**Climate Action**

Progress Reports on the delivery of commitments outlined in our Climate Action Plan are prepared by the Department of the Taoiseach and have been [published since 2019](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/55fde-climate-action-important-publications/#climate-action-plan-2023) on a quarterly basis. In 2023, my Department achieved an overall completion rate of 58%, with 14 of 25 actions that were due by end Q4 2023 under Climate Action Plan 2023 completed.

Some examples of key CAP achievements delivered in 2023 include measures such as the ongoing expansion of rural mobility services under the NTA’s Connecting Ireland programme, completion of the first projects under our Sustainable Mobility Policy Pathfinder Programme including the electrification of the Athlone town bus fleet, publication of our National Cycle Network Strategy, the publication of our National EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy and National En-Route EV Charging plan, update of our Renewable Transport Fuel Policy, the launch of the ‘Your Journey Counts’ national advertising campaign, the completion of new and revised Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies for the Waterford, Limerick-Shannon and Greater Dublin Areas, alongside the progression of BusConnects, DART+ and Metrolink through major milestones in our consultative and planning systems.

The annual update of the Climate Action Plan (CAP24) was finalised in May 2024 following public consultation under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes.

In May 2024, my Department also published its Public Engagement Strategy on Climate Action and Sustainable Mobility, setting out our intended approach to engagement with wider public on sustainable mobility and climate action in the transport sector.

Sectoral Adaptation

As well as work programmes to support climate change mitigation, the Climate Action Plan sets out integrated actions to progress and support crucial climate change adaptation actions. Through implementation of the statutory Transport Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (T-SAP), which was published in 2019, my Department has progressed actions to increase Transport infrastructure resilience to climate change impacts across the three priority implementation objectives to:

* Improve understanding of the impacts of climate change on transport infrastructure, including cross-sectoral cascading impacts, and close knowledge gaps through research and cross-sectoral collaboration;
* Assist transport stakeholders in identifying and prioritising climate risks to existing and planned infrastructural assets and enabling them to implement adaptation measures accordingly;
* Ensure that resilience to weather extremes and longer-term adaptation needs are considered in investment programmes for planned future transport infrastructure.

Preplanning and early-stage development for revision of the T-SAP under the revised National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was undertaken by my Department in 2023 including stakeholder mapping, establishment of T-SAP revision steering and planning groups, and establishing a baseline ‘state of play’ for adaptation readiness under a pilot monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework. Following publication of the revised NAF in May 2024, analysis and cross-sectoral engagement is underway including with national environmental and adaptation stakeholders in preparation for development of a sectoral climate change risk assessment, and delivery of the core elements of the plan in 2024 and 2025. Under the revised NAF, the indicative timeline for publication of the revised T-SAP is Q3 2025.

Sustainable Mobility Policy

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP) was published in April 2022 and aims to deliver at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys and a 10% reduction in kilometres driven by fossil-fuelled cars by 2030, in line with previous CAP21 commitments. These metrics have been superseded by updated targets in CAP23.

A Year One Progress Report detailing the status of SMP actions up to April 2023 was published in August last year and may be found on [Gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9aecf-national-sustainable-mobility-policy-year-one-progress-report/). A Year Two Progress Report will be published later this year. As per a commitment under the Policy, my Department held its second National Sustainable Mobility Forum in May 2024. More than 180 stakeholders attended the event, which was held in Portlaoise.

My Department is also developing a national demand management strategy that will support and complement the National Sustainable Mobility Policy.

To oversee delivery of the Sustainable Mobility Policy, officials in my Department established a Leadership Group. Under this Group, a Delivery Team identified over 30 exemplar ‘pathfinder’ projects and initiatives to be delivered by 2025 that will champion sustainable mobility projects across the county.

A broad variety of projects were selected ranging from national game-changing proposals like making College Green in Dublin car-free or locating a brand-new integrated public and active travel hub, with a new bridge across the Suir River in Waterford City, to smaller, creative and equally effective projects like a Bus-it-2-school project in Co. Meath or a pilot programme in Co. Leitrim to integrate local link with a hackney and community e-bike scheme.

Several Pathfinder projects were delivered either in whole or in part during 2023. The Athlone Town Bus Electrification project and the introduction of a new Smarter Travel Mark by the NTA were fully completed, while the first sections of several Active Travel Pathfinders were also completed: the N63 Major Wells Road portion of the Longford Core Cycle Network, the Castletymon District Centre Enhancement Project led by South Dublin County Council, and the Dunkettle to Carrigtohill and Bilberry to Waterford City sections of the Cork to Waterford Intra-Urban Demonstrator project. The first phase of the D24 Neighbourhood Cycle Network, also delivered by South Dublin County Council, was completed in Q2 2024 and will be formally opened on 5 July.

Renewable Transport Fuel

Under our IMPROVE programme, the Renewable Transport Fuel (RTF) Policy 2023-2025 sets out the pathway to the achievement of Climate Action Plan targets and European obligations, as well as ensuring European sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction criteria are adhered to concerning renewable transport fuel.

This is implemented through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), provided for under Part 5A of the National Oil Reserves Agency Act 2007 (as amended), which places an obligation on fuel suppliers to ensure that road transport fuel contains a proportion of renewable transport fuel.

The RTF Policy is reviewed every two years. The [Renewable Transport Fuel Policy 2023-2025](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/af803-renewable-transport-fuel-policy-2023-2025/) was published in 2023, renewing the 2021-2023 Policy and achieving CAP23 action TR 23/63. It sets out a trajectory of annual increase in the blending rate of supply of sustainable renewable fuel in transport toward an RTFO rate to 49% by 2030, from the current 21% (by energy content) of the road transport fuel (gasoline and motor diesel) placed on the market in Ireland, to meet both domestic CAP decarbonisation targets and European renewable energy targets over that period.

The RTF Policy sets out an indicative linear trajectory of annual increase in the RTFO percentage rate, expressed as a rate of 15% of renewable transport fuel (by volume) in road transport fossil fuel in 2022, rising to 17% (by energy) in 2023, and 21% (by energy) in 2024. Contributing to the RTFO, a statutory sub-target advanced biofuel obligation percentage rate was established in 2023 at a rate of 0.3% of road transport fossil fuel in 2023, rising to 1% in 2024. The RTF Policy also sets out an indicative linear trajectory of annual increase in this advanced biofuel obligation percentage rate to 2030 aligned to the EU RED sub-targets.

This has been supported through the enactment of enabling legislation and regulations, including the award of RTFO certificates to incentivise the supply of certain renewable fuels, and the implementation of E10 petrol as standard.

My Department has established working groups to support the implementation of renewable transport fuel policy actions on biofuel sustainability, meeting European targets for renewable transport energy share and to support the development of legislation. Supporting each of these working groups is an expert panel, established to provide industry knowledge and insight. Several meetings of each working group have been held since establishment in 2023 to progress the agreed work programmes.

Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation

The EU’s Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2023/1804), which is part of the EU’s ‘Fit for 55’ legislative package was formally adopted in September 2023 and came into full effect across all Member States on the 13 April 2024. This regulation sets a mandatory minimum level of alternative fuels infrastructure to be deployed across the Trans-European Network - Transport (TEN-T) to support the wider decarbonisation of the sector, with interim milestones established for 2025, 2030 and 2035, and a review clause for 2027.

Under this Regulation, the vision set for the deployment of public electric charging infrastructure envisages a 300% increase in charging capacity by 2025 and will see fast recharging stations deployed for cars and vans every 60km along the main transport corridors, as well as megawatt capacity dedicated to heavy duty vehicle charging facilities on the TEN-T network and at key urban nodes.

AFIR will also require the development of significant on-shore electricity supply capacity in our TEN-T ports and for renewable electricity supply for stationary aircraft in our TEN-T airports to support the decarbonisation of our aviation and maritime sectors, in addition to mandating a minimum level of alternative fuels refuelling infrastructure (e.g., hydrogen) in our major cities and along the TEN-T core network.

The increasing electrification and deployment of other zero-emission and renewable alternative fuels infrastructure in transport will therefore require close integration between the transport, electricity and planning sectors to ensure that network development strategies and investments meet the requirements necessary for compliance, not least the extensive power output requirements mandated by AFIR.

As part of the requirements set by the Regulation, my Department is also required to submit an updated draft National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure in Transport to the EU Commission by end 2024, with final policy frameworks required to be submitted by end 2025. My Department published an Issues Paper and opened a 6-week public consultation over May-June 2024 seeking the views of wider stakeholders to inform the development of this policy framework, and is currently reviewing submissions received from that consultation. It is expected that a second phase of public consultation will be undertaken on the draft national policy framework in early Q1 2025.

My Department has also established an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Alternative Fuels for transport with the first meeting taking place on 29 September 2023 and two further meetings in 2024. The Working Group is to coordinate action by stakeholders with policy responsibility for alternative fuels in transport (encompassing zero-emissions energy and fuel, renewable fuel, and low carbon fuel as defined in the EU alternative fuel legislation) and related infrastructure and vehicle technology for alternative fuels in transport use, aligning with relevant national policy for future production of alternative fuels.

**Cycling and Walking**

The Programme for Government committed to cross-Government spending of around €360 million per annum for active travel measures throughout the lifetime of the Government. The majority of this funding comes from the Department of Transport and will contribute to the development of almost 1,000km of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure across the country by 2025.

In 2024, €290 million has been made available to local authorities around the country through the National Transport Authority (NTA) to progress the delivery of over 1,000 walking and cycling projects across Ireland. This funding constitutes a significant increase on investment levels even a few years ago, with funding of €45 million invested in Active Travel in 2019. Actual spend on Active Travel infrastructure exceeded its 2022 and 2023 allocations with an investment of €310 million and €340 million made around the country in each respective year.

In tandem with their National Roads and Greenways projects, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have also begun investing in Active Travel projects in areas outside the remit of the NTA. Just under €12 million has been allocated to TII in 2024 for such projects which link urban centres to major road projects. These projects, most of which are at early stages of development, include the N8 Cycleway from Tivoli to Little Island in Cork, Active Travel linkages in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, and cycle path projects along the N2 in Monaghan. Active travel infrastructure is also incorporated, where possible, into major National Roads projects progressed by TII as part of their overall capital roads programme.

Greenways

In addition to the significant investment in Active Travel, €72 million is being invested in our Greenway network this year through TII, an increase of over €50 million based on 2019 funding levels. The number of Greenways in development in Ireland has increased from 13 in 2019, to over 70 projects currently underway.

National Cycle Network & CycleConnects

TII launched a public consultation on the development of a new National Cycle Network which was completed in Q2 2022.  The plan comprises of a 3,500km network that will criss-cross the country, connecting more than 200 villages, towns and cities. The network will include cycling links to transport hubs, education centres, employment centres, leisure and tourist destinations, and support “last mile” bicycle deliveries.  The National Cycle Network was published in January 2024 and is available; [www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4c7df-national-cycling-network-will-see-3500km-of-safe-bike-corridors-connecting-28m-people-in-cities-and-towns/#:~:text=Minister%20of%20Transport%20Eamon%20Ryan,to%202.8%20million%20people%20nationallyhttps://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4c7df-national-cycling-network-will-see-3500km-of-safe-bike-corridors-connecting-28m-people-in-cities-and-towns/ - :~:text=Minister%20of%20Transport%20Eamon%20Ryan,to%202.8%20million%20people%20nationally](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4c7df-national-cycling-network-will-see-3500km-of-safe-bike-corridors-connecting-28m-people-in-cities-and-towns/#:~:text=Minister%20of%20Transport%20Eamon%20Ryan,to%202.8%20million%20people%20nationally)

In tandem with the National Cycle Network, the NTA are developing CycleConnects which will outline planned cycling infrastructure investment within urban areas around the country. Proposals for intra-urban cycling links in key cities, towns and villages in each of the 22 counties outside the Greater Dublin Area are included in the plan. CycleConnects builds on the cycling plans already developed for the GDA and, together with the National Cycle Network, will create an overall comprehensive cycle network for Ireland. The draft CycleConnects plan has undergone environmental assessment in recent months and is due for publication in Q3 2024. Active Travel teams are now in place in all 31 local authorities, with the number of dedicated staff for Active Travel projects increasing from 57 in January 2021 to around 240 across the country.

Safe Routes to Schools and other initiatives

The Safe Routes to Schools Initiative was established during 2021, with the first phase of 170 schools selected in June 2021, 167 of which remain actively engaged in the Programme. 108 additional schools were selected for inclusion in Round 2 of the Programme on 12 December 2022 which brought the total number of schools currently in SRTS to 275.  As of 31 May 2024, projects at 65 schools have been completed with 26 additional under construction. All remaining schools in Rounds 1 and 2 are at various stages of progress through the Programme. In addition, all Active Travel projects progressed by the NTA aim to incorporate linkages to schools where possible, whether they are part of the SRTS programme or not.

My Department funds the delivery of CycleRight training through Cycling Ireland. The 2023 target of 35,000 pupils trained was reached, and it is expected that around 40,000 students will be trained in 2024, in line with the target in the National Sustainable Mobility Policy of an additional 5,000 students per annum completing the training. 2024 funding also includes an increased subvention for students in DEIS schools, which will number around 10,000 of the total trained this year.

Thresholds under the Cycle to Work scheme have been increased in recent budgets to allow for the purchase of e-bikes and cargo bikes or e-bikes. The latter was included in the Finance Act following Budget 2023, with an allowance of up to €3,000 available for individuals to put towards the purchase of a cargo bike or cargo e-bikes.

**Transport Infrastructure**

Transport Planning

A revised Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) 2022-2042 was published by the NTA in January 2023, following my approval. The strategy sets out a statutory framework for transport investment across the region over a twenty-year period and provides a clear statement of transport planning policy for the GDA.

The Transport Orientated Development (TOD) working group, which was established under the Government’s Housing for All plan and which is jointly led by my Department and the Department of Housing, published its report on TOD opportunities in Dublin in June 2023.

Metrolink

A significant milestone in the progression of the MetroLink project was cleared in July 2022, when Cabinet granted Decision Gate (DG) 1 approval under the Public Spending Code (PSC) to MetroLink. This decision enabled the project to move to planning application stage, and on 30 September, TII submitted a Railway Order application to An Bord Pleanála. The statutory planning consultation for the project closed on 16 January 2023.

An Bord Pleanála commenced an Oral Hearing in relation to MetroLink on February 19th 2024, which concluded on March 28th. Dependent on the outcome of the planning process, construction of MetroLink is earmarked to commence over the coming years with a view to operation by the mid-2030s.

MetroLink reached another significant milestone in June 2024 with the hiring of its first Project Director following a global search for the most suitable candidate.

DART Expansion

In December 2021 the Government approved the Preliminary Business Case for the DART+ Programme and a fleet framework agreement between Irish Rail and Alstom. This framework allows for the purchase of up to 750 electric/battery-electric train carriages for the Irish Rail system over a 10-year period. This approval permitted the purchase of 95 additional DART carriages, which are expected to enter service in 2026. In November 2022, the Government approved a second purchase of fleet under the framework agreement, which will see 90 new battery-electric multiple units arrive in 2026.

Following the submission of a Railway Order application by Córas Iopmair Éireann (CIÉ) to An Bord Pleanála in July 2022, an Oral Hearing for DART+ West was held in September/October 2023. A Railway Order for DART+ South West was lodged by CIÉ in March 2023.

The DART+ Coastal North rail project was submitted to Government in May 2024 and approved to enter the planning system. A Railway Order for DART+ Coastal North is expected to be lodged by CIÉ by the end of summer 2024.

Light Rail

**Dublin**: The preliminary business case for the Luas Finglas project has been submitted to my Department by the NTA for review and I hope to bring this to Government in the coming months for consent in line with the Infrastructure Guidelines. This will enable the project to enter the statutory planning process through the submission of a Railway Order Application to An Bord Pleanála.

**Cork**: Work on identifying a precise route for Luas Cork is progressing well.  In discussions with Cork City Council, it was agreed that some additional work should be undertaken in relation to the city centre section prior to commencing the public consultation stage. TII, in collaboration with the NTA, are now undertaking that additional work, in consultation with Cork City Council. That task is likely to take a couple of months and it is now anticipated that the Emerging Preferred Route for Luas Cork will be published later this year and a non-statutory public consultation process will then be undertaken.

**Galway**: The NTA, in conjunction with Galway City Council and Galway County Council, is currently developing the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS), which will replace the 2016 Galway Transport Strategy.  As part of the development of GMATS, mode specific analysis is being undertaken, including a light rail feasibility study. Following the preparation of the draft GMATS , the NTA will undertake a non-statutory public consultation process which will give stakeholders the opportunity to share their views on the draft strategy. It is anticipated that the public consultation on the draft GMATS will commence later this year, and the publication of the completed, updated strategy will follow after a review and consideration of the public consultation responses.

Roads

At the start of 2023, €491 million in capital exchequer funding was allocated for investment in the national road network. €237 million was allocated for the progression of new national roads projects. This included a number of projects which were completed in 2023, including the N5 Westport to Turlough, the N22 Ballyvourney to Macroom, and the Moycullen bypass. €254 million was invested in the protection and renewal of the existing national roads network, which includes measures to improve safety and meet the challenges of climate adaptation.

At the start of 2024, approximately €411 million in capital exchequer funding was allocated for investment in the national road network. €146 million was allocated for the progression of new national roads projects. This included a number of projects which were under construction, including the Dunkettle Interchange, Listowel Bypass and N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge. In addition, a number of schemes are approaching construction, including the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy and the Adare Bypass, with other NDP projects at an earlier stage of development continuing to be advanced. €265 million was invested in the protection and renewal of the existing national roads network, which includes measures to improve safety and meet the challenges of climate adaptation.

In 2023, €626 million was allocated for investment in the regional and local road network. At the start of 2024, €658 million was allocated for investment in the regional and local road network, with about 90% directed to road maintenance and renewal and the balance for targeted road improvement schemes.  In Q2 2024, an additional capital allocation of €30m was made available to help address the impact of persistent and prolonged rainfall over the 2023/24 winter season, with this funding to support remedial works on the worst impacted sections of the network. Through the National Development Plan, €70 million was allocated to road improvement projects including the completed Athy Southern Distributor Road along with current projects in construction such as Shannon Crossing / Killaloe Bypass/ R494 Upgrade and the Tralee Northern Relief Road, together with the completion of advance/emergency works and the retender of the main construction contract related to the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road. A range of regional and local road minor/safety improvement schemes and climate adaptation projects have also been implemented under the roads works programme.

**Public Transport**

Fares

The Young Adult Card was launched on Public Service Obligation (PSO) services on the 9 May 2022 enabling those aged between 19 and 23 to avail of an average 50% discount in their public transport fares. The Scheme was extended to participating commercial bus operators (CBOs) on 4 September 2022. Further, in October 2022, the Scheme was widened to include third level students aged 16 to 18. Under Budget 2024, my Department secured an extension to for the scheme to include 24 and 25-year-olds. This was launched on January 11th and will allow this age group to benefit from the 50% fare reduction. These low fares apply to all subsidised public transport journeys on Dublin Bus, Iarnród Eireann, Bus Éireann, Luas, Go Ahead, TFI Local Link and on participating commercial bus operator (CBO) services.

As part of the suite of Cost-of-Living measures, in May 2022 Government introduced a 20% average fare reduction on all Public Service Obligation (PSO) public transport services.

As part of the total funding package of €563.55m that was secured for PSO and Local Link services under Budget 2023, funding was provided for the continuation of the Young Adult Card on both PSO and CBO services, and for the continuation of the 20% average fare discount on PSO services. Under Budget 2024, a funding package of c. €613.463m has been secured for PSO and Local Link services. This includes funding for the continuation of the 20% fare reduction on PSO services, the Young Adult Card on both PSO and CBO services, and the 90-minute fare until the end of 2024. Funding has also been secured to support new and enhanced bus and rail services next year.

On 27 April 2023, the NTA published its National Fares Strategy for commuter and inter-urban journeys on Public Service Obligation (PSO) bus and rail services. Under this Strategy, changes introduced in future fares determinations will reflect a more consistent, equitable approach, and one that is easier to understand for customers.

Fares Determination

The fare determination has formalised a new ‘Dublin City Zone’, extending to approximately 23km from the centre of Dublin, encompassing the current area of validity of TFI 90 Leap Card travel. It also introduces simplified Leap capping, as well as changes to some Intercity Rail and town bus fares. The most significant change is the implementation of an initial phase of the National Fares Strategy on Dublin Commuter bus and rail services. The short distance leap fare will have a slight increase and the new Dublin City Zone will now include areas such as Ashbourne and Ratoath. This is the first step in delivering the National Fares Strategy and it is NTA’s intention to roll this out further across the country in the months ahead.

Connecting Ireland & Rural Mobility

A consultation report regarding the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan was published on 3 May 2022.

Throughout 2022, Phase 1 of the Plan delivered 38 new and enhanced bus services. The revisions were implemented on routes and service serving areas in counties Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Clare, Sligo, Kildare, Offaly, Mayo and Wexford.

Routes identified through the Connecting Ireland consultation process were prioritised to provide emergency public transport services to people fleeing the war in Ukraine and housed in rural or isolated locations to ensure better access to our local communities. This continues to be achieved through an acceleration of network improvements, including additional stops, route modifications, and more services with the aim to increase connectivity.

In February 2023, Phase 2 of Connecting Ireland was launched, and 65 new and enhanced bus services were implemented during 2023. December 2023 was the busiest month of bus service launches recorded under Connecting Ireland. Twenty new and enhanced bus services were implemented, connecting towns and villages in Counties Galway, Mayo, Waterford, Kerry, Sligo and Cavan. In total over 100 new or enhanced services have been rolled out under Connecting Ireland, with 49 of the new and enhanced services providing connections to rail services, 42 to hospitals and 34 to colleges. Under Connecting Ireland, over 190 towns and villages have been connected to the public transport network, and over 280,000 people have access to new and enhanced bus services.

The Rural Transport Programme, now operating under the TFI Local Link brand, provides scheduled and demand responsive public transport services in rural areas nationwide. There has been a substantial increase in funding for TFI Local Link services going from €12 million in 2016 to over €57 million in 2024. The additional funding has enabled the introduction of 100 new Rural Regular Service routes operating at least 5 times per day over a 5,6,7 days per week schedule. They are specifically designed to ensure connectivity with other public transport services and better linkage of services between and within towns and villages. Passenger numbers increased to 3.2 million in 2023. As part of the ongoing transition of the public transport fleet to zero emissions vehicles, two fully accessible electric vehicles began operating on TFI Local Link services in the Dingle peninsula during June 2024.

Indecon consultants were appointed by my Department in Q4 2023 to conduct an independent review of the existing administrative, operational, legislative, and funding structures of rural public transport service provision via the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) and make recommendations on the future long-term structure of rural public transport provision, to evaluate its current effectiveness. The Report is currently being finalised.

The new Carlow town service launched on 30 July 2023 operated by Bus Éireann. The new Clonmel town service launched on 11 December 2023 operated by TFI Local Link Tipperary. The NTA is continuing to plan for new and enhanced services in a number of regional centres by the end of 2025.

**Buses**

BusConnects

Much work has also progressed in relation to BusConnects.

The Preliminary Business Case for infrastructure investment was approved by Government in Q2 2022, allowing BusConnects Dublin to enter the planning system. The planning applications for all Core Bus Corridor schemes were subsequently submitted by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to An Bord Pleanála. Four schemes have been approved by An Bord Pleanála so far – the Clongriffin, Liffey Valley, Ballymun/Finglas and Belfield/Blackrock schemes.

The Network Redesign for Dublin has been rolling out incrementally since 2021. The first of these Spines – the H-Spine (Howth to City Centre) – launched in June 2021. The second Spine – the C-Spine (Lucan/Leixlip to City Centre) – launched in November 2021. The roll-out continued in 2022 with the launch of the third and fourth phases – the G-Spine (Ballyfermot to City Centre) and the Northern Orbital routes. The Southern and Western orbital routes rolled out in 2023. The E-Spine (Ballymun to Bray) and the O Route (Inner City Orbitals) are expected to launch later in 2024 subject to craftworker and depot availability.

100 double-deck electric buses are currently entering service incrementally in Dublin and all will be in service by August 2024. In addition to the 100 electric buses currently entering service in Dublin on an incremental basis, an additional 50 have been accepted by the NTA, and a further 70 have been ordered. Furthermore, 34 electric single-deck buses will be absorbed into the Dublin Bus fleet in 2024.

In Cork, following a public consultation, the new BusConnects network was published in June 2022, and it aims to provide an increase of over 50% in bus services across the city. Planning for the implementation of the new bus network has commenced and it is expected that the new network will be implemented in the coming years.

Another key component of the BusConnects Cork programme is the implementation of bus priority measures, generally bus lanes, on key bus corridors serving the city.  A third round of non-statutory public consultation on the 11 Sustainable Transport Corridors commenced ran from November to December 2023. Preparation of a Preliminary Business Case for the programme is ongoing.

Similarly, BusConnects Galway will provide a major enhancement to the bus system there. Key elements are currently under development, namely the Cross City Link project and the Dublin Road scheme. The Salmon Weir Pedestrian/Cycling Bridge was officially opened to the public last May. The bus network design was finalised last December following a public consultation, and it will provide improved services, including in Bearna and Oranmore.

BusConnects Limerick will provide a major enhancement to the bus system there. Key elements are currently under development, with 34 electric buses entering service. The bus network design was finalised last December following a public consultation, and it will provide improved services across the city.

The new bus network for Waterford expected to be published by 2025. Implementation planning for the new network is estimated to commence following this.

**Decarbonisation of Road Transport**

Within the Climate Action Plan (CAP), fleet electrification is one of the two single biggest mitigation actions for domestic sectors and will provide the greatest share of transport emissions abatement to 2030. The CAP sets an an ambitious target of shifting 30% of our private car fleet to electric by 2030 with a supplementary target of 195,000 EVs (battery electric and plug in hybrid electric) vehicles on our roads by the end of 2025. As of May 2024, there are just over 129,300 registered electric vehicles in Ireland.

In Ireland, Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland (ZEVI) was established as an office within the Department of Transport in July 2022 to support consumers, businesses and the public sector in the transition to electric vehicles.

ZEVI published Ireland’s first EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2025 which sets out the Government’s ambition regarding the delivery of a public charging network to support up to 195,000 electric cars and vans by the middle of the decade.

Arising from this strategy, the National Road EV Charging Network Plan, published in May 2024, outlines the pathway for delivery of EV charging on the national road network with banks of high powered chargers to be rolled out every 60km on our motorway network by 2025. The second part of this plan, the Regional and Local EV Charging Network Plan, was published for consultation in May 2024 and focuses on neighbourhood and destination charging in cities, towns and villages around the country. This regional plan will be led by local authorities, working together to develop regional strategies that promote a unified and efficient rollout of charging infrastructure.

The finalised Universal Design Guidelines for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure were published in May 2024 and provide best practice guidance for public authorities and private sector chargepoint operators to ensure that EV charging infrastructure is as accessible and easy to use as possible. In 2024, €115.8m has been allocated to ensure the continued transition to electric vehicles which includes funding for EV grants and EV charging infrastructure. This funding will continue to incentivise the switch to electric vehicles as well as enabling the expansion of a fast and rapid electric vehicle charging network to stay ahead of demand.

A range of new charging infrastructure schemes are being developed which will help provide another critical link in the overall network for public charging, including:

A motorway infrastructure scheme, administered by TII, that will deliver banks of high-powered chargers every 60km across the motorway network by 2025. The sites to be supported under this scheme will be announced in July 2024, with delivery to commence from this date.

A second high powered scheme, to be administered by TII, to provide banks of high-powered chargers along the primary and secondary national road network.

A Shared Island funded Sports Club scheme, which will install up to 200 fast chargers in sports clubs on the island of Ireland.

An EU Just transition Fund supported scheme, which is planned to install 60-80 chargers in the Just Transition area in the midlands.

Local Authority pilot schemes, funding the roil out of EV charging in Local Authorities who have already developed local EV network plans, while supporting the development of local EV Network plans in other areas.

These new sites, in addition to those under other destination schemes currently planned will be delivered in 2024 and 2025.

These schemes as well as a suite of related programmes across both ZEVI and its stakeholders and partners, will ensure that the rollout of EV charging is not only compliant with our national and EU obligations under the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR), but also provides charging infrastructure which meets the needs of users regardless of their vehicle type, their geographic location or their specific demand for charging.

As well as investing in EV infrastructure, the Government is supporting the transition through the continuation of vehicle incentives such as the purchase grant for battery electric vehicles (BEVs) of 3,500, home and apartment charging grants, benefit-in-kind relief for BEV’s, VRT relief of up to 5,000 for BEVs and a low rate of annual motor tax.

Current direct incentives include:

A purchase grant for battery electric vehicles (BEVs) of up to €3,500;

A Home Charger purchase grant scheme - up to €300;

VRT relief of up to €5,000 for the purchase of BEVs;

Benefit-in-Kind tax relief for battery electric vehicles;

eSPSV grant scheme – a generous grant for taxi drivers to make the switch to Wheelchair Accessible EV’s of up to €25,000;

ZEHDV grant scheme – a grant scheme for HDVs to bridge the gap between a low emission vehicle and a fossil fuel vehicle; and

Low rate of annual motor tax.

E-Scooters

All necessary e-scooter regulations were commenced on 20th May 2024 – Commencement Orders (Road Traffic Act 2024, Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023), Technical and Usage, Detention of E-scooters (powers for AGS), Use of Powered Personal Transporters (only permitting e-scooters and no other form of PPT), Traffic & Parking, Signs, and Fixed Charge Notice regulations.

The RSA have undertaken an advertising campaign specifically for e-scooters and this ran during May and Jun 2024. Full details of permitted e-scooters are available on both the RSA and Gov.ie websites:

Gov.ie Campaign:        [gov - E-Bikes, E-Mopeds and E-Scooters (www.gov.ie)](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/5e95b-e-bikes-e-mopeds-and-e-scooters/)

RSA Campaign:             [E-scooters (rsa.ie)](https://www.rsa.ie/road-safety/campaigns/e-scooters)

E-Bikes and E-Mopeds

Provisions classifying e-bikes and e-mopeds were contained in the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023. These provisions were commenced on 20th May 2024.  Full details of the requirements are available on the Gov.ie and RSA campaign pages.

Gov.ie Campaign:       [gov - E-Bikes, E-Mopeds and E-Scooters (www.gov.ie)](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/5e95b-e-bikes-e-mopeds-and-e-scooters/)

RSA Campaign:          [News laws on e-bikes and e-mopeds (rsa.ie)](https://www.rsa.ie/road-safety/road-users/special-purpose-vehicles/powered-personal-transportation)

Medium and Heavy-Duty Vehicles

In 2022, Ireland became a signatory to the Global Memorandum of Understanding on Zero Emission Medium and Heavy-Duty Vehicles, which targets a new sales share of 30 percent for zero emission trucks and buses that are 3.5 tonnes or over by 2030.

The 10-Year Road Haulage Strategy, published in December 2022, sets out the strategic and policy direction for the haulage and heavy goods road freight sector for the next decade and includes 39 actions.  A key action within the strategy was the establishment of a Road Freight Forum. The Road Freight Forum has met on five occasions since it was established in 2023 and consists of representatives from industry, academics and the Department of Transport and its agencies. An annual report detailing the progress during the first year on the actions contained within the strategy was published in January 2024.

**Rail**

Cork

In Cork, Phase 1 of the Cork Commuter Rail Programme, largely funded through the EU's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, is to be completed by end-2026. This will facilitate more commuter rail services in the Cork area and the longer-term electrification of this network. Work on the overall programme is underway and the Preliminary Business Case is being developed. All works associated with Phase 1 will be completed by end-2026 as required by the European Commission.

This will see a significant investment (€164m of EU funds) in Cork’s rail infrastructure, which will facilitate the longer-term electrification of the network through construction of a new ‘through’ platform at Kent Station to create an integrated suburban network, re-signalling of the network, and double-tracking from Glounthaune to Midleton.

A planning application was submitted to Cork City Council seeking planning consent for the additional platform at Kent Station. Following approval from Cork City Council, the contract to build the through-platform at Kent Station was awarded by Iarnród Éireann to John Craddock Ltd. in early 2023.  Construction has commenced on site with construction expected to be completed by next year.

A four-week non-statutory public consultation on the preferred option for double tracking the current single line between Glounthaune and Midleton concluded in August 2022. The feedback received fed into the Railway Order application, which was submitted by Córas Iompair Éireann to An Bord Pleanála in November 2022. An Bord Pleanála granted a planning application for the project.

In addition to the Kent Station and double-tracking works above, in June Iarnród Éireann awarded a contract to Alstom for a major signalling upgrade project on the Cork commuter rail network, to increase the number of trains which can operate between Cork and Cobh, Midleton and Mallow.

Waterford

Relocation of Plunkett Station in Waterford is being funded under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) as part of the regeneration plans for Waterford City.  The project continues to progress well with Iarnród Éireann working closely with the contractor and Waterford County Council to manage the interface with the railway.

Galway

Upgrade of Ceannt Station in Galway city, included in NDP: The construction contract was awarded in November 2023, with works currently on-going. Construction is anticipated to be completed by mid-2026.

Oranmore Station, included in NDP:  The Preliminary Business Case has been approved by the NTA.  Irish Rail are expecting to be in a position to lodge a planning application for the project imminently. Construction on the project is expected to commence in Q3 2025 subject to planning permission and funding availability.

Limerick

A new rail station at Moyross; A non-statutory public consultation on the emerging preferred option for the station concluded in June. Irish Rail are currently advancing the preliminary design and expect to produce a Preliminary Business Case for the project in Q3 2024.

Upgrading of Colbert Station; Redevelopment Stage 1 commenced on-site in June 2022. The project is nearing completion with the new ticket offices and bus concourse area now open to the public. Works to the stations set down area and carpark are due for completion in July.

All-Island Strategic Rail Review

The All-Island Strategic Rail Review is being undertaken in co-operation with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland. It is considering inter-regional and inter-urban connectivity on the rail network, including the potential for high-/higher speed rail and rail freight. The Review will inform the strategic development of rail on the Island of Ireland in the coming decades to 2050, in line with net carbon zero targets in both jurisdictions.

Work on the Review is now at an advanced stage, a draft was published for the purposes of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) public consultation in July 2023.

The draft Report makes 30 strategic recommendations to enhance the rail system across the island up to 2050. Implementation of these recommendations would result in substantial improvements in the capacity, speed, frequency and reach of the rail system. Journey times by rail would be much reduced, and frequency would increase to at least hourly between cities and every two hours on rural and regional routes. The network would be decarbonised, with the intercity routes electrified. There would be the rehabilitation of currently disused lines, including between Athenry and Claremorris, and between Waterford and Wexford, increasing the size of the rail network, widening accessibility and connectivity through rail.

The public consultation phase of the SEA process concluded on 29th September and submissions have been reviewed by officials from both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

It is expected that a final Review report, taking account of the comments raised in the consultation, will be submitted for Government approval in both jurisdictions shortly and that the final Review will be published immediately thereafter.

**Small Public Service Vehicles (SPSVs)/Taxis**

The greening of the taxi fleet continues to be prioritised with 2,299 vehicles grant aided since the scheme’s inception.

The eSPSV infrastructure scheme is designed to encourage more taxi drivers to convert to electric vehicles. The project involved installing taxi dedicated electric vehicle chargers at major transport hubs nationwide. Chargers have been installed in Dublin (Heuston), Cork and Limerick (Colbert) train stations as well as Dublin and Cork airports. Additional funds had been allocated to this project with further high-powered charge points having been installed at five (Westport, Dundalk, Bray, Sallins & Tralee) additional Irish Rail stations.

**Road Safety**

Implementation of a new 10-year Road Safety Strategy, aligned with the Vision Zero principle, is well under way with all relevant agencies participating and led by my Department.

Phase 1 Action Plan is due to close end 2024 with 190 Actions almost complete or nearing completion.

Work has begun on implementing Phase 2 Action Plan 2025- 2027.

The Speed Limit Review, published 14 September 2023, fulfils a Programme for Government commitment and an action included in the Government’s Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. It is a significant piece of work which aims to address the fragmentation and inconsistency of speed limits on roads all over the country. Consistent and appropriate speed limits across the road network, as called for by the final report, will contribute to increasing road safety.

Key proposals include:

default speed limit on national secondary roads to reduce from 100km/h to 80km/h

default speed limit for the network of local and rural roads throughout the country to reduce from 80km/h to 60km/h

default speed limit on urban roads, which include built up areas as well as housing estates and town centres, to reduce to 30km/h

The Road Traffic Act 2024, signed into law by the President on 17 April 2024, amends the default speed limits in line with these recommendations of the speed limit review.  My Department is now working with stakeholders towards phased implementation of the changes. Collectively, this will assist local authorities to carry out their own speed limit reviews and pass bye-laws for 'special' speed limits, where appropriate.

The Road Traffic Act 2024 also amends the penalty point regime, to ensure that people who commit multiple penalty point offences on the same occasion receive multiple points, as opposed to the present system under which they receive only one set of points.  Work is under way to prepare for the commencement of these provisions. The new Act also makes it mandatory for the Garda to conduct preliminary tests for drugs following a serious collision, in the same way in which it is already mandatory to conduct alcohol tests.  The new testing provisions came into effect from 31 May 2024.

The Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023 is a wide-ranging Act which addresses a number of measures. The Act, which also addresses a wide range of other necessary matters, was signed into law by the President on 23 June 2023. Secondary legislation under the Road Traffic Acts was introduced on 20th May 2024 for e-scooters, including technical and usage regulations.

It also provides measures to underpin dynamic traffic management on the M50, the BusConnects project, the Irish Motor Insurance Database, and many other matters.

**Demand Management**

As per the commitment in the Programme for Government to ‘Evaluate and bring forward measures for demand management to incentivise modal shift’, the Climate Action Plan 2023 outlined the intention to develop a new national demand management strategy for transport. To this end, a draft Strategy entitled ‘**Moving together - A Strategic Approach to Improving the Efficiency of Ireland’s Transport System’** has now been developed.

The draft Strategy and associated Implementation Plan are currently open to public consultation (since 16 April).  This will conclude on 21 August 2024. As part of this process, my Department is also undertaking extensive stakeholder engagement. When this engagement concludes (circa Q3), the Strategy will be submitted to Government for approval and publication.

**Ports & Maritime**

In line with National Ports Policy (NPP) and the National Development Plan, the ports of Dublin, Cork, Shannon Foynes and Rosslare are all progressing major infrastructure projects to increase capacity for the trading needs for Ireland.

Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure

A number of ports and entities within ports are progressing plans for the delivery of port infrastructure to meet the requirements of the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) sector in line with the policy statement published by my Department in December 2021. The dedicated ORE Ports Facilitation Division in my Department is committed to supporting the development of port infrastructure to maximise the use of Irish commercial state ports for offshore wind delivery.

My Department is a member of the Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce and is responsible for actions under Workstream 6. This workstream plays a key role in supporting the development of port infrastructure and capabilities to maximise the use of Irish ports for offshore wind facilitation. Supporting the development of port infrastructure is a core objective of the Taskforce and my Department is working very closely with the Taskforce in this regard.

My Department assisted ports in preparing applications for the 2023 call for funding under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), which opened in September 2023. The call closed in January 2024 with results expected in July 2024. A number of ports applied for funding under this call to develop infrastructure to facilitate offshore wind projects.

My Department has recently signed an Advisory Assignment with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the EIB's work undertaking analysis on demand, capacity, and financing options relating to Irish ports’ ORE plans has commenced. Part of the advisory work includes carrying out case studies on a number of proposed ORE port projects. The output of this work will be significant in identifying how Irish ports will contribute to the meeting of our 2030 offshore wind targets.

An ORE Ports Co-Ordination Group has also been established by my Department to facilitate consistent engagement with key stakeholders on ports’ progress with their ORE projects. The group meets on a quarterly basis and not only allows for ports to engage directly with officials in my Department, but other key government Departments relevant to the delivery of ORE.

On the 14 November 2022, Iarnród Éireann announced the commencement of works which will facilitate the reopening of the 42km stretch of railway between Limerick and Foynes which will assist Shannon Foynes Port Company in its development of a freight distribution hub as well as port infrastructure for ORE.

National Ports Policy Review

A review of National Ports Policy has commenced. A first phase public consultation was conducted seeking views on an Issues Paper published on 23 October 2023. Over 70 submissions were received and are under consideration by my Department.

Maritime Connectivity

During COVID and in preparation for Brexit, significant work was undertaken and continues to safeguard and increase maritime supply lines into and out of Ireland, to ensure maximum maritime connectivity. A significant number of additional routes and capacity to the Continent were introduced in the aftermath of Brexit. The number of weekly sailings to mainland European ports rose from 30 sailings per week to more than 60 since 2020.

Foot and Cycle Passengers

My Department reviewed the services and facilities available to accommodate foot and cycle passengers at our seaports and on ferry services out of Ireland. It engaged with the passenger ports of Dublin, Rosslare and Cork, on their plans for ensuring continued access to ferry services for foot passengers and relevant ferry companies.

In November 2022, Brittany Ferries introduced a new vessel, the Salamanca, on the Rosslare-Bilbao route. This has enabled foot and cycle passengers to access sailings to Spain for the first time. In September 2023 the Ireland - France Sail-Rail initiative was launched, meaning travellers between the two countries who use both the ferry and the train to start or continue their journey are now able to book their Sail-Rail tickets from the Brittany Ferries and Irish Ferries websites, or in-person at 12 rail stations around the country, offering a more sustainable, environmentally friendly form of international travel. Both Irish Ferries and Irish Rail continue to engage to develop an integrated ticket option. In addition, getting to the relevant train stations at either end is also now easier and inclusive in the Sail-Rail bundle. Thanks to the efforts of the local and transport authorities, port transfers from the station to the ferry terminal are now facilitated by buses in Dublin, Cork, Cherbourg and Roscoff.

International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM)

Ireland acceded to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM), an important environmental convention, on 30 November 2023. The Convention aims to prevent the spread of harmful aquatic organisms from one region to another by establishing standards and procedures for the management and control of ships’ ballast water and sediments.

Maritime Safety

My Department published the General Scheme of the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Accidents) Bill in December 2022. The Bill provides for the establishment of a Marine Accident Investigation Unit (MAIU) within the Department of Transport which will replace the Marine Casualty Investigation Board as the permanent body responsible for marine accident investigation. The Bill also provides rule making power for the Minister for Transport to make the necessary secondary legislation for the regulation of offshore service vessels and industrial personnel. The Bill is currently being drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and it is intended that it will be published in Q2 2024.

Since 27 June 2020, 55 pieces of new maritime legislation to give effect to national, EU and international policies and requirements have been developed and finalised.

**Irish Coast Guard Aviation Services Contract**

On 30 May 2023 the Government approved the awarding of the next generation Coast Guard aviation service contract to Bristow Ireland Limited.  The contract will provide for the day and night-time operation of four helicopter bases in Sligo, Shannon, Waterford and Dublin. In addition to the helicopter service, the new Coast Guard aviation service will, for the first time, also include a fixed wing aircraft element. The new Coast Guard aviation service is being introduced on a phased based and the transition will be completed by mid-2025, as per contract.

**Aviation**

Dublin Airport & North Runway

Increasing the capacity of Dublin Airport is in line with our National Aviation Policy which recognises the strategic importance of Dublin Airport in meeting national social and economic policy goals and includes a specific objective of developing Dublin Airport as a secondary hub airport with the necessary capacity to connect key existing and emerging global markets. The new North Runway at Dublin Airport officially opened on the 24 August 2022.

The new runway provides much needed capacity to enhance connectivity for Ireland’s island economy and is key to developing Dublin Airport’s network. daa advise that the North Runway will be capable of delivering a 31% gain in connectivity by 2034, underpinning Dublin Airport’s position as a leading European Airport, a key European gateway to North America and a driver of economic growth. The cost of the overall runway programme was approximately €320m with no recourse to exchequer funding.

As part of Dublin Airport’s Capital Investment Plan (CIP 2020+), daa submitted an Infrastructure Application (IA) to the planning authority before the end of 2023. The IA seeks to allow the airport to grow beyond 32m passengers a year to 40m passengers a year. The application will also seek permission for all associated infrastructure required to support this increase in passengers including the construction of new aircraft piers and stands. A number of infrastructure projects will also be included that will enable daa to deliver on its commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 51% by 2030 and to achieve its ambition of net zero by 2050.

Regional Airports

In recognition of the importance of our regional airports to supporting connectivity to the regions and enhancing balanced regional development, Government has continued to sustain the high level of supports to regional airports. This year, Government has provided almost €17m to eligible airports (Donegal, Kerry and Ireland West (Knock)) and PSO air services under the Regional Airports Programme.

The Regional Airports Programme for the period 2021 to 2025 was published by my Department on 4 February 2021. This Programme continues to support Ireland’s smallest airports that provide scheduled passenger services and handle fewer than one million annual passengers (on average over the two preceding financial years).  In addition to targeting funding at safety and security projects and activities, the Programme also supports projects with a sustainable focus, encouraging airports to reduce emissions and build climate resilience.

A public consultation was undertaken by my Department to inform a mid-term review of the Programme, which was completed in December 2023. The review has considered how the Programme is currently delivering on its objectives, primarily in the context of how international connectivity and services, to and from the regions can be maintained and enhanced. It also explored how balanced regional development is being supported.

Engagements are ongoing with colleagues across Government with a view to reaching a conclusion on this review shortly.

Aviation Sustainability Measures

My Department continues to support aviation sustainability measures at EU and global level including leading on, or liaising with other Departments, in relation to the aviation specific ‘Fit for 55’ proposals.

The agreement of the ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation in 2023 is an important step given the acceptance globally that sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) will play a significant role in emissions abatement in the short to medium term. In mandating the increased deployment of SAFs at Union airports, the Regulation aims to provide a clear signal to the fuel industry that a significant scale up of SAF supply and production will be needed to meet that demand. This EU approach aligns with the international collective global goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions from aviation by 2050 and my Department is currently engaged in preparing for the domestic implementation of this Regulation.

An important step achieved globally in the effort to decarbonise the aviation sector, was the recognition of the critical role of SAFs at the Third Conference on Aviation and Alternative Fuels, which was convened by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in late 2023. The outcome of this was the agreement of an interim, non-binding target to reduce CO2 emissions from global aviation by 5 per cent, by 2030, through the use of SAFs, Low Carbon Aviation Fuels and other cleaner aviation energies.

In relation to the ‘Long Term Aspiration Goal’ (LTAG) – ICAO requires Contracting States to develop a national SAF Policy Roadmap, which will then input into a wider national State Action Plan on CO2 Aviation Emissions Reduction Activities. My Department is updating the 2019 State Action Plan, which will be submitted to ICAO later this year.

In 2023, my Department began development of the national SAF Policy Roadmap, which is targeted for completion in Q4 2024 and will then subsequently input into the aforementioned State Action Plan. It can be expected that the SAF Policy Roadmap will then be further built upon in future years and will be an evolving document. To assist in this important work, my Department late last year, established the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Task Force to bring together stakeholders with responsibility for and interest in policy development and implementation in relation to SAF. To date, the SAF Task Force has convened three times, and officials have engaged in over 70 bilateral meetings with the aviation sector, fuel producers, financial representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

Through engagement with this broad range of stakeholders and experts, my Department aims to develop a fuller understanding of this emerging industry to enable the development of the policy roadmap. In addition, officials are identifying interlinkages that exist between different policy remits across government departments and agencies, to ensure the development of an effective, cohesive policy.

Air Navigation Restructuring

On 1 May 2023, following on enactment of the Air Navigation and Transport Act 2022 on 7 December 2022, the regulatory functions of the Irish Aviation Authority and the Commission for Aviation Regulation were combined to form a single national aviation regulator, the IAA, which is responsible for aviation safety, security, economic and consumer interest. In addition, a new commercial semi-state company, AirNav Ireland, was established to undertake the air navigation services functions of the IAA.

The new regulatory structure reflects international best practice in this area.

**Licensed Haulage Support Schemes**

A temporary haulage support scheme was put in place by my Department in 2023, with €15.6 million paid out to 2,827 operators representing approx. 74% of the overall road haulage operators licensed in the State.

The Licensed Haulage Support Scheme 2023 came on the heels of a previous Licensed Haulage Emergency Support Scheme in 2022, which was designed to assist licensed haulage businesses dealing with a sudden and severe spike in diesel prices following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in February 2022.

The second half of 2022 saw sustained historic highs in diesel price, which were a continued risk to the liquidity of haulage businesses. The Licensed Haulage Support Scheme 2023 was a response to this sustained high price period.

Over €32 million in support was provided to haulage businesses across both schemes.

Year on year, the number of haulage operators that applied for and received support under the Schemes dropped by 8%.

Both haulage support schemes operated under the EU Temporary Crisis Framework (TCF) on State Aid, adopted to address the economic impacts, in particular on energy prices, of the war in Ukraine.

Logistics and Supply Chain Skills Week

In 2023, the Logistics and Supply Chain Skills Group (LSCSG), currently chaired by my Department, successfully organised Ireland’s first ever Logistics and Supply Chain Skills Week, which was held from 27 March to 1 April.

The second national Logistics and Supply Chain Skills Week took place from Monday 26 February to Saturday 2 March 2024.  The key event of the Week was the first ever LogisTYcs expo for Transition Year students which saw hundreds of Transition Year students from across the country engage with logistics companies and education providers about potential future careers in the logistics and supply chain sector.

**Public Transport Accessibility**

While all new public transport infrastructure is accessible from the design stage, there are many older, legacy facilities that are not accessible, for example Victorian era train stations. My Department funds the Public Transport Accessibility Retrofit Programme to retrofit such older facilities and services. The level of funding has progressively increased to €15m in 2024.

The Travel Assist Scheme provide free assistance for disabled people, persons with disabilities, reduced mobility, and older people, to use public transport in the Greater Dublin Area. The Scheme was rolled out to Cork in 2022 and to Limerick in Q4 2023.

In rural areas over 95% of TFI Local Link services are now accessible with new services also now accessible from the start of services. Previously there was a two-year lead-in period.

Work has continued under Irish Rail’s ‘Big Lift’ and ‘Lift Call’ multi-annual programmes to ensure the reliability and availability of lift access for disabled people. Recently under the ‘Big Lift’ Programme two lifts were fully replaced at Connolly and Bray, with lift renewals work at Blackrock, Booterstown, Shankill, Killiney, Sandycove, Glenageary, Seapoint, Salthill Monkstown, Clontarf road and Howth Junction stations. Under ‘Lift Call’, works were carried out on an additional 15 lifts in eight separate stations with CCTV installed on 11 escalators in four rail stations. All public lifts are now fitted with the Lift Call CCTV system which is 100% monitored and over 90% of the stations have the Lift Passenger Call System activated, giving Howth Junction and Mallow Control Centres full control of access to the lifts. This will be 100% by the end of 2024.

The installation of the Lift Passenger Call System is now also integrated into the specifications for all new lifts being installed across the network, resulting in immediate access to the CCTV and lift access for passengers - once the lifts are put in service for public use.

In January 2023, the 24 hours advance notice requirement was reduced to 12 hours on Intercity rail routes. The number of Wheelchair vehicles increased to 18% of the taxi fleet by end 2023.

**Safe travel**

A key priority for my Department is ensuring the safest possible travel experience for users of public transport services and infrastructure.

Under the National Sustainable Mobility Policy, my Department has committed to publish an annual ‘Public Transport Passenger Safety and Personal Security Report’ in conjunction with the NTA and implement measures where appropriate. This was published in March 2024: [www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NTA-Security-Report-Final.pdf](https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NTA-Security-Report-Final.pdf)

Other Initiatives

My Department has also pursued actions outside of the Programme for Government to strengthen and improve our policy leadership mission and improve as an organisation.

In 2023, an Assistant Secretary for the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) was appointed for the first time, with responsibility for driving and delivering a transformation programme for the Coast Guard, to ensure that the IRCG is best placed to succeed in the 21st Century.  A new Director for the Irish Coast Guard was also appointed. Other positive initiatives include the development of a new “Digital Hub”, which will centralise my Department’s ICT and digital functions with a citizen centric focus, and the delivery of our “Connecting the DoTs” programme, which received the Champion Change Management Programme Award at the Irish HR Leadership Awards in 2023.