Joint Committee on Transport

Meeting of the Committee with Transport Infrastructure Ireland on Wednesday, 19 November 2025

Subject: National Roads, Light Rail & Metro

Opening Statement
Lorcan O'Connor, Chief Executive, Transport Infrastructure Ireland

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am joined by Geraldine Fitzpatrick, Head of Roads and Greenways Capital Programme, Sean Sweeney, Programme Director Metrolink, and Paolo Carbone, Head of Light Rail Capital Programme.

TII's remit in relation to National Roads as set out in the Roads Act 1993 is to secure the provision of a safe and efficient network of national roads having regard to the needs of all users. National Roads comprise 5,400 kilometres of Motorways, National Primaries, and National Secondaries. National Roads make up approximately 5% of the total length of public roads, yet National Roads carry some 45% of all vehicle kilometres. TII is the Approving Authority for National Roads projects.

In 2015 the Roads Act was amended to include the function to secure the provision of, or to provide such metro and light railway infrastructure as may be determined by the Minister or, in the Greater Dublin Area, by the National Transport Authority (NTA). Under the Infrastructure Guidelines, TII is the Sponsoring Agency and the NTA is the Approving Authority for metro and light railway projects.

Recent Railway Orders for both Metro and Luas and the publication of a revised National Development Plan (NDP), combined with the imminent publication of multiyear funding under a Transport Sectoral Plan means that it is an exciting time for TII. It is also hoped that the Accelerating Infrastructure Report when published will serve to introduce solutions to address many of the challenges delaying the delivery of critical infrastructure. All of these factors combined means TII is focused on a 'decade of delivery' to address our transport infrastructure deficit.

The NDP review published in September of this year sets out the high-level intent of Government to support the delivery of critical transport infrastructure as well as to protect the State's previous investment in respect of the existing transport networks. For the 2026 to 2030 period of the plan a total of €22.33 billion is allocated to the Transport sector over the five years of the plan with a separate provision of €2 billion ICNF (Infrastructure Climate and Nature Fund) allocated to low-carbon transport, for the commencement of Metrolink.

1.0 National Roads

In 2025, €323 million was provided for planning, design and construction of New Roads projects. Most of this funding is required for the construction of the N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge, N28 Cork to Ringaskiddy and the Adare Bypass section of the N21/N69 Foynes Limerick.

A total of €676 million will be spent in 2025 on national roads asset management, minor safety improvements, PPPs, the Zero Emissions Vehicle programme, operations and maintenance, that is, everything that is not related to New Roads Projects. The total funding available to TII for this category of activity comes from a mix of Exchequer Grants (capital and current), revenue from TII's toll operations at the M50 e-Flow and Dublin Tunnel, and revenue share income from PPP toll concession roads.

TII recognises that the NDP funding for the years 2021 to 2025 prioritised programmes other than national roads. This has caused a significant backlog of pavement renewals to build up and the condition of the carriageways for many national roads is deteriorating. TII is engaging with the Department of Transport with a view to tackling the backlog and securing the long-term performance of national roads assets.

TII under its mandate is also supporting the role out of electric vehicle charging. Based on data received from Charge Point Operators TII's view is that there are over 3,000 publicly accessible recharging points across the country. This equates to almost 200 MW of currently available recharging output. Furthermore, across our Light Duty Vehicle (LDV) programme TII anticipates that this will deliver an additional 516 publicly accessible recharging points equating to a further 71MW of available recharging output. Collectively, the existing infrastructure and the delivery of the contribution from the TII LDV schemes will be a major step in helping to reduce range anxiety.

2.0 Light Rail – New Projects

TII is advancing major light rail projects across Dublin and Cork in collaboration with the NTA. The NTA provides funding to TII for the purposes of delivering light railways. In Dublin, expansion of the Luas network is progressing including Finglas, Lucan, and Poolbeg. Luas Finglas received planning consent on 30th October, with preparation for the Approval Gate 2 submission from TII to NTA underway, which if approved and subject to confirmation of funding will allow commencement of the tender process for the main construction contract.

Once the tendering process is complete it is subject to Approval Gate 3 – approval to award and execute the construction contract. The potential is there for tram passenger services to begin four years after the award of the contract for the main construction contract.
The route selection for Luas Lucan is ongoing, with an Emerging Preferred Route expected in the first half of 2026. Subject to funding and approvals, a Railway Order could be submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála at the end of 2028.

A feasibility study carried out by TII for Luas Poolbeg is under review by the National Transport Authority and we look forward to progressing this line.

In Cork, TII is refining the proposed light rail route following public consultation, with a revised route due in 2026. Subject to funding and approvals, a Railway Order could be submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála in 2028.

3.0 Light Rail Network Management

TII is also responsible for the operation, maintenance and asset management of the existing Luas light rail network in Dublin which has expanded since its opening in 2004 to 43km with 67 stops and 3 maintenance depots. The light rail network is busy, and patronage growth has rebounded strongly since the COVID-19 pandemic and TII is expecting passenger journeys to exceed 54 million this year – up from approximately 48 million passenger journeys in 2019. Luas has catalysed compact, high-density housing near tram stops, supporting sustainable urban growth. Areas like Cherrywood, Sandyford, Citywest, and the Docklands in Dublin have seen significant residential expansion, adjacent to the Luas network and we estimate that over 400,000 people live within 1km of a Luas stop today.

The current annual Operations and Maintenance cost to provide the services is in the region of €100 million with revenue from fares and advertising in the region of €60M p.a.

The budget for asset management, renewals and network enhancement projects is expected to increase significantly from current levels as the asset base ages to approximately €50 million per annum.

4.0 Metrolink

The Railway Order for MetroLink was approved by An Comisiún Pleanála on October 2, 2025. This represents a major milestone for the programme and for Ireland — MetroLink is now formally approved, and the pathway to delivery is clear. Like in the case of Luas Finglas, we are currently in the eight-week period during which a judicial review may be sought, so I won't spend too much time on the specifics of the order itself. However, I do want to take this opportunity to give the Committee an update on progress, cost and schedule.

The most recent cost estimate for MetroLink, taken from the Preliminary Business Case, is €9.5 billion (P50)1, which does not include VAT. It is important to note that this figure is three years old and does not reflect significant construction industry inflation in recent years, as well as a number of new requirements and commitments that have been incorporated through the Railway Order process — all of which will influence the updated cost profile.

[1] "P50" refers to the level of estimated cost where there is a 50% probability that the MetroLink's final cost will be at or below that value.

MetroLink's P50 cost estimate represents the point at which there is a 50% probability that the final outturn cost will be at or below the forecast value, based on current scope and identified risks.

It's essentially the "most likely" or median outcome based on current available information and the range of possible cost and schedule risks.

The MetroLink team are in the process of re-examining the overall cost forecast model. They are using industry experts like Oxford Global Projects to verify their work. Once this has been completed and verified it will be presented to Government.

In terms of schedule, we are still working towards opening in the mid-2030s. As with all major infrastructure projects, both cost and schedule remain estimates until we reach contract award and have a signed agreement with a construction partner. At that point will we have definitive figures.

5.0 Benefits

It is worth restating how significant MetroLink will be for the country and the capital. It will complement the Luas, DART, BusConnects and intercity rail networks, creating a fully integrated transport system that delivers real connectivity for Dublin and beyond. When complete, it will be capable of transporting up to 20,000 people per hour, per direction, bringing passengers from Dublin Airport to the city centre in just 20 minutes. This is more than a transport project — it is a nation-building programme, supporting economic growth, sustainable travel, and Ireland's transition to a low-carbon future. Most importantly it is about getting working people home to their families quicker and safer.

Thank you for the opportunity of updating the committee. I look forward to your questions.

Lorcan O'Connor
Chief Executive, TII