

Getting Leinster Moving

Labour's sustainable transport plan
for Leinster: increasing mobility and
creating jobs

Nessa Childers, Labour MEP candidate, Ireland East



Getting Leinster Moving

Government cutbacks have deprived Ireland of the transport network it needs for sustainable economic growth. Reductions in both road and public transport investment show the Government to have the wrong attitude and the wrong priorities. To boost local businesses and help those with daily commutes we need a targeted and effective plan for sustainable transport in Leinster that increases mobility and job creation. To attract investment and bring jobs to our province, it is essential that we show the world that Leinster provides access to a 21st century transport network.

This essential component to a modern economy cannot be achieved by Fianna Fáil's strategy. Rather than investing in our future, they choose to cut back.

The Emergency Budget in April 2009 saw:

- €5 million cutback in essential national road maintenance;
- €10 million cutback in public transport service payments to CIE;
- €300 million cutback in capital expenditure;
- €150 million cutback from capital provision for regional and local roads, cutting grant allocations by almost half in some counties, endangering local road safety and accessibility to rural areas;
- €150 million cutback from the capital provision for public transport, delaying even further the implementation of vital transport projects;
- Further cutbacks in railway safety, traffic management and accessibility.

These cutbacks are set to continue as the Government leads the country's economy into a continuing recession. We cannot afford this negative approach any longer.

Labour does not see a improving transport as a burden. It is an opportunity to create employment and get Leinster back on the move.

Getting Leinster back on track

We need to see life made easier for commuters and to improve rural access. This requires continued investment and smart policy in public transport and a road network that works.

- If Ireland is to become economically and environmentally sustainable we need to see a modal shift towards public transport. Public transport can be both more efficient and more environmentally friendly than the car. But, as it stands, Leinster's public transport system is lagging behind that of our European counterparts. In order to make public transport more attractive to the public it needs to provide value for money and needs to be more accessible to more people.
- To affect this change a number of projects need to be completed. Transport 21 provides a useful framework with a number of key projects already beyond the planning stages. However, Government cutbacks of over €150 million to the capital provision for public transport put these projects' futures in jeopardy. It is essential that we complete the reopening of the Navan rail line to provide a vital rail link from Meath to Dublin. We need to see quick completion of the Kildare Rail Project to increase capacity and frequency.
- Commuter rail links need to be improved. The Wexford/Arklow/Wicklow train line to Dublin has just two services daily that arrive into the city before 09:00, and just two departing after 17:00. The lack of services for those commuting to work means they have to resort to private transport to ensure they can be flexible enough to meet the demands of modern jobs. The situation is the same for those trying to attend or host meetings in Leinster. Taking public transport from Dublin to a meeting in Wexford is simply not feasible. This has a detrimental effect on businesses trying to operate right across Leinster.
- There is no point increasing rail links only between big towns and cities if access to rural communities is not increased as well. Public transport is simply not an option in many rural areas. To remedy this, various forms of public transport in Leinster must be fully integrated and wider reaching. Cutbacks at Bus Éireann are unwelcome. After a decade of poor planning, there are isolated housing developments in villages with little or no public

transport provision. Labour want to see a stronger rural bus network to give villages access to nearby towns and access to the national rail network. Widening access to bus services should make it possible for residents of all villages currently out of the network to get anywhere in Ireland by public transport.

- For the many commuters who want to take public transport as much as possible but are left with no choice but to drive to the nearest train station, park and ride facilities must be made more available and show value for money. Park and ride facilities must be fairly priced and profits from them kept in the transport network rather than outsourced to the private sector.
- We need clarity from the Government on whether the Leinster Orbital Route will go ahead. The significance of a route like this is not to be underestimated. If built, it would alter traffic patterns across the province, and planning for public transport and traffic management cannot go ahead while there is doubt about the Orbital Route.

Bring Transport – Bring Jobs

Investing in transport means investing in our future. It is essential that any new investment in transport is sustainable and that we do not have to keep re-evaluating and restructuring the network. It is essential, therefore, that the transport network is built for the future. Our transport system must be ready for the challenges of the 21st century; environmentally and economically sustainable and geared towards a modern/green economy.

These big but simple steps if implemented will also provide jobs in Leinster. Construction jobs in their implementation and sustainable employment across a number of sectors in the longer term by boosting access to investors and facilitating economic activity in our communities.