



Northern & Western  
Regional Assembly

# Submission on Department of Transport Statement of Strategy 2023-2025

March 2023



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040



The Northern and Western Regional Assembly welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the development of the Department of Transport's (DOT) new statement of strategy to cover the period 2023 to 2025. The provision of accessible, frequent, high-quality and affordable public transport services across the Northern and Western Region will be key to simultaneously delivering the vision and objectives of the National Planning Framework <sup>1</sup> (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) of the Northern and Western Region <sup>2</sup> while supporting the region's transition to a low carbon society.

For these reasons, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly – through extensive stakeholder consultations and research in the development of the RSES – adopted a series of “Regional Policy Objectives” (RPOs) aiming to significantly improve the region's transport system, with a particular focus on national, regional and local roads, rail and airport infrastructure, bus services, rural transport services, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Delivering the transport objectives of the RSES will be central to improving our region's transport system and addressing historical underinvestment in the region's transport infrastructure, thereby supporting the objectives of the NPF, the RSES and the emission reduction targets outlined in the Climate Action Plan.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the scale of the challenges associated with the region's transport system this could not be more important. Based on the latest available statistics, residents in the Northern and Western Region – relative to the national norm – tend to live further away from sustainable modes of public transport and generally live close to a transport option with infrequent daily services during the working week. As a result of these challenges and infrastructure deficits, our region records low usage of sustainable transport modes, a high reliance on private car journeys and high commuting levels.

For example, as documented in Section 2 of this submission, residential dwellings located in the Northern and Western Region are – on average – 3.8km from a public bus stop, which was notably higher than the State average of 2.6km, while residential dwellings based in the region are – on average – 30.4km from a train station, which was significantly higher compared to the State average of 15.7km. Notably, the Northern and Western Region had the lowest percentage of its population living close to a transport option with more than 50 departures each day – at 6 per cent – which was substantially lower relative to the State average of 30 per cent. Furthermore, the Northern and Western Region is also underserved in terms of publicly available EV charge points compared to the all-island average, as highlighted in Section 2 of this submission.

<sup>1</sup> <https://nwf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nwra.ie/pdfs/NWRA-RSES-2020-2032.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/>



With this in mind, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly has made a number of high-level recommendations to ensure that the transport objectives of the RSES are reflected in the new statement of strategy of the DOT, namely:

1. Support the delivery of the population and compact growth targets in the RSES of the Northern and Western Region.
2. Deliver and prioritize transport projects that have been outlined in the existing Galway Transport Strategy and in Local Transport Plans in the Northern and Western Region.
3. Upgrade and expand the rail infrastructure of the Northern and Western Region.
4. Improve the inter-regional and intra-regional national road network that connects the key settlements of the Northern and Western Region and maintain and enhance the regional and local road network of the region.
5. Enhance the reliability and connectivity of interregional and intra-regional bus services that connects the key settlements of the Northern and Western Region.
6. Continue to expand the “Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan” and other transport programmes in rural communities in the Northern and Western Region.
7. Enhance the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the Northern and Western Region, particularly in the Galway Metropolitan Area, the Regional Growth Centres,<sup>4</sup> the Key Towns<sup>5</sup> and rural communities of the region.
8. Expand the public EV charge point network in strategic and accessible locations across the Northern and Western Region.
9. Enhance the use of smart transport technologies on public transport modes in the Northern and Western Region.
10. Improve the infrastructure and services of Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) and Donegal Airport.



<sup>4</sup> The Regional Growth Centres of the Northern and Western Region include Letterkenny, Sligo Town and Athlone

<sup>5</sup> The Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region include Ballina, Castlebar, Cavan, Ballinasloe, Carrick-on-Shannon, Monaghan Town, Roscommon Town, and Tuam.

### Key messages

- Average distance of a home to a public bus stop is notably high in the Northern and Western Region.
- Just over half of the region's population only has access to transport with less than 10 services a day .
- The Northern and Western Region is notably reliant on private car journeys.

Section 2 of this submission will highlight some of the key challenges facing the Northern and Western Region's transport system and the likely impact of these challenges. To achieve this, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly has analysed the region's performance with respect to a host of regional transport statistics that has been provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO).<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1: Regional Transport Challenges

The Northern and Western Region is experiencing a number of significant challenges in terms of transport accessibility, frequency and capacity. Such challenges are evident from the region's performance with respect to a number of key transport indicators, namely:

- ◆ Access to sustainable transport modes
- ◆ Frequency of public transport
- ◆ EV charge point infrastructure

#### 2.1.1: Access to Sustainable Transport Modes

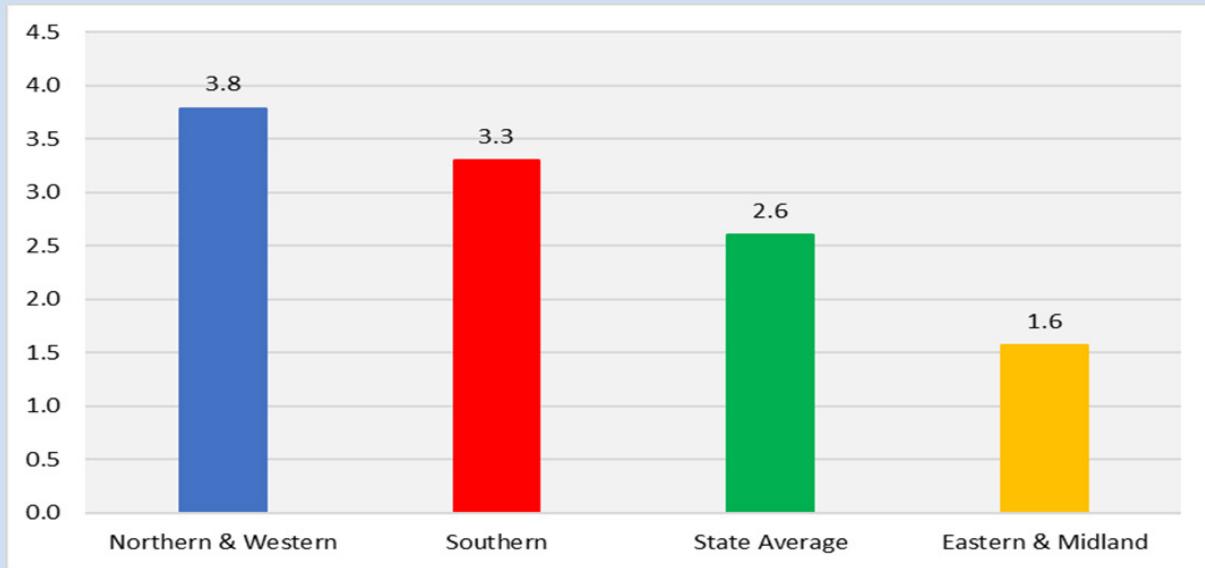
Residential dwellings based in the Northern and Western Region are – on average – 3.8km from a public bus stop, which was higher relative to the corresponding State average of 2.6km and the highest out of the three NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland, as evident from Figure 1. As can be seen from Figure 2, residential dwellings based in the Local Authorities of the Northern and Western Region were generally further away from public bus stops relative to the national norm. Notably, residential dwellings in Donegal were – on average – 13.5km away from a public bus stop, which was the highest average distance recorded in the State at the time of the Census. Above average distances were also registered in Galway County (3.9km), Monaghan (3.7km), Roscommon (3.2km), Mayo (2.9km) and Cavan (2.8km). Below average distances were registered in Leitrim (2.3km), Sligo (1.4km) and Galway City (0.4km).

In conjunction to the lack of access to public bus stops, residents based in the Northern and Western Region also do not have adequate access to other sustainable modes of transport. For example, Figure 3 shows that residential dwellings based in the Northern and Western Region are – on average – 30.4km from a train station, which was notably higher relative to the State average of 15.7km and the highest out of the three NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland. Notably, the Northern and Western Region's average distance to a train station is more than twice the corresponding ratio for the Southern Region and is four times larger than the equivalent ratio for the Eastern and Midland Region. In terms of Local Authorities, residential dwellings based in Donegal are – on average – 113km from a train station, with notably high distances also noted in Monaghan, Cavan, Galway County and Leitrim.

<sup>6</sup> Census data from 2016

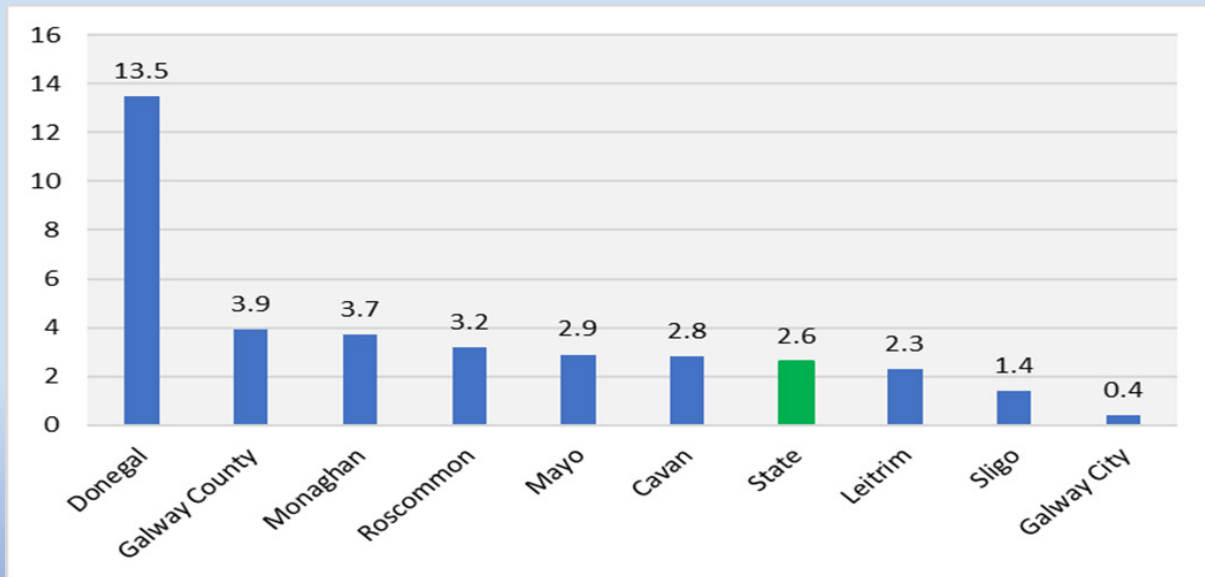


**Figure 1: Average distance of residential dwellings to a public bus stop (km), by NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**



Source: CSO

**Figure 2: Average distance of residential dwellings to a public bus stop, by Local Authority Area in the Northern and Western Region**

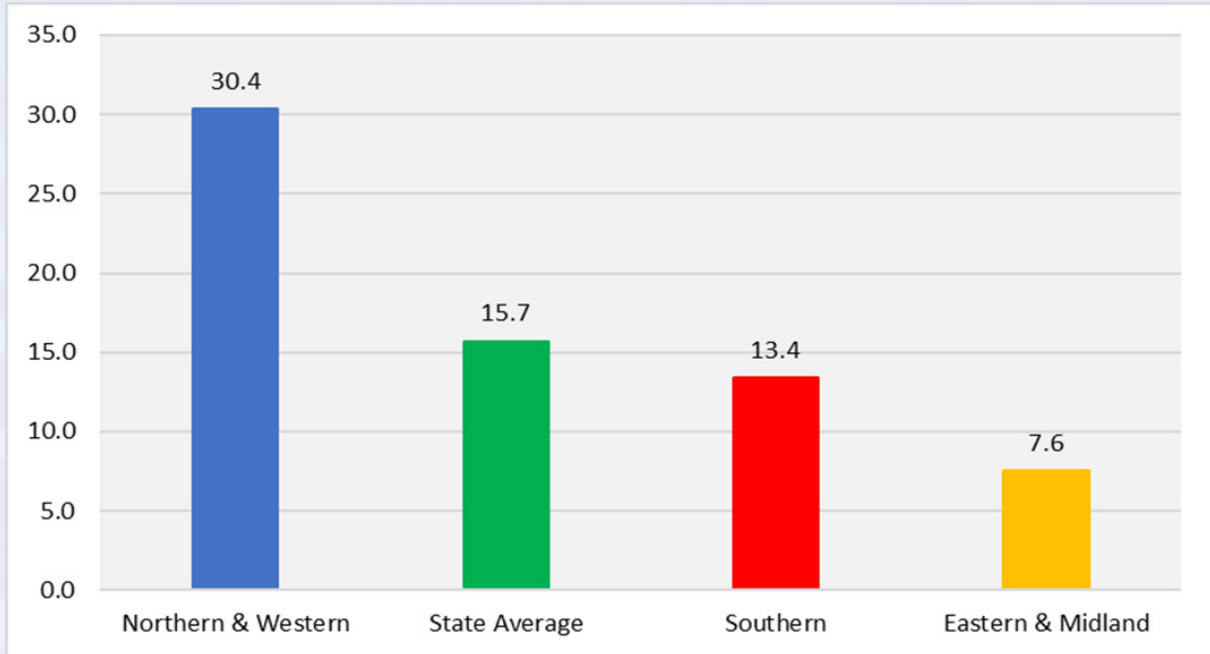


Source: CSO



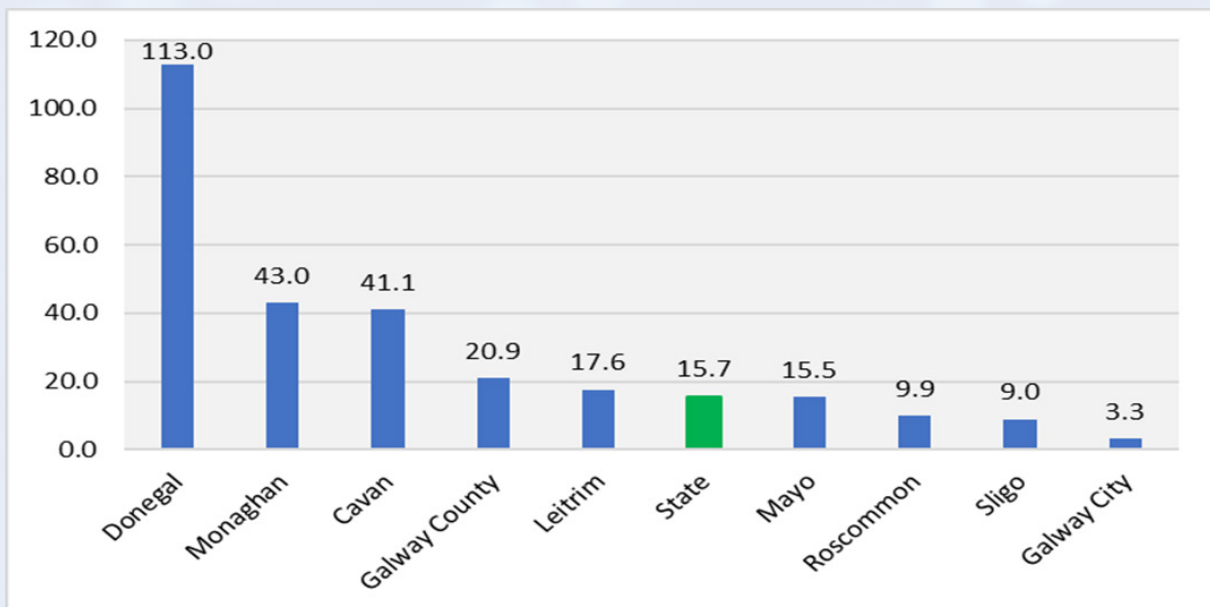


**Figure 3: Average distance of residential dwellings to a train station (km), by NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**



Source: CSO

**Figure 4: Average distance of residential dwellings to a train station (km), by Local Authorities based in the Northern and Western Region**



Source: CSO

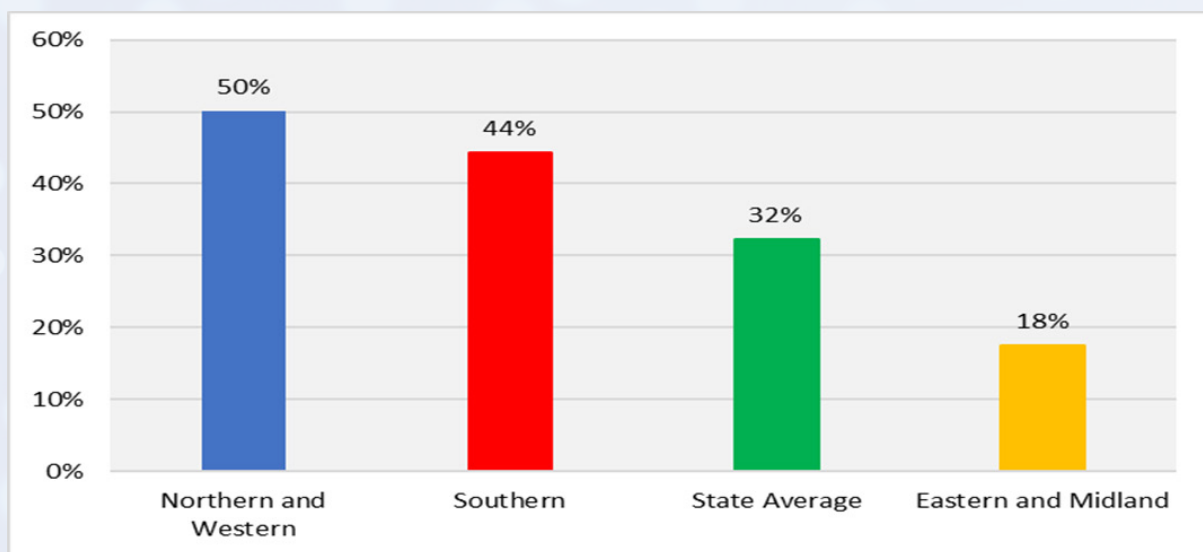


### 2.1.2: Frequency of Public Transport

Of the three NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland, the Northern and Western Region had the highest percentage of its population living close to a transport option with less than 10 daily departures during the working week – at 50 per cent – which was considerably higher relative to the State average of 32 per cent, as evident from Figure 5. In contrast, the Eastern and Midland Region had the lowest percentage of its population living close to a transport option with less than ten departures each day, at 18 per cent.

In terms of Local Authorities, 95 per cent of the population of Leitrim lived close to a public transport option that had less than 10 daily departures during the working week, with high ratios – relative to the national norm of 32 per cent – also recorded in Cavan at 74 per cent, Roscommon at 64 per cent, Mayo at 61 per cent, Galway County at 59 per cent and Monaghan at 55 per cent, as can be seen from Figure 6.

**Figure 5: Percentage of population whose nearest public transport stop had infrequent services (i.e. less than ten daily departures) during the working week, by NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**



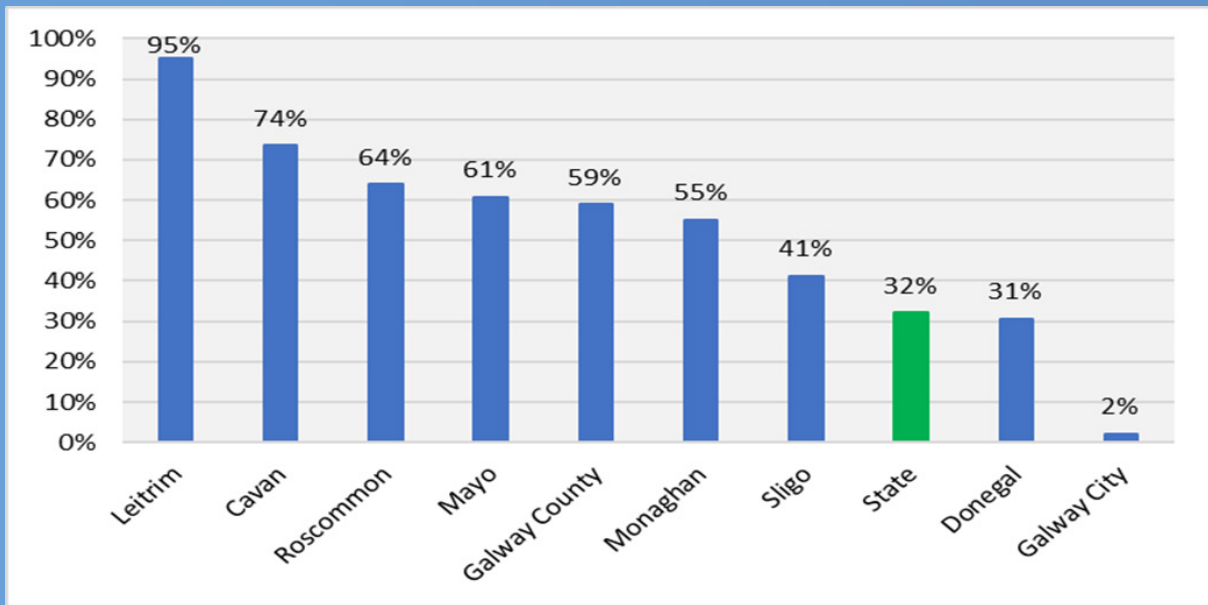
Source: CSO

In conjunction to this, the Northern and Western Region also had the lowest percentage of its population living close to a transport option with more than 50 departures each day – at 6 per cent – which was substantially lower relative to the State average of 30 per cent. In contrast, the Eastern and Midland Region had the highest percentage of its population living close to a transport option with more than 50 departures each day, at 48 per cent.

As evident from Figure 8, Galway City was the only Local Authority within the Northern and Western Region to register an above average ratio in this regard, with 50 per cent of its population living close to a transport option with more than 50 daily departures during the working week. Notably, no residents based in Leitrim, Mayo, Donegal and Monaghan lived close to a transport option with 50 daily departures during the working week, with low ratio also recorded in Cavan, Sligo and Roscommon.

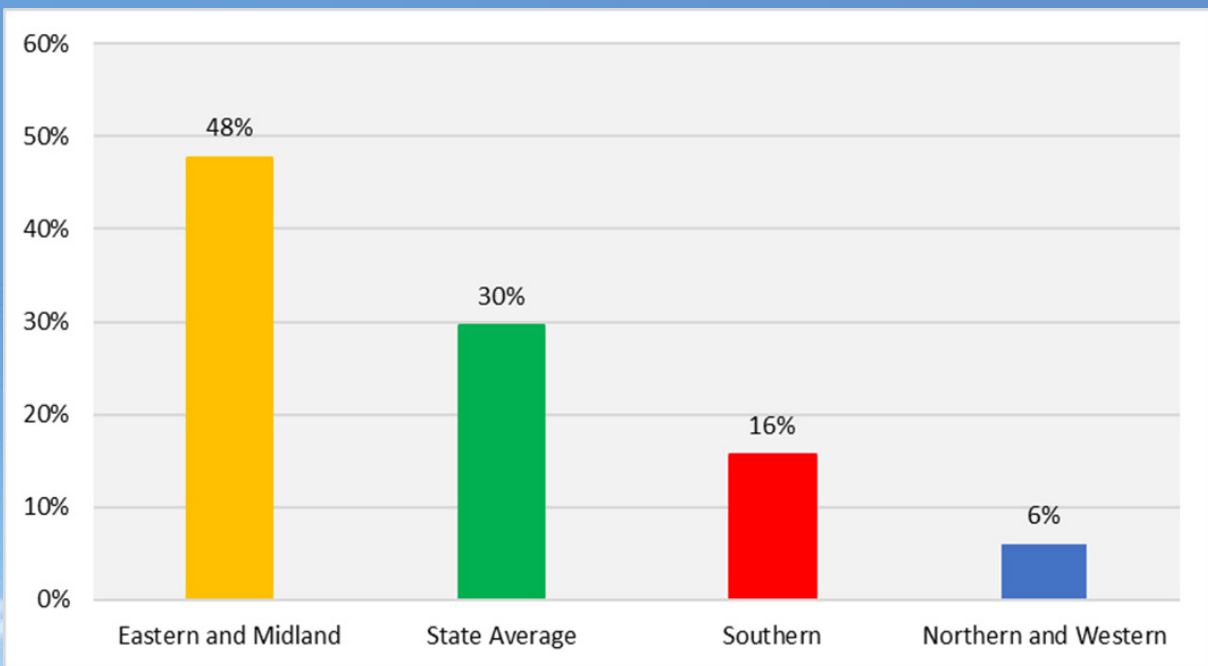


**Figure 6: Percentage of population whose nearest public transport stop had infrequent services (i.e. less than ten daily departures) during the working week, by NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**



Source: CSO

**Figure 7: Percentage of population where the nearest public transport stop had high frequent services (i.e. more than 50 daily departures) during the working week, by NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**

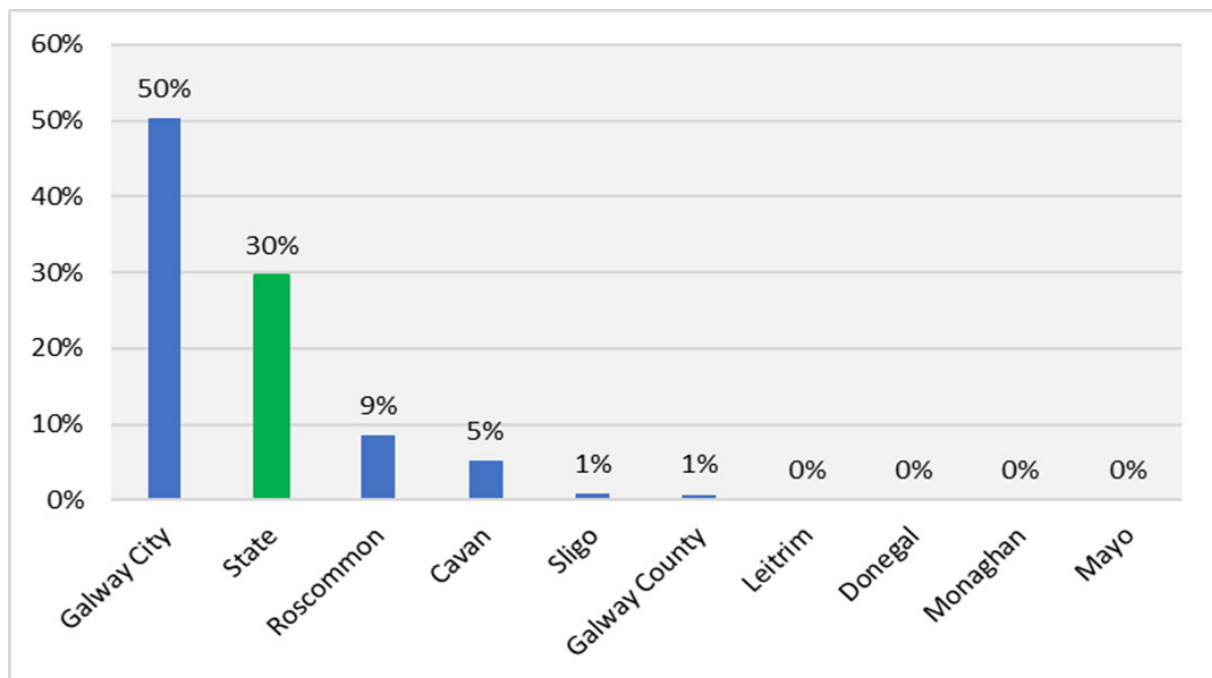


Source: CSO





**Figure 8: Percentage of population where the nearest public transport stop had high frequent services (i.e. more than 50 daily departures) during the working week, by Local Authorities based in the Northern and Western Region**



Source:CSO

### 2.1.3: EV Charge Point Infrastructure

Using data from Plugshare,<sup>7</sup> OpenCharge Map<sup>8</sup> and the ESB's "EV Charge Point Map"<sup>9</sup>, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly has been able to examine the number of publicly available EV charge points<sup>10</sup> on the island of Ireland, as of the 1st week of October 2022. As evident from Table 1, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly identified 488 publicly available EV charge points located in the Northern and Western Region as of October 2022, which was the lowest out of the 4 NUTS 2 Regions of the island of Ireland and lower than the corresponding totals for Northern Ireland (529 publicly available EV charge points), the Southern Region (920) and the Eastern and Midland Region (1,261).

**Table 1: Absolute number of EV charge points located on the island of Ireland, as of October 2022**

Region	Number of EV Charge Points
Eastern and Midland Region	1,261
Southern Region	920
Northern Ireland	529
Northern and Western Region	488
<b>Island of Ireland (total)</b>	<b>3,198</b>

Source: Northern and Western Regional Assembly's calculation using data from Plugshare, OpenCharge Map and the ESB's "EV Charge Point Map"

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.plugshare.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://openchargemap.org/site>

<sup>9</sup> <https://esb.ie/what-we-do/ecars/charge-point-map>

<sup>10</sup> EV charge points outside of private households

**Table 2: Absolute number of EV charge points located on the island of Ireland, as of October 2022**

County	Number of EV Charge Points
Dublin	639
Antrim	240
Cork	239
Kildare	174
Galway	172
Wexford	146
Limerick	113
Kerry	108
Wicklow	102
Donegal	99
Down	97
Clare	89
Tipperary	84
Louth	83
Mayo	81
Westmeath	78
Meath	74
Derry	70
Laois	65
Waterford	57
Kilkenny	52
Tyrone	50
Armagh	43
Cavan	35
Sligo	35
Roscommon	34
Carlow	32
Fermanagh	29
Offaly	27
Monaghan	24
Longford	19
Leitrim	8
<b>Island of Ireland (total)</b>	<b>3,198</b>

Source: Northern and Western Regional Assembly's calculation using data from Plugshare, OpenCharge Map and the ESB's "EV Charge Point Map"



As evident from Tables 1 and 2, publicly available EV charge points – in absolute terms – seem to be generally concentrated in urban oriented regions and counties with relatively less publicly available EV charge points found in counties in the Northern and Western Region and Northern Ireland. That said, such information does not take into account the unique geographical dimensions of all regions and counties across the island of Ireland, which is quite relevant considering the varying range of EVs in terms of distance and battery size and due to factors such as “range anxiety”. Therefore, using the above information and data from Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI)<sup>11</sup>, this submission also analyses the number of publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup> for the 4 NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland and the counties of the island of Ireland, thereby capturing the density of publicly available EV charge points in Ireland.

As can be seen from Table 3 and of the 4 NUTS 2 Regions of the island of Ireland, the Eastern and Midland Region recorded the highest density of publicly available EV charge points, with 8.7 publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup>, which was higher than the average for the island of Ireland which was 3.8. Of the 4 NUTS 2 Regions of the island of Ireland, the Northern and Western Region registered the lowest density of publicly available EV charge points, with 1.9 publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup>, which was below the average for the island of Ireland and also notably lower than Northern Ireland (3.7) and the Southern Region (3.1).

**Table 3: Number of publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup>, for the 4 NUTS 2 Regions of the island of Ireland, as of October 2022**

Region	Number of EV Charge Points
Eastern and Midland Region	8.7
<b>Island of Ireland</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Northern Ireland	3.7
Southern Region	3.1
Northern and Western Region	1.9

Source: Northern and Western Regional Assembly’s calculation using data from Plugshare, OpenCharge Map and the ESB’s “EV Charge Point Map”

As evident from Table 4, urban oriented counties located in the Greater Dublin Area generally recorded densities that were above the all-island average, with the highest concentration found in Dublin with 69 publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup>. Other counties to record above average densities included Kildare (10.3 publicly available EV charge points per 100 Km<sup>2</sup>), Louth (10), Antrim (7.7), Wexford (6.2), Wicklow (5), Westmeath (4.2), Limerick (4.1) and Down (3.9). In contrast, rural oriented counties located in the Northern and Western Region and Northern Ireland recorded the lowest density of publicly available EV charge points, with only 0.5 publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup> in Leitrim. This was followed by other counties such as Roscommon (1.3), Offaly (1.3), Mayo (1.4), Tyrone (1.5), Fermanagh (1.6), Longford (1.7), Cavan (1.8) and Monaghan (1.9).

<sup>11</sup> <https://osi.ie/>

**Table 4: Number of publicly available EV charge points for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup>, for the counties of the island of Ireland, as of October 2022**

County	Number of EV Charge Points
Dublin	69.0
Kildare	10.3
Louth	10.0
Antrim	7.7
Wexford	6.2
Wicklow	5.0
Westmeath	4.2
Limerick	4.1
Down	3.9
<b>Island of Ireland</b>	<b>3.8</b>
Laois	3.8
Carlow	3.6
Derry	3.3
Armagh	3.2
Cork	3.2
Meath	3.2
Waterford	3.1
Galway	2.8
Clare	2.6
Kilkenny	2.5
Kerry	2.2
Donegal	2.0
Tipperary	2.0
Sligo	1.9
Monaghan	1.9
Cavan	1.8
Longford	1.7
Fermanagh	1.6
Tyrone	1.5
Mayo	1.4
Offaly	1.3
Roscommon	1.3
Leitrim	0.5

Source: Northern and Western Regional Assembly's calculation using data from Plugshare, OpenCharge Map and the ESB's "EV Charge Point Map"

Notably, all 8 counties of the Northern and Western Region recorded a ratio which was below the average for the island of Ireland, therefore – for every 100 Km<sup>2</sup> – it is clear that Ireland's most rural oriented region under Project Ireland 2040 – namely the Northern and Western Region – is underserved in terms of publicly available EV charge points.



## 2.2: Impact of Regional Transport Challenges

Based on the findings of Sub-Section 2.1 of this submission, it is clear that residents in the Northern and Western Region – relative to the national norm – tend to live further away from sustainable modes of public transport and generally live close to a transport option with infrequent daily services during the working week. Such trends seem to be having an impact on the Northern and Western Region’s transport system, based on trends in the following indicators:

- ◊ Low Usage of Sustainable Transport Modes
- ◊ High Reliance on Private Car Journeys
- ◊ High Commuting Levels

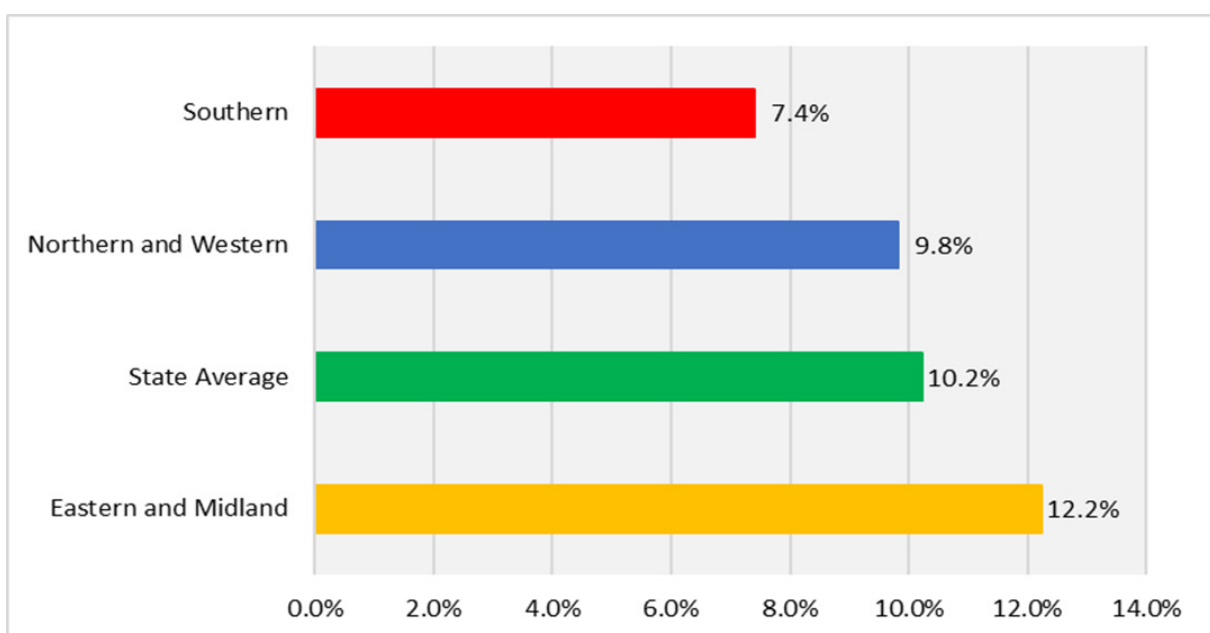
### 2.2.1: Low Usage of Sustainable Transport Modes

As can be seen from Figure 9, only 9.8 per cent of all journeys in the Northern and Western Region were completed through buses, coaches or minibuses, which is below the State average of 10.2 per cent. Of the three NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland, residents based in the Eastern and Midland Region had the highest proportion of journeys completed through this transport mode, with 12.2 per cent of journeys carried out through buses, coaches or minibuses. In terms of Local Authorities, only 7.6 per cent of journeys in Sligo were completed through buses, coaches or minibuses, which was the lowest out of the 9 Local Authorities based in the Northern and Western Region. Other Local Authorities to record below average ratios in this regard included Roscommon (8%), Mayo (8.4%), Galway County (8.6%), Galway City (9.6%) and Monaghan (10.2%), as evident from Figure 10.

In conjunction to this, only 0.3 per cent of all journeys in the Northern and Western Region were completed through trains, which is below the State average of 2.7 per cent. Of the three NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland, residents based in the Eastern and Midland Region had the highest proportion of journeys completed through this transport mode, with 5 per cent of journeys carried out through buses, coaches or minibuses. Furthermore, 11.2 per cent of all journeys in the Northern and Western Region were completed by either walking or cycling, which was the lowest out of the three NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland and below the State average of 16.6 per cent.

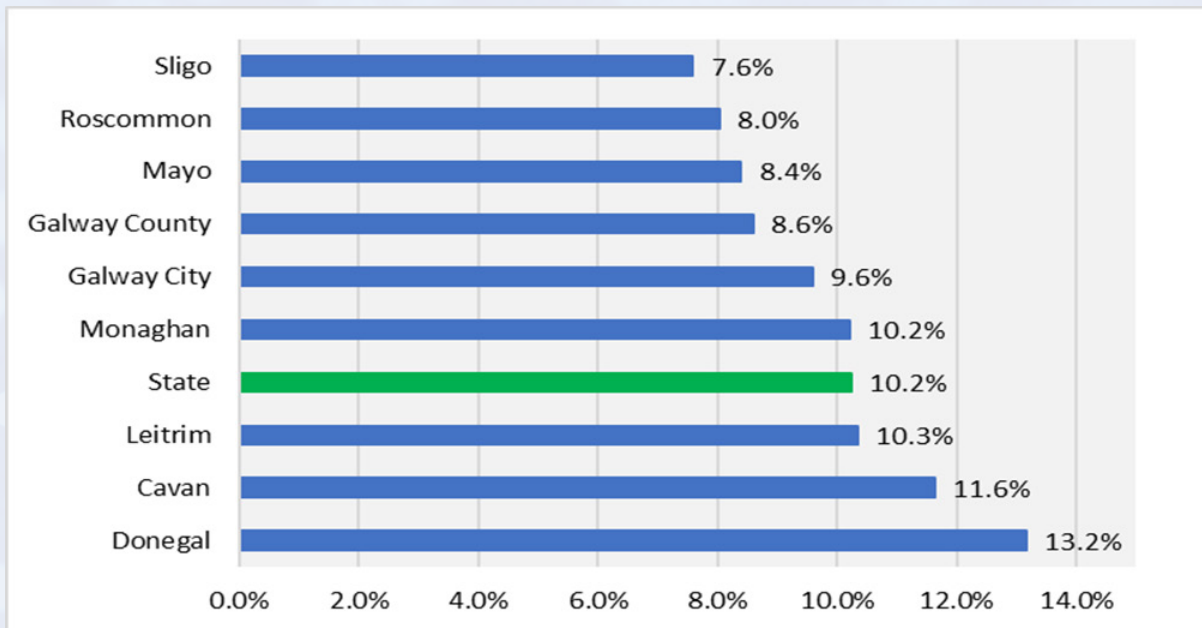
Along with other factors, the challenges associated with the region’s transport system – specifically in terms of accessibility, frequency and capacity – are likely to have significantly contributed to the low uptake of sustainable transport modes in the Northern and Western Region.

**Figure 9: Percentage of journeys that were completed through buses, coaches and minibuses, by the NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**



source: CSO

**Figure 10: Percentage of journeys that were achieved through buses, coaches and minibuses, by the Local Authorities of the Northern and Western Region**



source: CSO

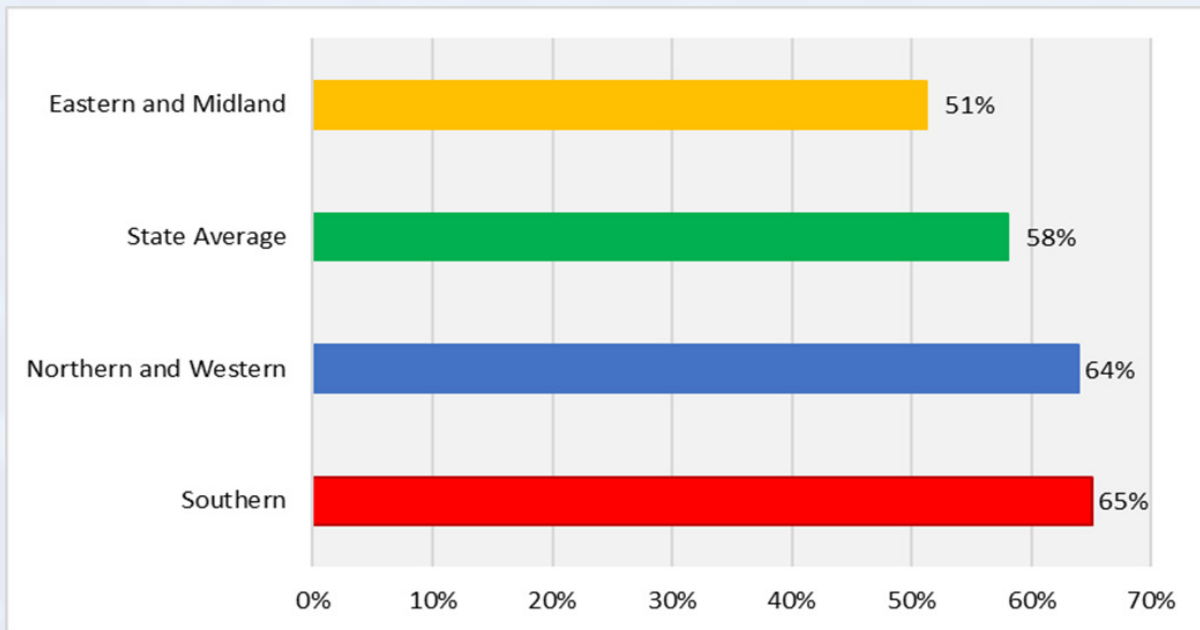
**2.2.1: High Reliance on Private Car Journeys**

Figure 11 shows how reliant the residents of the Northern and Western Region were on private cars – both in terms of driver and passenger journeys – with 64 per cent of all journeys in the region completed through private cars at the time of the previous Census. Such a ratio was higher than the corresponding State average of 58 per cent. Likewise, as evident from Figure 12, residents based in the Local Authorities within the Northern and Western Region were largely reliant on private car journeys, with residents based in Roscommon and Galway County most reliant on this transport mode, with 68 per cent of all journeys completed using private cars in these areas. Overall, 8 out of the 9 Local Authorities based in the Northern and Western Region registered an above average reliance on private car journeys. The challenges associated with the Northern and Western Region’s transport system – in terms of accessibility, frequency and capacity are likely to have contributed to such a high reliance on private cars.



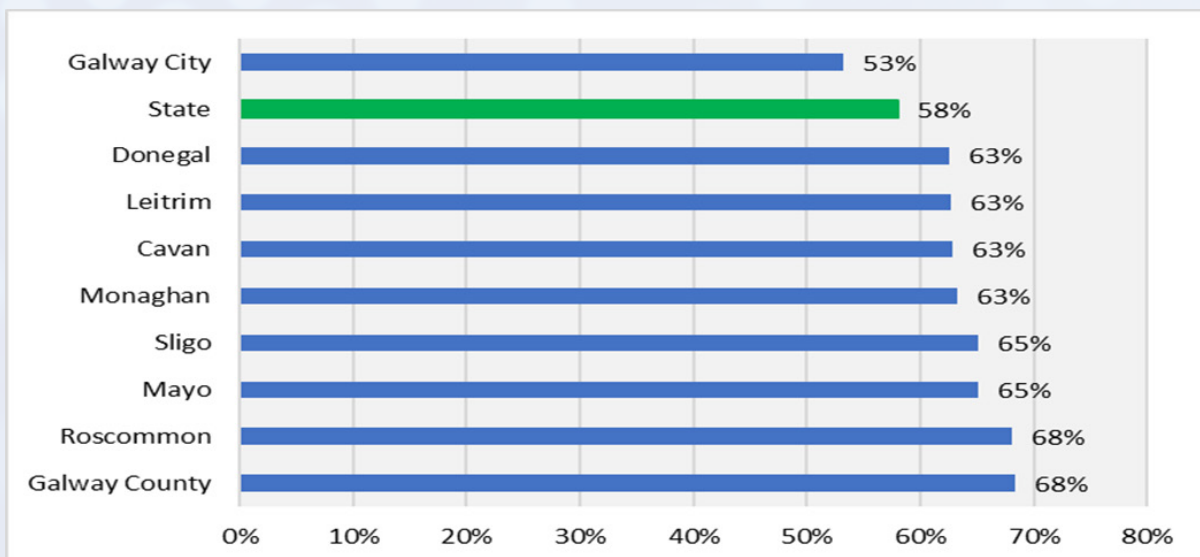


**Figure 11: Percentage of all journeys that were completed through private cars, by the NUTS 2 Regions of Ireland**



source: CSO

**Figure 12: Percentage of all journeys that were completed through private cars, by the Local Authorities based in the Northern and Western Region**



source: CSO

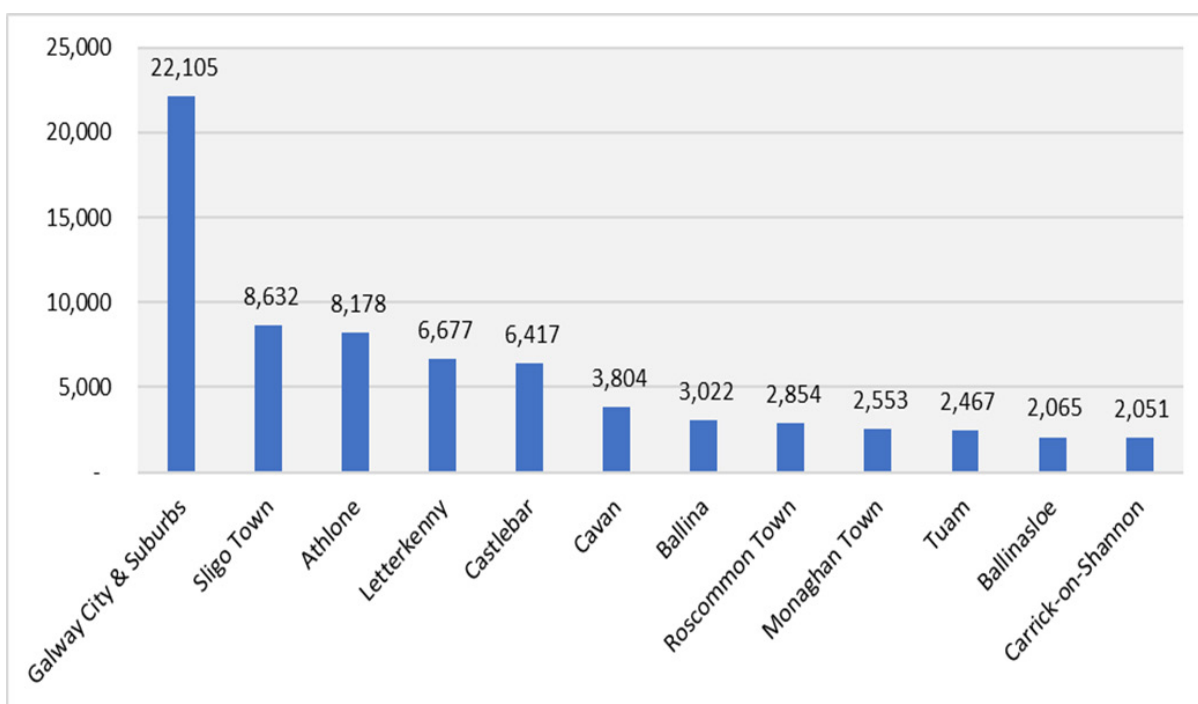
### 2.2.3: High Commuting Levels

There are certain settlements that have high levels of commuting into the Galway Metropolitan Area, the Regional Growth Centres of Letterkenny, Sligo Town and Athlone and the Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region. Given the reliance on private car journeys – at both a regional and local authority level – it is highly likely that a sizeable proportion of these commuters are using private cars as their mode of travel since the region's transport system has issues with respect to accessibility, frequency and capacity. As a result, the lack of alternative travel options and high levels of commuting – which are expected to be completed using private cars – is likely to be needlessly contributing to higher carbon emissions and longer commuting times.

Figure 13 provides a sense of the scale of this challenge, with the graphic showing the overall number of workers who travelled into the Galway Metropolitan Area, the Regional Growth Centres of Letterkenny, Sligo Town and Athlone and the Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region to their place of employment. As evident from Figure 13, a total of 22,105 workers – who were not resident in Galway City and Suburbs – travelled into this settlement to their place of employment at the time of the Census, with high commuting levels also noted in settlements such as – but not limited to – Sligo Town (8,632 commuters), Athlone (8,178), Letterkenny (6,677), and Castlebar (3,804), while significant levels of commuting were also evident in remaining Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region.

To what extent these commuters integrate with public transport or use private cars as their mode of transport remains to be seen but given the fact that – at a regional and local authority level – commuters are notably reliant on private cars, it is likely that a sizeable proportion of these commuters are using private car journey as their mode of travel, which – as a result – is contributing to higher carbon emissions and longer commute times.

**Figure 13: Number of commuters that travel to their place of work in Galway City and Suburbs, the Regional Growth Centres and the Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region**



source: CSO

Since these commuters are by definition coming from outside of the region’s designated settlements, it is clear that there are other settlements in close proximity that have high levels of commuting into the Galway Metropolitan Area, the Regional Growth Centres of Letterkenny, Sligo Town and Athlone and the Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region.

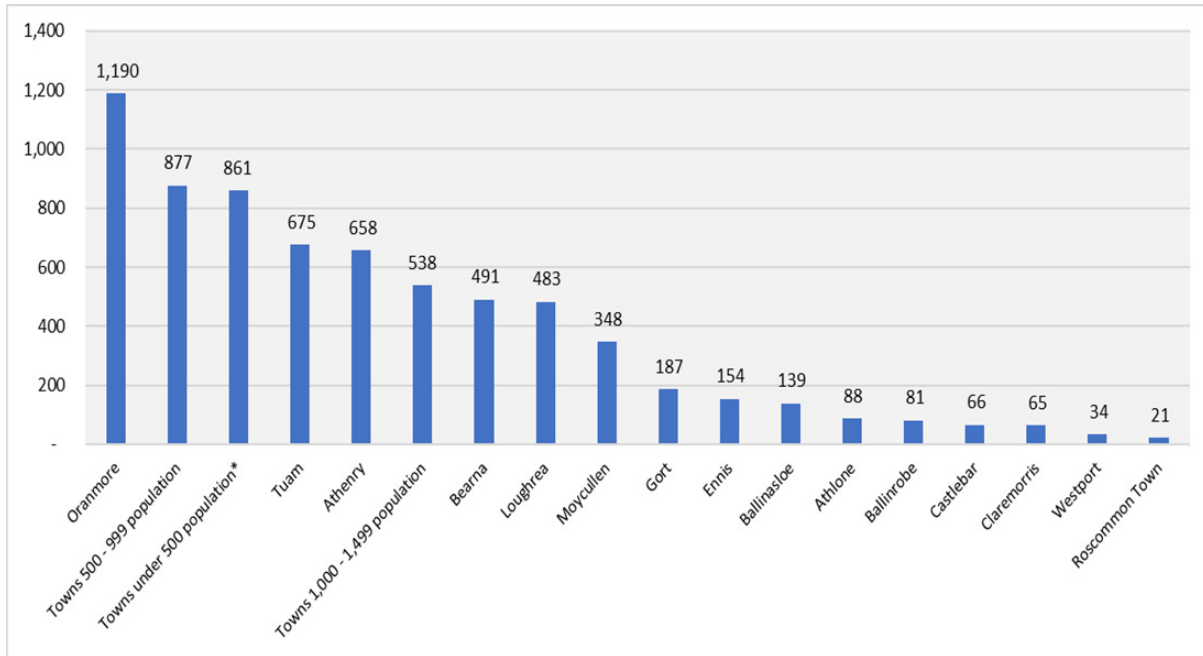
For example, as can be seen from Figure 14, there are a number of individual settlements which experience high levels of commuting into Galway City and Suburbs – including but not limited to – Oranmore (1,190 workers commute into Galway City and Suburbs), Tuam (675), Athenry (658), Bearna (491), Loughrea (483), Moycullen (348), Gort (187), Ennis (154), Ballinasloe (139) and Athlone (88). Furthermore, commuting into Galway City and Suburbs – for work purposes – was also high from towns with a population between 500 and 999 (877), from towns with a population with less than 500 (861) and from towns with a population between 1,000 and 1,499 (538). Similar results are evident for Letterkenny and Sligo Town in Figure 15 and 16 respectively.

To what degree these commuters integrate with public transport or rely on private car journeys remains to be seen, but it is well established that commuters within the Local Authority areas of Galway City – and particularly in Galway County – are quite reliant on private car journeys as a means of travel, which suggests it is highly likely that a sizeable proportion of these commuters are using private car journey as their mode of travel. In the context of the “new statement



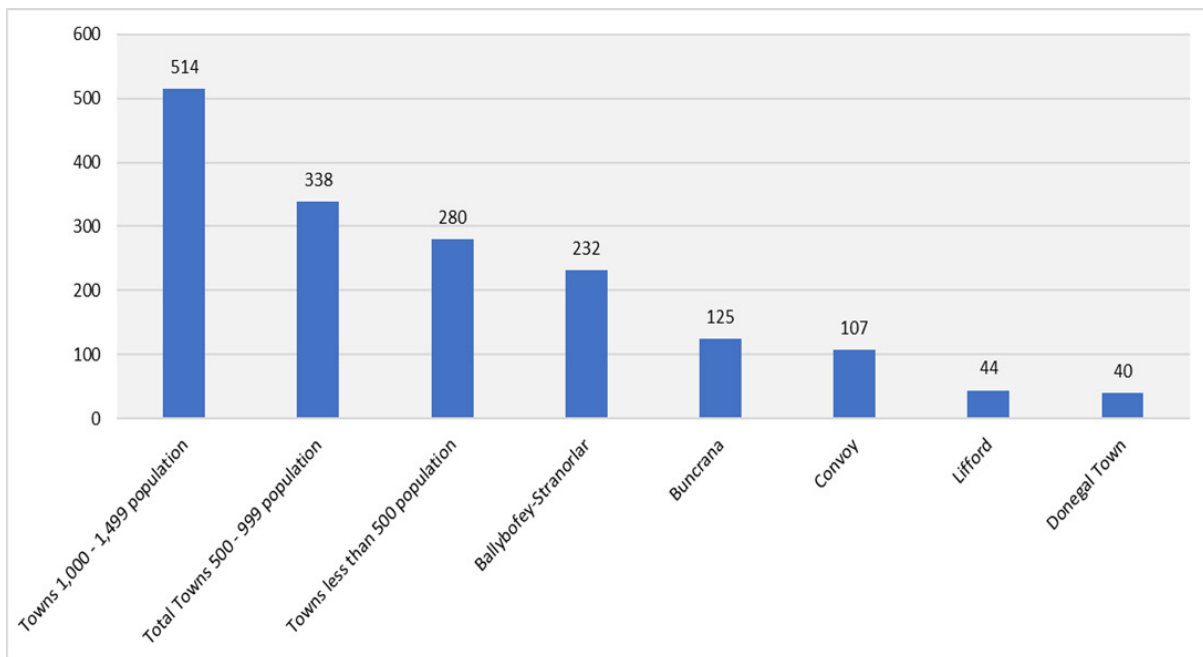
of strategy of the Department of Transport” initiative, this provides extensive opportunities to target these communities with accessible, frequent, high-quality and affordable transport services, providing high-quality and sustainable travel options and facilities to commuters based in these communities.

**Figure 14: Number of commuters that travel to Galway City and Suburbs for work purposes, that were greater than 20 commuters by CSO defined settlements and aggregated rural towns**



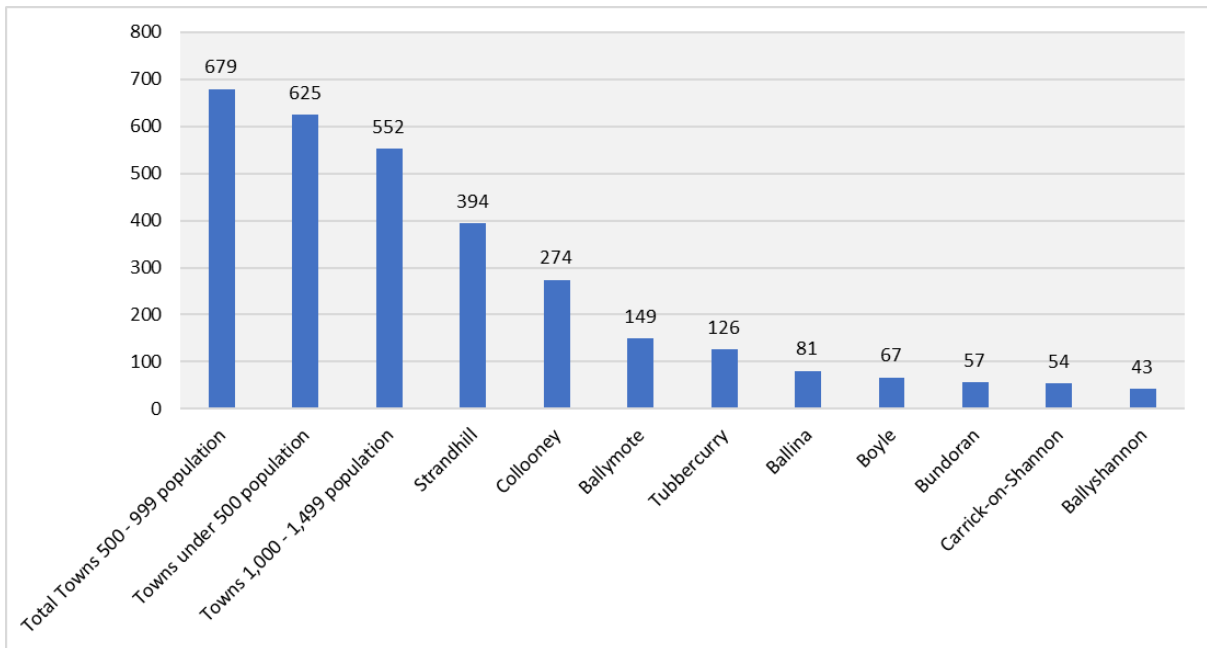
source: CSO. \* Towns under 500 population, with at least 50 inhabited houses

**Figure 15: Number of commuters that travel to Letterkenny for work purposes, that were greater than 20 commuters by CSO defined settlements and aggregated rural towns**



source: CSO. \* Towns under 500 population, with at least 50 inhabited houses

**Figure 16: Number of commuters that travel to Sligo Town for work purposes, that were greater than 20 commuters by CSO defined settlements and aggregated rural towns**



source: CSO. \* Towns under 500 population, with at least 50 inhabited houses





## 3:

## Recommendations

It is imperative that the new statement of strategy of the DOT supports the implementation of the transport objectives of the RSES of the Northern and Western Region, acknowledging the need to deliver services that will improve the region's transport system and address historical underinvestment in our region's transport infrastructure. To achieve this, the Assembly has made a number of high-level recommendations which should be reflected in the new statement of strategy of the DOT, namely:

1. **Support the delivery of the population and compact growth targets in the RSES of the Northern and Western Region:** The new statement of strategy of the DOT needs to acknowledge and support the delivery of the Northern and Western Region's designated population and compact growth targets of the RSES, with the region's compact growth targets outlined through the following RPOs:
  - ◆ **RPO 3.2 (a)**, namely deliver at least 50% of all new city homes targeted in the Galway MASP, within the existing built-up footprint of Galway City and suburbs.
  - ◆ **RPO 3.2 (b)**, namely deliver at least 40% of all new housing targeted in the Regional Growth Centres, within the existing built-up footprint.
  - ◆ **RPO 3.2 (c)**, namely deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements with a population of at least 1,500 (other than the Galway MASP and the Regional Growth Centres), within the existing built-up footprints.
  - ◆ **RPO 3.3**, namely deliver at least 20% of all new housing in rural areas on brownfield sites.
  - ◆ **RPO 3.4**, namely support the regeneration and renewal of small towns and villages in rural areas.

The provision of accessible, frequent, high-quality and affordable public transport will be central to supporting these targets and thereby supporting more sustainable settlement patterns in the Northern and Western Region.



- 2. Deliver transport projects that have been outlined in the existing Galway Transport Strategy and in Local Transport Plans in the Northern and Western Region:** The new statement of strategy of the DOT should aim to support projects that have been outlined in the existing Galway Transport Strategy and the Local Transport Plans in the Northern and Western Region, in a manner that encourages sustainable travel patterns and reduces private car journeys.

The statement of strategy should have a particular focus on implementing the N6 Galway City Ring Road project, developing a safe street environment for pedestrians and cyclists, providing park and ride facilities at appropriate strategic and accessible locations on the periphery of the city that are linked in with the bus network, developing a cross-city network of high frequency bus services, while enhancing the Galway Metropolitan Area's rail infrastructure. The statement of strategy should also aim to deliver Local Transport Plans that facilitate a shift to more sustainable transport modes in the Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region – as required by the RSES (RPOs 6.27 and 6.28). In this regard, there should be a particular focus on providing infrastructure that will allow for multi-modal travel integration and sustainable mobility, reducing the reliance on private car journeys and supporting a shift to sustainable transport modes, namely cycling, walking, public transport and car-sharing.

- 3. Upgrade and expand the rail infrastructure of the Northern and Western Region:** As outlined in the RSES of the Northern and Western Region, the Assembly supports the delivery of rail projects which will improve the connectivity and accessibility of the region, enhance the region's existing rail facilities and transition the fleets to low carbon sources. The new statement of strategy needs to support these specific rail projects, relevant reviews and feasibility studies that have been outlined in our RSES through a variety of RPOs (6.12-6.17), with specific rail projects and priorities including:

- ◆ **RPO 6.12** which seeks to upgrade the capacity of the Athlone - Athenry - Galway rail line, including the provision of dual tracks and increased service stops between Athlone and Galway
- ◆ **RPO 6.13 (a)** which aims to deliver the Athenry - Tuam - Claremorris - Sligo rail line to an appropriate level of service and to a standard capable of facilitating passenger and freight transport.
- ◆ **RPO 6.15** which seeks to enhance the capacity of the Sligo to Dublin rail line
- ◆ **RPO 6.16** which supports investigation of extending rail services to the North-West City Region from Sligo and Dublin, creating an integrated All-Island approach
- ◆ **RPO 6.17** which aims to support the development of a strategy for the electrification of the rail network

- 4. Improve the inter-regional and intra-regional national road network that connects the key settlements of the Northern and Western Region and maintain and enhance the regional and local road network of the region.** The new statement of strategy of the DOT should aim to maintain and enhance the existing national road network and deliver new strategic national road projects to strengthen international and regional connectivity in the Northern and Western Region. In this regard, the new statement of strategy of the DOT should aim to deliver the Northern and Western Region's road projects that have been identified in the National Development Plan<sup>12</sup> and the RSES of the Northern and Western Region, as outlined through RPOs 6.6 to 6.10. In conjunction to this, the strategy should also aim to maintain and improve the region's existing regional and local road networks, as a means of enhancing the connectivity of rural communities located in the Northern and Western Region.

- 5. Enhance the reliability and connectivity of interregional and intra-regional bus services that connects the key settlements of the Northern and Western Region.** The new statement of strategy of the DOT should aim to improve connectivity between urban centres – such as Galway City and Dublin – and the reliability and the level of service within and between key settlements in our region. Within the Galway City area, investment in bus infrastructure and services will be delivered through Bus Connects and the relevant parts of the Galway Transport Strategy and this should be reflected in the new statement of strategy of the DOT.

- 6. Continue to expand the “Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan” and other transport programmes in rural communities in the Northern and Western Region:** The Northern and Western Regional Assembly supports the continuation and expansion of the “Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan”. The new statement of strategy of the DOT should aim to further integrate this service with other public transport services, improve linkages of services between towns, villages and rural communities within the region, whilst improving the overall customer experience for this service. Furthermore, the new statement of strategy should also continue to maintain and improve the

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/774e2-national-development-plan-2021-2030/>



ferry services provided to the island communities of the Northern and Western Region and support the delivery of Greenway and Blueway projects in rural communities across the region.

7. **Enhance the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure of the Northern and Western Region, particularly in the Galway Metropolitan Area, the Regional Growth Centres,<sup>13</sup> the Key Towns<sup>14</sup> and rural communities of the region.** In line with RPO 6.26, the new statement of strategy of the DOT should aim to support sustainable and active travel modes, by aiming to deliver safe cycling routes and enhance pedestrian facilities across settlements of all scale in the Northern and Western Region. The strategy should acknowledge the need to provide additional funding to Local Authorities and transport agencies as a means of delivering cost effective walking and cycling infrastructure and Greenway and Blueway projects in the region.
8. **Expand the public EV charge point network in strategic and accessible locations across the Northern and Western Region.** As a means of supporting RPOs 6.33 and 6.34, the DOT's new statement of strategy should encourage greater use of EVs by developing more targeted, convenient and safe recharging facilities across the Northern and Western Region. In this regard, the new statement of strategy should aim to deliver EV "Fast Charge" points or EV "High Powered Charge" points in strategic and accessible locations across the Northern and Western Region.
9. **Enhance the use of smart transport technologies on public transport modes in the Northern and Western Region.** Where applicable, future transport projects within the Northern and Western Region should involve a systematic integration of ICT in the planning, design, operations, and management of these services. In this regard, the new statement of strategy should acknowledge and support the following RPOs within the RSES:
  - ◊ **RPO 6.18** namely utilise smart technology to provide for enhanced service experience for customers
  - ◊ **RPO 6.22** namely provide new interchange facilities and enhanced bus waiting facilities together with enhanced passenger information, utilising smart technology in appropriate circumstances.
10. **Improve the infrastructure and services of Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) and Donegal Airport:** The continued development of IWAK will be key to supporting growth in the Northern and Western Region's export base and the Strategic Development Zone at the airport has the potential in acting as a regional employment hub. On this basis, it is imperative that the new statement of strategy of the DOT aims to develop the infrastructure of the region's largest airport, with the view of improving the region's connectivity to global markets and enhancing IWAK's connectivity with the regions transport network. Furthermore, the new statement of strategy should also acknowledge the importance of the infrastructure and services of Donegal Airport, with the view of enhancing its existing and valuable contribution to the region.

<sup>13</sup> The Regional Growth Centres of the Northern and Western Region include Letterkenny, Sligo Town and Athlone

<sup>14</sup> The Key Towns of the Northern and Western Region include Ballina, Castlebar, Cavan, Ballinasloe, Carrick-on-Shannon, Monaghan Town, Roscommon Town, and Tuam.








## Northern & Western Regional Assembly

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