

GALWAY TRANSPORT VISION

2023



PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT
POBAL SEACHAS BRABÚS
FIGHTING FOR WORKERS & ECO-SOCIALISM

Gaillimh
GALWAY



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INTRODUCTION

Galway is the most congested city of its size in Europe. The negative consequences of this are felt by us all, in terms of time wasted sitting in traffic, fuel expenses, air pollution and more. This document is intended to provoke a conversation and debate about the future of transport in Galway. In sections on bus, rail and active travel, we put forward an ecosocialist vision that will improve quality of life, reduce congestion and emissions, increase accessibility for workers, women and people with disabilities, reduce energy usage and save people money.

Despite the rhetoric of the Green Party and others, Ireland is utterly failing to take the actions necessary to reduce emissions. Last year we had the highest increase in greenhouse gas emissions of any EU country, at 17%. Transport is one of the most significant contributors to those emissions. It is vital we rapidly move to end the current reliance on private cars. This can be done through urgently improving the alternatives – bus, rail, cycling and walking. These must be enhanced to become attractive alternatives to the car for the journeys people need to make.

“WE WELCOMED AN BORD PLEANÁLA’S REJECTION OF THE RING ROAD PLANS. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A BETTER GALWAY”

The N6 Galway Bypass is often presented as the solution to Galway’s transport woes. We believe it would be an environmentally disastrous, ineffective and expensive mistake. Instead of reducing congestion, around the world adding more roads has been found to result in more cars, more traffic and more emissions. We welcomed An Bord Pleanála’s rejection of the Ring Road plans. It is an opportunity to create a better Galway, one that is less congested, less polluted and offers a better quality of life.

Each year, People Before Profit produces a fully costed alternative budget. Using figures supplied by the state, we show how fare-free public transport with an increased capacity is perfectly possible. In order to achieve this and the other ecosocialist changes called for in this document, we need to break from the dependence on the private market and the for-profit model in the provision of public services.





THE ECOSOCIALIST, ECOFEMINIST CASE FOR FREE, GREEN AND FREQUENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Our existing public transport network, in Galway and nationwide, is organised to serve the needs of profit, being primarily designed for commuting to work rather than travelling for social or caring purposes. This has resulted in major gender bias in its design, given a key reason women, who disproportionately rely on public transport, travel is to drop off and collect family members. People with disabilities face even more prohibitive difficulties, and on buses are forced to compete for space with buggies and prams.[1] Working-class people in general and women, people with disabilities and public transport workers in particular must be central to designing Galway's transport network. People Before Profit will invest in a free, green and frequent public transport network for Galway, which is democratically run by workers, service users and communities, is accessible to all communities and guarantees quality pay and conditions for workers.

Free public transport is crucial to PBP's transport strategy for Galway and Ireland nationally, and our fully-costed alternative budget annually budgets for fare-free public transport.[2] This is vital from an environmental perspective in maximising public transport use, thereby minimising carbon emissions. The decision in 2019 to make public transport free to children on their services more than doubled child use on Irish Rail and Bus Éireann; making it free for all on services nationwide would increase it even more. Free public transport already exists in many countries, such as the US, Germany and Brazil, where nearly 100 towns and cities now offer some form of free transport, while Luxembourg completely abolished fares in 2020. In many of these areas, it has emerged that fares contributed only a small portion of running costs or that collecting fares cost more than their abolition. While free public transport has been applied to scheduled services, it can be extended to public bike schemes, share taxis, free taxis for people with impaired mobility and a level of free car hire for occasional journeys. People Before Profit will invest in these in Galway.[3]

“MAKING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN GALWAY FAST, FREQUENT AND FREE WILL ALSO HELP MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE, ENJOYABLE AND SAFE”

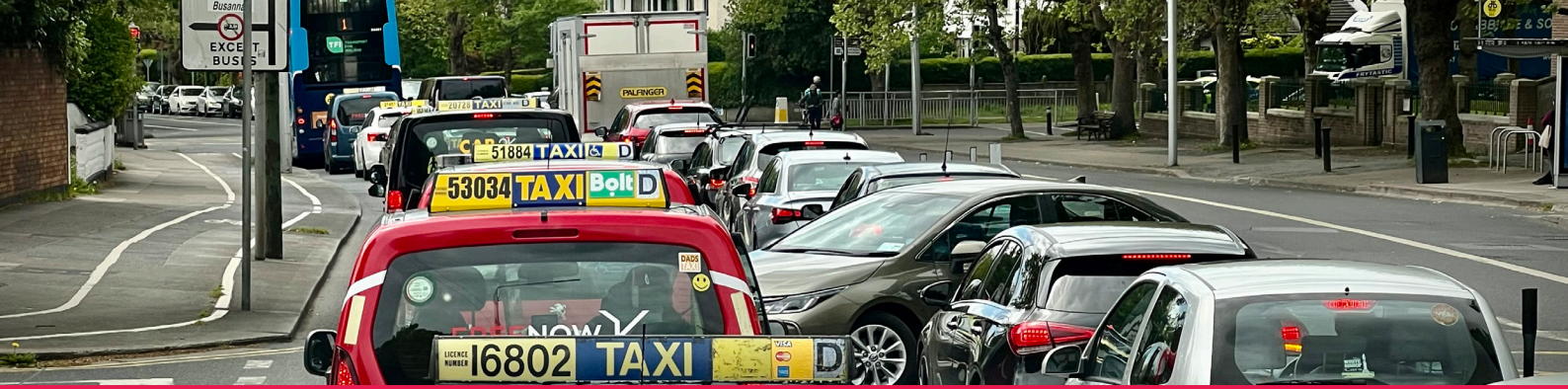
Making public transport in Galway fast, frequent and free will also help to make it accessible, enjoyable and safe without the need to introduce repressive and reactionary measures like transport police. Safety is crucial to making public transport accessible to all; a 2020 survey found that one in three public transport users in Ireland had seen or experienced homophobic, racist, sexual or general harassment or violence on public transport, with a third of women and a quarter of men reporting that they do not use it because they feel unsafe. As this document outlines below, expanding public transport use through these measures will also slash greenhouse gas emissions in Galway, given an overwhelming 80% of journeys in Ireland are currently by private car.[4]

[1]<https://rupture.ie/articles/free-frequent-fast-transport>

[2]<https://www.pbp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FINAL-BUDGET-23.pdf>

[3]<https://rupture.ie/articles/free-frequent-fast-transport>

[4]Ibid.



AIR POLLUTION & GALWAY CITY

Air pollution is a significant risk to human health. Each year, over 4 million people die due to exposure to outdoor air pollution and its effects.

Air pollutants can be naturally occurring, such as sea salt spray, radon, and volcanic gases. However, anthropogenic air pollutants (i.e. those created by humans) are a particular concern for the public's health and well-being. These pollutants are primarily created during combustion processes for creating electricity or for transportation.

The impacts of air pollution are varied, and both short and long-term exposure can lead to a wide range of illnesses. These include but are not limited to:

Increased respiratory symptoms

- Exacerbation of asthma
- Decreased lung function
- Increased hospital admissions
- Lung Disease and Cancer
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Strokes/increased risk of stroke
- Decreased birth weights
- Lower academic test scores

**“IN IRELAND,
APPROXIMATELY 1300
DEATHS EACH YEAR
ARE ATTRIBUTED TO AIR
POLLUTION.”**

In Ireland, approximately 1300 deaths each year are attributed to air pollution. Many of these deaths are highly preventable. This could be achieved by implementing a public retrofitting programme of all homes and public buildings towards a zero carbon standard, increasing pedestrianisation and expanding footpaths, facilitating more green spaces like parks, public gardens and pitches in cities and towns, including necessary amenities like tables, benches and bins, keeping fossil fuels in the ground, and ensuring people have access to free and frequent public transport.

Galway City began collecting public data from an air quality sensor in January 2021. This sensor collects data for one air pollutant – NO₂ or Nitrogen Dioxide – and is located in Eyre Square.

From Jan 6th 2021 to 2022, the results for NO₂ Eyre Square were as follows:

Mean: 17.53ug/m³

Median: 15.12ug/m³

In 2021, the World Health Organisation (WHO) redefined the air quality guidelines in relation to outdoor (ambient) air pollution.

These figures are now

Pollutant	Daily Limit	Annual
PM _{2.5}	15 ug/m ³	5 ug/m ³
PM ₁₀	45 ug/m ³	15 ug/m ³
NO ₂	25 ug/m ³	10 ug/m ³

As you can see, compared to the WHO guidelines, Galway exceeds the ‘safe’ level of all pollutants in the city. However, recent scientific research suggests that there is no safe level for air pollution.

Galway City has recently added a new air quality monitor in Briarhill to its repertoire.

In just a few short months of operating, the results are not surprising but disappointing nonetheless

NO₂ - Mean: 21.68ug/m³
 Median: 16.22ug/m³
 PM₁₀ - Mean: 15.13ug/m³
 Median: 12.37ug/m³
 PM_{2.5} - Mean: 9.73ug/m³
 Median: 7.64ug/m³

“UNFORTUNATELY, EVS STILL CONTRIBUTE TO PARTICULATE MATTER POLLUTION, ALONG WITH CHILD LABOUR CONCERNS, HEALTH RISK FOR MINERS, AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION.”

Addressing air pollution in Galway is key to improving locals’ health. Pollution from transport will not be eradicated by removing all internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and replacing them with Electric Vehicles (EVs). Unfortunately, EVs still contribute to Particulate Matter pollution, along with child labour concerns, health risks for miners, and traffic congestion.

Improving active transport options will reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Facilitating disabled people with an accessible city will reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Free, reliable, and frequent public transport will reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Reducing the need for private vehicles will reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Banning SUV’s - needless, fuel-guzzling dangers to pedestrians, cyclists and climate - from Galway city centre will reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

All of these solutions, and more, will bring cleaner air for all to enjoy for years to come.



RAIL SERVICES

As part of a significant shift towards public transport, People Before Profit would prioritise a major expansion of free, frequent and fast rail services in Galway and the west of Ireland, as part of investing more broadly in high speed rail between major urban centres nationwide and expanding metro and light rail projects in cities across Ireland. This is an ambitious plan but given the urgency of the climate crisis, it is absolutely necessary. Construction of these services will take time, and will almost certainly exceed the time limits of this plan, but People Before Profit Galway believe this could be a strong start to revolutionising the provision of public transport in Galway and the wider region. In terms of rail services, this would take three forms: intercity rail, commuter rail, and urban light rail.

INTERCITY & COMMUTER RAIL

The expansion of intercity rail would see the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor (WRC) from Galway north towards Sligo and eventually on to Donegal and Derry. This is a goal which People Before Profit branches and activists, from Galway to Derry, have campaigned for for many years, in order to reverse the disastrous dismantling of the rail network in the region in the decades post-partition which was central to the economic decline of the west of Ireland. The Western Rail Corridor would be a key link for reducing traffic in and out of Galway city while also providing a vital transport link for many towns and villages along the way.

The McCann report commissioned by the government in 2004 provided a detailed cost-analysis of the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor. The plan to reopen the route was included in the Transport 21 plan and the National Development Plan 2007-2013. The plans advocated reopening the Western Rail Corridor from Ennis to Collooney in four phases:

- Phase 1: Ennis to Athenry - 58km at an estimated cost of €74.7m
- Phase 2: Athenry to Tuam - 25km €34.7m
- Phase 3: Tuam to Claremorris - 27km €58.9m
- Phase 4: Claremorris to Collooney - 74.43km €197.4m

In the end only phase 1, from Ennis to Athenry, thus connecting Limerick to Galway, was reopened. Phases two to four were dropped for economic reasons by the new Fine Gael-Labour government in 2011 and the then transport minister Leo Varadkar. Over ten years later, the economic basis for reopening the WRC is clear, but the environmental and quality of life basis also make the WRC essential.

The WRC would see stations opened in Tuam, Knock, Charlestown, and Tubbercurry as well as connecting to existing stations in Claremorris and Ballymote, interchanging with the lines from Dublin to Westport and Sligo respectively. Through these links, this would also see greater connectivity with neighbouring counties Mayo and Roscommon outside of the immediate WRC line. The reopening of the WRC would be the first stage in making Galway a hub for regional rail

transport in the west of Ireland. This would be followed by the reopening and extension of rail transport into the west and east of county Galway as well as more direct connections with main towns in neighbouring counties Mayo and Roscommon.

As well as the huge benefits to Galway in reducing traffic on the routes in and out of the city, the reopening of the WRC will have a positive impact on the towns it serves, encouraging growth and development and reversing the economic decline of small-town Ireland. This development will have a major impact in rebalancing economic growth in Ireland away from the Dublin region, and in doing so it would have a positive impact on traffic and congestion in the Dublin area as well as other major urban areas as well. Economic growth and development in towns along the route can also help reverse the trend of dereliction that has become a blight in small town Ireland leading to homes becoming inhabitable and easing the housing crisis.

Together with long distance rail services from Galway to Sligo and eventually Donegal and Derry, the reopening of the WRC would facilitate the provision of commuter rail on the section between Claremorris and Galway city. This would use shorter trains, running more frequently during busier times in the morning and evening to provide for commuters. This can be replicated on the line between Galway and Athlone and between Galway and Limerick. To facilitate commuters, new stations would be built at Renmore and Roscam between the existing Ceannt station in Galway city centre and Oranmore.

Increased numbers of trains would also help reduce the overcrowding that is currently a significant problem on the two existing lines, with passengers frequently unable to find seats at peak times. To facilitate the increased number of trains would require the existing routes to be expanded to double and even triple track while the WRC should be built as double track immediately.

The expansion of rail services in and out of Galway city would also require the redevelopment of Ceannt Station to facilitate it. Extra platforms and tracks must be factored into the ongoing plans for the redevelopment of the Ceannt Station site and surrounding area. People Before Profit Galway have already called for keeping Ceannt Station and the surrounding site in public hands to be used for public housing and amenity. Any effort to sell the site off to private developers must be resisted if the necessary expansion of the station site is to be realised.

Widening the line to include triple track into the station would require widening of the line crossing Lough Atalia and this should be accompanied by improvements to the pathway along it to make it safer and more accessible for pedestrians.

Expanding the tracks to double and triple would also help facilitate a significant rise in freight rail without obstructing passenger rail. This is another important step in reducing road traffic and emissions.



URBAN LIGHT RAIL

Galway city, in common with other Irish cities, had a tram service constructed in the late 19th century. First built in 1879, the route ran from Eyre Square in the city centre, along Shop Street, across the river and all the way to Salthill. This ran successfully until 1918 and shows that light rail is possible in Galway. As with similar infrastructure elsewhere like Dublin's previous privately owned tram network, it was short-sightedly closed as private car ownership grew. The city had a much smaller population and covered a much smaller area at the end of the nineteenth century yet still maintained a tram service for the best part of forty years. This defeats the idea that light rail isn't feasible in Galway or that Galway isn't big enough to justify it.

Data from 2022 shows Galway city is currently the seventh worst city in Europe and 39th worst in the world for traffic congestion. The city hasn't seen the same decline in traffic that was seen in other cities during the COVID pandemic with only a drop of 13% on pre-pandemic levels compared to a 29% drop in Dublin and a 26% drop in Limerick which has a similar population size to Galway. With the population of Galway city forecasted to rise to 120,000 by 2040, congestion will only get worse unless drastic action is taken to get people out of their cars and reduce traffic congestion. Car users need serious alternatives and light rail is one of them.



People Before Profit Galway support the ongoing calls for the construction of a light rail system for Galway city, the so-called GLUAS, and state clearly that it should be free and accessible to all communities in the city.

“GALWAY CITY IS CURRENTLY THE SEVENTH WORST CITY IN EUROPE AND 39TH WORST IN THE WORLD FOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION”

The GLUAS campaign group have done fantastic work in raising awareness and promoting very light rail as an option for Galway. They have cooperated with groups in Coventry in England who are constructing a very light rail system similar to the one envisaged for Galway. 24,000 people signed the GLUAS petition in 2018 showing there is widespread public support for light rail in Galway. Transport Minister Eamon Ryan stated in a GLUAS webinar in 2021 that 'If they build it, they will come' - but has shown little to no sign that he will follow up on this. The Green Party also said that a feasibility study would be carried out in 2022, but so far that hasn't happened.

The government must now follow up on this and provide funding and resources to construct the system. People Before Profit Galway support the GLUAS campaign's vision of a two-line light rail system with park and ride facilities on each end; one line to cross Galway city from Knocknacarra in the West to Renmore in the East and one line connecting Dangan via the city

centre to Parkmore. This would be an excellent start and leave open the possibility of the lines being extended to Barna, Moycullen, Claregalway and Oranmore.

The system would be what is known as a Very Light Rail (VLR) system which is being pioneered in Coventry by researchers from the University of Warwick. This concept uses shallow track bases which require less construction time and cause less disruption to existing infrastructure than larger systems such as the LUAS in Dublin.

The Principle Tram Operations

22 Light rail 11 ton Trams with 75 passengers standing capacity, Carriage connect to increase capacity, Ultra Light Rail with 26-30cm Shallow Track, 20 Km .rail, 10 0m/day instillation 64 stops, - Trams every 5 minutes day time , 20%+ conversion from Car to Tram. Tram priority dedicated controlled synchronised traffic lights -, - Average Tram fare €2.00/€2.50, Leap Card Friendly - 4 P&R , Location 350m of population cluster. Automated in time, Eco friendly zero emissions future proof sustainable. State of art materials to be Covid free.

The Gluas Project (2021 version)

Bushy Park P&R, Newcastle Rd. NUIG , Cathedral, Eyre sq, Moneengeisha, Tuam Rd, Mervue Business Pk, , Ballybane, Briar Hill P&R, Paice Mor, on to Ardaun.



Park & Ride, West Distributor Road, Westside Quincentenry Bridge, Headford Road, Moneenagisha, GMIT, Merlin Park. Park & Ride

The GLUAS plan would consist of 20km of track with an estimated construction time of 140 weeks. This could easily be built during the lifetime of this transport plan, with possible extensions coming later.

Private car travel will no longer be prioritised as public transport and active travel will take precedence. Tram tracks, along with more bus lanes, cycle lanes, pedestrianisation and improved paths will by necessity mean less road space for cars. This will require a culture shift as people adjust to less car usage. However, it is an absolutely necessary change and ultimately will lead to a better quality of life for all through less congestion, shorter commuting times and lower pollution levels.



ACTIVE TRAVEL & CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

People Before Profit advocate for an extensive network of safe, segregated cycle lanes and footpaths across the city. There is a clear demand for improved and expanded cycling infrastructure in Galway. This is evidenced by the successful cycle buses that facilitate many children in cycling to school safely and widespread public support for a Salthill cycle lane that the City Council has regretfully backtracked on providing. It is welcome that increased cycle lanes feature in the Galway BusConnects plan. However, as noted later in our section on bus networks, we would like to see these lanes better segregated from vehicle traffic in order to improve cyclists' safety.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE CURRENT GALWAY TRANSPORT STRATEGY

In general the Galway Transport Strategy's (GTS) - Appendix F, which deals with the city's Cycle Network, outlines a respectable upgrade to current cycle facilities across the city. However, the GTS still relies too heavily on necessitating private vehicles. The appendix's overall aim is to create a comprehensive cycle network that connects both the East and West and North and South of the city with minimal impact on the built infrastructure and general environment, in accordance with current government policy and regulations of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report carried out for the GTS.

The following is a list of changes by People Before Profit to be implemented into the GTS in order to enhance the comprehensiveness of the network and plan, overall.

F4.2 Salthill

Threadneedle Road

That a Southbound cycle lane be proposed between Deane and Threadneedle roundabout. Currently the GTS proposes only a Northbound cycle lane due to the vertical alignment creating unsafe conditions for cyclists journeying downhill, however as cyclists still need to journey southbound the northbound route will most likely be used by cyclists in both directions, creating more dangerous conditions than a downhill route would, keeping in mind that cyclists must have properly functioning brakes in accordance with the rules of the road for cyclists. If downhill alignment is still considered too dangerous, another route must be provided for cyclists to gain access to the Prom.

Salthill Road Upper & Lower

The current GTS proposes to "provide traffic calming measures and signage to reduce motorised traffic speeds through Salthill and advertise the presence of cyclists.". Salthill Roads Upper & Lower are key links between Salthill and Galway City Centre, and are therefore in drastic need of proper cycling infrastructure. The current road layout across the Salthill Road stretch leaves little space for the inclusion of safe cycle paths, it is this report's proposal to

reclaim the street space from on-street parking, which currently exists for most of the 1130m stretch. This is in accordance with the climate action plan[1], the Town Centre First Policy[2] and the GTS itself, all of which state the importance of changing streetscapes from being majority car-centred in order to prioritise active travel modes and as a way of reclaiming urban spaces. The removal of the majority of on-street parking would leave an abundance of space for cycle infrastructure.

“THE REMOVAL OF THE MAJORITY OF ON-STREET PARKING WOULD LEAVE AN ABUNDANCE OF SPACE FOR CYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE”

F4.6 Newcastle & Dangan

Upper & Lower Newcastle

Proposal to remove the majority of on-street parking from the road, especially in places where the parking aligns with houses which can cater for their own parking (e.g. driveways & garages), use the reclaimed space to provide raised, off-road cycle lanes on each side, amalgamated with pavement upgrades and resurfacing.

F4.7 City Centre

Bohermore

Proposal to remove the majority of on-street parking from the road, especially in places where the parking aligns with houses which can cater for their own parking (e.g. driveways & garages), use the reclaimed space to provide raised, off-road cycle lanes on each side, amalgamated with pavement upgrades and resurfacing.

Dyke Road

Proposal to remove the majority of on-street parking from the road, especially in places where the parking aligns with houses which can cater for their own parking (e.g. driveways & garages), use the reclaimed space to provide raised, off-road cycle lanes on each side, amalgamated with pavement upgrades and resurfacing. Pavements along the Dyke Road are currently not continuous with dangerously narrow passages travelling westward passing Deacy Park. Proposal for Dyke Road to be considered within the Headford Road LAP and a plan created for one-way traffic only on the road, or closure to private vehicles apart from residential traffic as far as the tie-in with Coolough Road.

[1] *Climate Action Plan 2023. Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2023. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/>*

[2] *Town Centre First Policy. Department of Rural and Community Development, 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/41084-government-launches-first-ever-town-centre-first-policy/>*



BUS NETWORK

People Before Profit believe an extensive network of free, green and frequent bus routes must be central to Galway's transport infrastructure. Fare-free public transport has been successfully implemented in many cities and regions around the world, including European cities such as Tallinn, Luxembourg and Dunkirk. Each year, People Before Profit publishes a fully costed alternative budget that shows how fare-free public transport with increased capacity is entirely achievable.

Galway's bus network is old-fashioned and inadequate for a growing city. Several routes are controlled by private entities, and there are no services available after midnight. All routes pass through an increasingly-congested Eyre Square, and don't serve all the people of the city and county. Below, we will explore some ideas on how we can improve the operation of the Galway bus network.

“IN THE MIDST OF A WORSENING CLIMATE CRISIS, EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP PEOPLE REDUCE THEIR CAR USAGE AND GET ONTO PUBLIC TRANSPORT IS WELCOME.”

We support the BusConnects Galway project and the potential it has to encourage more public transport use and cycling in our city, which will not only tackle overall emissions, but our major traffic issues as well. BusConnects is a step in the right direction towards reducing our use and reliance on cars and that change needs to be systemic and not left to only personal choice. The more Galway invests in public transport infrastructure now, the more likely we are to meet our climate targets. In the midst of a worsening climate crisis, everything that can be done to help people reduce their car usage and get onto public transport is welcome. More buses, bus routes, and cheaper transport costs are a win-win for everyone.

However, the current plans are lacking in regards to cyclist safety through proper segregated cycle lanes. At the moment, the majority of the cycle lanes are only protected by a slight curb. This is not nearly enough to protect cyclists from buses and other traffic. Bollards or similar vehicle prevention measures along all the cycle lanes should be an absolute minimum. This plan needs to guarantee cyclist and pedestrian safety first and foremost, while providing the public transport system Galway needs, and ending the car-dominated planning of the city. We must continue to ensure that we fundamentally change the hierarchy of transport from vehicles to people. Pedestrians require safe paths and crossing opportunities, wheelchair users deserve wide footpaths with no fear a vehicle will block their progress, and cyclists must be kept segregated from vehicular traffic to improve their safety

NATIONALISATION OF PRIVATE BUS ROUTES & GREATER CITY COVERAGE

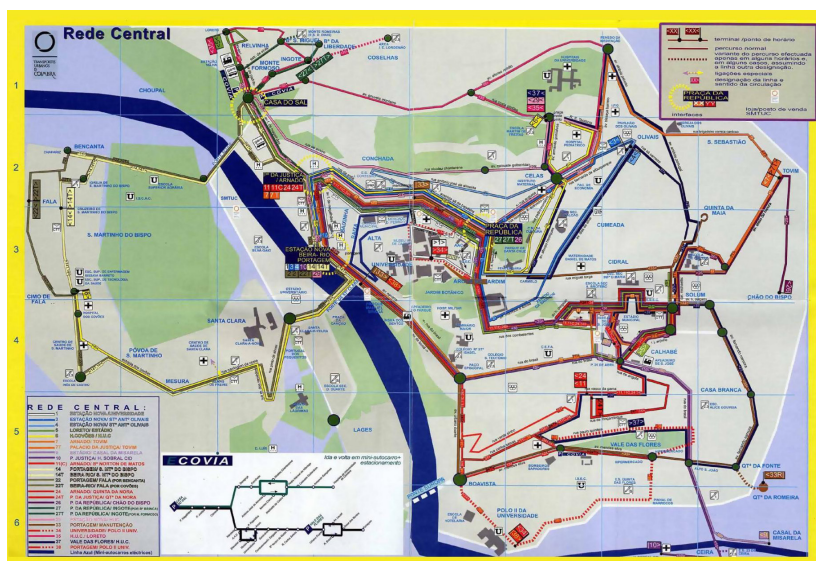
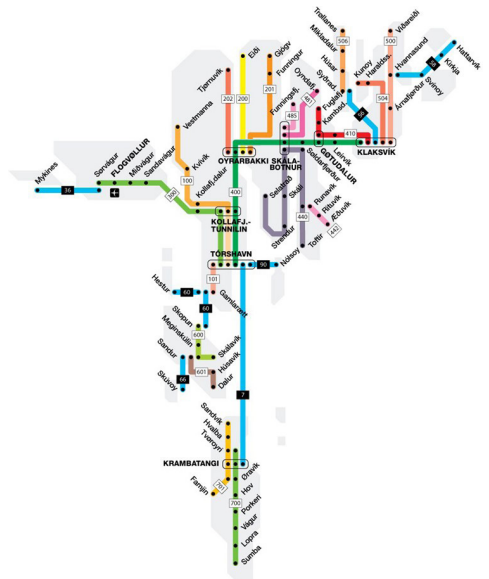
Private bus routes in Galway must be taken into public ownership. Public transport must be under public control. We saw the dangers in relying on private bus operators during the Covid pandemic, when City Direct bus routes 410, 412, & 414 were temporarily halted, and the 411 service was also reduced. This essentially cut off the people of Knocknacarra from the rest of the city. Other private bus firms followed suit, with Burkes (Tuam), Farrells (Athenry), CityLink (Clifden) & Healy Bus (Loughrea) all suspending their services for a time, making it difficult for essential workers to get into work each morning.

Large areas of Galway city and its surrounds are still left without adequate bus services. Workers living on one side of the city and working on the other are often forced to change buses in Eyre Square. An orbital route connecting major population centres in the west like Knocknacarra and Salthill to the industrial areas in the east like Parkmore and Ballybrit is an obvious improvement that should be made.

Below are five examples of cities with a superior bus system to that in place within Galway city. Of the five examples, we have chosen three cities of similar population to Galway, as well as a much larger & much smaller example.

Tórshavn, Faroe Islands (14,001)

Torshavn is the capital city of the Faroe Islands. Not only does it have an extensive public bus system, but all services in the city have been available free of charge to passengers as of 2007.

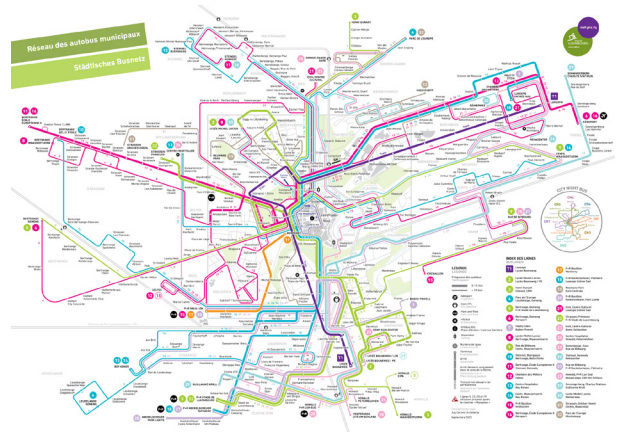


Coimbra, Portugal (99,792)

Coimbra is the 4th largest city of Portugal, and capital of the Centro Region. It provides adequate public transport to citizens by combining an extensive conventional bus system with two electric trolleybus lines, the only system of its type in Portugal. Buses typically run every 10-15 mins for most of the day, and the introduction of electric buses has begun on some routes.[1]

Luxembourg City, Luxembourg (114,303)

Luxembourg has a wealth of public transport options provided in the city, including a bus network which has been available free of charge to passengers since 2020. The city has around 40 bus lines, including 7 night buses.[2]



Reykjavik, Iceland (122,853)

Reykjavik provides an efficient public transport system to its citizens despite a lack of a train network, due to its extensive bus system which runs through the city in all weathers. There are a total of 27 intracity routes available. [3]

Oslo, Norway (634,293)

Oslo puts paid to the notion that an extensive bus system can only be provided in cities of smaller populations. Some of Oslo's busiest stops will be visited by buses up to 50 times per hour at peak times.[4]



Galway by comparison, only has twelve bus routes running through the city, of which four are in private hands. Large portions of the city are not serviced by buses, and even larger portions are not serviced conveniently, and require a bus change in Eyre Square.

“WE MUST ALSO BRING PRIVATISED ROUTES INTO PUBLIC OWNERSHIP, TO BE RUN AS A PUBLIC SERVICE”

We require an overhaul of bus routes in the city, with more extensive options available. We must also bring privatised routes into public ownership, to be run as a public service, not on the basis of profit maximisation.

DECENTRALISE BUS ROUTES FROM EYRE SQUARE

All Bus Éireann routes currently pass through Eyre Square, in addition to the majority of private routes. This centralisation almost adds as a stopgap for the dearth of public transport options available. Rather than ride one bus from source to destination, passengers are often required to swap at the Eyre Square bus hub.

Workers on the west of the city should have a public transport option that will transfer them to large employment hubs such as Ballybrit & Parkmore Industrial Estates in the east of the city without need for a transfer.

Whilst the Galway BusConnects programme does introduce some new cycle lanes and footpaths, it also proposes increased centralisation of Galway City Bus Routes. The number of public routes will be cut from eight to five, with all five passing through Eyre Square and over Salmon Weir Bridge.



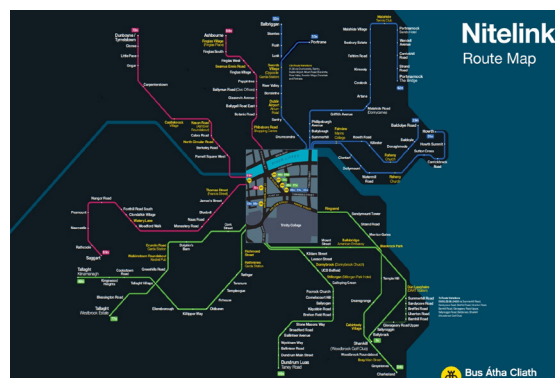
Decentralisation of the bus network could tie in with the idea of a more walkable Galway City. It could allow for the pedestrianisation of Eyre Square and its surroundings. More bus routes will reduce the need for transfers, and those which are still required can take place at points outside this area. Areas such as University Hospital and ATU have been mooted as alternative transfer hubs.

INTRODUCTION OF NIGHT BUSES

Galway City bus routes in Galway currently cease operations prior to midnight. This leaves those who finish work late, and those who decide to go out in the evening, without a public transport option for their route home.

Bus Éireann have recently introduced eight 24 hour buses in Dublin, as well as twelve Nitelink routes, which run late services each Friday & Saturday. These buses run every 1-2 hours from midnight until 4am.

A similar system could be introduced in Galway, with late buses running citywide throughout the night. Safety is a particularly important concern here, with fifty five per cent of women saying in a 2020 survey they would not use public transport at night. The increased safety that comes with fast, frequent and free public transport, will be crucial in making travel at this time safer for all, as argued previously.[5]



MORE RURAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPTIONS

Large swathes of rural Galway are left without a public transport option altogether. This drives private car ownership upwards in these areas.

In other areas where transport options do exist, they are often sparsely provided and run by private companies. Taking these into public ownership will allow us to increase their frequency, and adhere to the principle of “free and frequent” public transport. Farrell’s 418 connecting the city to Athenry, for example, only runs seven times daily during the week in each direction, and ceases operation at 6:10pm. The CityLink bus to Clifden only runs until 5:30pm, and comes with a hefty cost of a €20 return adult ticket. Nationalising the sector will also benefit workers employed by these companies; as underfunded as our semi-state sector is currently, the 6,000 workers employed by Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus have significantly better pay and conditions than the 11,500 full-time staff employed by private companies nationwide.[6]

Whilst public transport will not eliminate car ownership in rural areas, it would at least give alternative options to the people who live there. Companies such as Farrell’s and CityLink should be taken into public ownership, and their routes both merged into Bus Éireann and increased sufficiently in frequency. In villages and rural areas, Local Link and Rural Link services should be massively expanded and shared taxis and public car hire made available. Bus routes cut under this government, such as the Bus Éireann 20/X20 service which connected Galway with Craughwell, Loughrea, Aughrim and Ballinasloe, should be restored and safeguarded.

[1] <http://www.algarvebus.info/coimbra.htm>

[2] <https://www.justarrived.lu/en/transport-in-luxembourg/getting-around-by-bus/>

[3] <https://www.scandinaviastandard.com/how-to-use-public-transport-in-reykjavik-iceland/>

[4] <https://www.tu.no/artikler/ble-lovet-svevebane-og-t-bane-na-far-fornebu-beboerne-en-ny-bussrute-i-stedet/376408>

[5] <https://rupture.ie/articles/free-frequent-fast-transport>

[6] *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Under the capitalist system in which we live, a 15 minute city will remain beyond the reach of the world's working-class. The only way to achieve free, frequent and fast public transport for all - and avert climate disaster in the process - is through the fight for ecosocialism. People Before Profit, as Ireland's largest ecosocialist party, is leading the struggle to bring this about. If you agree with our ecosocialist solutions for Galway's transport woes as proposed above, join us today to make them a reality.



Join People Before Profit at WWW.PBP.IE/JOIN

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