, marine leisure, recreation and other activities, including the RNLI Sligo Bay Lifeboat Station at Rosses Point.