**PMB on Regional Transport Infrastructure**

***That Dáil Éireann notes that:***

* State-led, strategic infrastructural investment is essential for the social and economic growth of our villages, towns and cities and to ensure balanced regional development and increase connectivity.
* The network of 94,000km regional and local roads across the state provide vital connectivity to rural Ireland.
* The state’s regional airports carried 5.45 million passengers in 2019 and reports from 2016 and 2019 demonstrate that Cork, Shannon and Ireland West Airports generate a combined annual €2.13 billion to the economy and support directly or indirectly 29,050 jobs
* Our ports are vital assets to our coastal and island communities and have important economic, functions including building resilience in respect of supply chains post Brexit.
* Public transport investment including bus and rail can play a major role in decreasing CO2 emissions from the transportation sector and provide workers, families and communities an alternative and sustainable mode of transport.
* The recently published National Development Plan sets out a broad vision for infrastructure investment. However, there are many projects without a commencement and completion date, an identifiable funding allocation, with projects seemingly prioritised on the basis of planning considerations rather than their importance for achieving balanced and strategic development
* That the current strategic rail review is being completed on an All-Island basis which is a positive development

***Further notes that:***

* The approach of successive governments has failed rural Ireland and the downgrading of the North and Western region from a ‘developed region to a ‘region in transition’ by the EU Commission is an example of this.
* Senior members of Government, up to and including the Taoiseach, have indicated publicly that a number of critical regional infrastructure projects outlined in the National Development Plan may never be delivered, casting doubt on approximately 30 road projects, while other public transport projects will be delayed by years.
* Bus Eireann Expressway bus routes from Galway, Limerick, Cork and Belfast have been cut, impacting connectivity and frustrating efforts to reduce transport emissions.
* An Economic Appraisal by former ESRI Economist Dr John Bradley in June 2021 assesses potential demand for Phase 2 and 3 of the Western Rail Corridor at 575,000 passengers per annum by 2030, and finds in a cost benefit analysis that restoring the rail connection between Galway and Mayo via Tuam yields a positive net present value and a benefit to cost ratio of greater than 1, concluding that a strong business case based on potential passenger and existing freight flows to southern ports justifies it being prioritised for delivery
* Yet no firm commitment to deliver the extension of the Western Rail Corridor to Mayo has been provided in the National Development Plan.

***Calls on the Government to:***

* Provide clarity on all projects included in the National Development Plan, including funding, and timescales for the progression and the estimated completion of projects, ensuring balanced regional development is prioritised in the delivery of projects.
* Introduce a statutory requirement that all Government Departments and public bodies will undertake rural impact assessments in relation to their measures, especially where measures have a socio-economic impact on rural Ireland.
* Fully commit to the delivery of the Western Rail Corridor extension to Mayo as a key infrastructure project for regional development and seek relevant sources of EU funding to advance the project.
* Prepare a new all-island ‘National Aviation Policy’ that recognises the impact the pandemic has had on our regional airports to ensure they can continue to contribute to sustainable regional development.
* Resource Bus Eireann via the National Transport Authority to ensure there is no curtailment of the intercity expressway bus services
* Urgently expediate the delivery of key public transport projects as outlined in the Cork metropolitan area strategy and Galway transport strategy