

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity for the Department of Public Health (DPH), HSE North-East to submit on **Proposed Variation No. 1 of the Monaghan County Development Plan (MCDP) 2019 – 2025**.

The DPH, HSE North-East commends Monaghan County Council (MoCC) on the progress made thus far on the **Monaghan County Development Plan (MCDP) 2019 – 2025**. It is also good for the inclusion of MoCC's vision for public transport to be the preferred choice for people to consider.

The DPH, HSE North-East supports the actions outlined in the MCDP that can create a shift towards public and active transport modes. Our support is due to the substantial impact transport has on health and wellbeing. Some of these impacts are well recognised, such as preventable injuries and deaths from road accidents, air and noise pollution. There are also direct and indirect impacts through the way transport and urban design influences physical activity levels, greenhouse gas emissions, social cohesion, inequities in health, and chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Therefore, a well-designed public and active transport system can mitigate these adverse impacts of transport and promote health and well-being.¹

This submission supports and recommends:

- Expanding and enhancing the rapid and frequent network as a necessary enabler to changing the way people travel;
- Prioritisation and integration of well-designed and high-quality safe walking and cycling routes to support public transport use;
- Provision of secure cycling infrastructure at public transport stations and on-vehicle bike facilities;
- Addressing affordability and accessibility issues (costs and coverage) for low-income communities to promote equity; and
- Supporting the wide-spread roll-out of electrification of diesel vehicles to reduce their impact on climate change and poor air quality.

Focus area 1: expanding and enhancing the rapid and frequent network

1. The DPH, HSE North-East supports expansion of the rapid and frequent network. Successful travel behaviour change interventions make the desired action the easy choice. For public transport this means being accessible, minimal waiting times (frequency of service), reliability, and affordability. An expanded rapid and frequent network that has these features is key to shifting travel behaviour from private vehicles to public transport. The rapid and frequent network should therefore be prioritised and, if needed, road space re-allocated to it and active modes.
2. Expansion and enhancement of the rapid and frequent network must be underpinned a suitable framework to ensure efficiency is not traded off against safety. Public transport is a safer mode of travel than private vehicles and creating a shift to greater public transport use could make a significant contribution to MoCC achieving its goals for development of Monaghan. Additionally, key performance indicators

¹ Sallis JF, Spoon C, Cavill N, et al. *Co-benefits of designing communities for active living: an exploration of literature*. Int J Behav Natur Phys Act 2015; 12: 30

(KPIs) should be set that measure progress towards safety goals for both public transport and active travel to it.

3. The DPH, HSE North-East supports the integration of these features but with provision of dedicated space for cycling. To truly encourage and support safe travel by bike, dedicated cycle lanes are required rather than shared space with bus or priority lanes. The integration of public and active modes should also include direct, protected cycle routes alongside development of Monaghan.
4. The DPH, HSE North-East notes that public transport patronage is increasing, but so is private vehicle use. A true measure of success for a public transport system is the number of people in Monaghan who shift modes from private vehicles to public transport. The DPH, HSE North-East therefore recommends addition of a KPI that measures mode shift from private vehicles to public and active transport (in addition to patronage).

Summary of recommendations on expanding and enhancing the rapid and frequent network:

- Prioritise and provide direct, dedicated, and safe cycle routes in conjunction with the rapid and frequent network;
- Use a suitable approach to underpin all public and active transport planning and development;
- Add a KPI for zero serious deaths and injuries related to public transport, and if possible, the journey to/from public transport; and
- Add a KPI for mode shift from private vehicles to public and active transport.

Focus Area 2: Improving how the general public gets to public transport

1. To create system-level behaviour change and reduce per capita vehicle travel, an integrated active transport and public transport system needs to be capable of reducing reliance on private vehicles. A frequent and rapid transport system would enable a transformation for Monaghan.
2. The DPH, HSE North-East strongly supports safe and quality infrastructure development that encourages walking and cycling to public transport, and integration with a cycling and walking network. Because walking and cycling have different catchment areas and specific infrastructure needs, the needs of each mode should be considered individually.
3. Bike parking at public transport stations that is secure, visible and sheltered from the weather is supported as it removes a disincentive to people using bikes to access public transport.
4. The DPH, HSE North-East supports high-density development within walking distance of the frequent and rapid transport network as this greatly increases the number of people within the catchment area and can reduce car dependency. Parking policies that favour a shift to public transport and active modes can further support public transport use.

Summary of recommendations on expanding and enhancing the rapid and frequent network:

- Provide direct, dedicated, and safe cycle routes to/from public transport that follow desire lines and are underpinned by a successful strategy;

- Provide safe walking routes to/from public transport that follow the proposed variation in the development;
- Provide quality and secure bike parking and infrastructure with development; and
- Support the provision of micro transit around Monaghan city centre.

Other Areas

1. Diesel vehicles emit pollutants. There is little known locally about the ambient air quality in Monaghan. However, increased vehicle activity with new road development may contribute to declining ambient air quality. Therefore, switching from diesel to zero emissions vehicles will have significant benefits for public health, quality of life, and for the environment.
2. Embedding network-wide sustainability and ensuring environmental, health, social, cultural and safety opportunities are realised, and impacts are mitigated should be an underpinning principle for all transport planning and delivery.
3. The DPH, HSE North-East has considerable expertise in the health benefits of public transport. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with MoCC how the DPH, HSE North-East can support its MCDP with investigation into the wider social, health, environmental and economic benefits of public transport.

Summary of recommendations on other areas:

- Accelerate the timeframe for the switch from diesel to zero emissions vehicles.
- Introduction of local ambient air quality monitoring.
- The DPH, HSE North-East would welcome providing support and expertise to MoCC in its investigation into the social and health benefits of the MCDP 2019 - 2025.

Conclusion

1. Thank you for considering the submission on the MCDP 2019 – 2025. The DPH, HSE North-East supports MoCC's intent to improve the transport system within Monaghan, and to integrate into the development of Monaghan.
2. The DPH, HSE North-East urges MoCC to prioritise implementation of activities that support a shift from private vehicle use to public and active transport. This shift is important for place-making, health and well-being, and sustainability.

Appendix 1: Department of Public Health, HSE North-East

Context: Monaghan faces a number of public health challenges through changing demographics, increasing incidence of lifestyle-related health conditions such as obesity and type 2 diabetes, infrastructure requirements, the balancing of transport needs, and the reconciliation of urban design and urban intensification issues.

The DPH, HSE North-East has a statutory obligation to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities in the North-East region or Ireland. Consultants in Public Health Medicine (CPHM) are all designated as Medical Officers of Health (MOH). They are appointed in the DPH, HSE North-East to provide public health services for four counties (i.e. Cavan, Louth, Meath, and Monaghan).

The current mandate and statutory responsibility for comprehensive health protection related to the environment comes through MOH legislation. The Health (Duties of Officers) Order, 1949 (S.I. No. 128 of 1949)² states that Medical Officer of Health (MOH) **shall** carry out the following roles:

Section (1): Advise the county council – generally in relation to the health of the people and the provision of health services, sanitary services and housing accommodation, on any questions relating to health matters or sanitary matters in the making and subsequent operation of such bye-laws.

Section 1 is the advisory mandate. While the law expects the MOH to advise the county council (as would have been appropriate at the time of enactment) in practice, because of the changes in operational responsibilities, CPHMs advise the relevant authorities, including the county council.

Section (2): Inform himself as respects all influences affecting or threatening to affect injuriously the public health in the county and as respects the causes, origin and distribution of diseases in the county.

Section 2 provides a mandate for public health investigations and risk assessment and for descriptive and analytical epidemiology of the effect of the environment on health, including for climate change influences on health.

In addition, where there is an environmental source of an infectious disease, Infectious Diseases Regulations, 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981) also applies. This mandates the MOH to investigate and take all necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection. The most common area where the MOH investigates and takes control measures is for drinking water contamination, but other areas include contamination of bathing water, air quality incidents, chemical contamination incidents, and the MOH also has an important emergency planning, preparedness and response role.

The DPH, HSE North-East's primary role is to improve population health. It therefore actively seeks to influence any initiatives or proposals that may affect population health in the North-East region of Ireland to maximise their positive impact and minimise possible negative effects.

² Health (Duties of Officers) Order, 1949 Available URL: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1949/si/128/made/en/print> (Date accessed: 18th November 2019).