ALL-ISLAND STRATEGIC RAIL REVIEW

RAIL PROJECT PRIORITISATION STRATEGY

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European Investment Bank

An Roinn Iompair
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All-Island Strategy Rail Review: Project Prioritisation Strategy

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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The All-Island Strategic Rail Review (referred to as the Rail Review hereafter) was published in July 2024 by the Department of Transport (DoT) in Ireland and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in Northern Ireland.

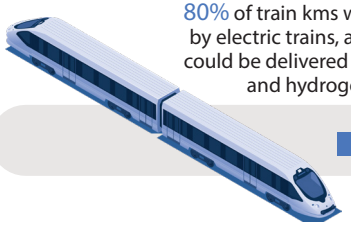
The purpose of the Rail Review was to inform Government policy with respect to the strategic development of the rail system in Ireland and Northern Ireland up to 2050, with a view to supporting, on an economic and evidenced basis, decarbonisation, sustainable connectivity into and between major cities, enhanced regional accessibility, and balanced regional development.

The Rail Review presented 32 recommendations up to 2050 to enhance and expand the rail system to achieve a Vision of an accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households and businesses. Some of the Review's outcomes for 2050 are shown in the infographic to the right, with its Goals and Objectives shown on page 4.

This Rail Project Prioritisation Strategy sets out, at a high level, the proposed sequencing of selected projects. The Strategy outlines why these projects, many of which are in the Rail Review's infrastructure-related recommendations, have been identified for development in the years ahead, and on what basis.

The Rail Project Prioritisation Strategy is guided by the Department of Transport in Ireland, Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann and Translink, with the support of the European Investment Bank.

IF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REVIEW WERE DELIVERED:



80% of train kms would be delivered by electric trains, and the remaining could be delivered by battery electric and hydrogen traction.

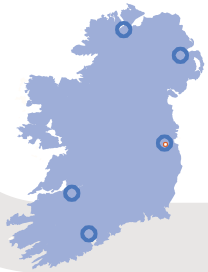
The carbon footprint of a passenger rail journey could be 80% lower than an equivalent journey by an electric vehicle.



700,000 more people would live within 5km of a rallway station - representing an increase of 25% on today's catchment.

Rail journey times between the island's major cities would be significantly reduced, by 50% in some cases. There would be hourly services between key cities, increasing to half-hourly on busiest routes.

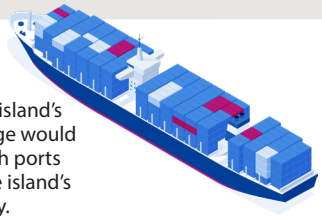




Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford and Derry~Londonderry would be able to boost local services and enable the whole island to double passenger rail market share.

90% of the island's commercial aviation passengers would be able to access their airports by rail.





66% of the island's freight tonnage would pass through ports served by the island's railway.



There would be a €20bn/£17bn boost to the island's economy, based on 2011 prices.

CURRENT METRICS

Less than 3% of the rail network is electrified

Rail Passengers **64 million** in 2024, the highest ever and growing

Passenger rail market (or mode share) remains low at around **1%** of passenger kilometres

201 passenger rail stations

2,700 km of Rail Network

Population of over **7 million** people

Rail freight mode share is less than **1%** of total tonne kms

ALL-ISLAND STRATEGIC RAIL REVIEW

The Rail Review has 32 recommendations for policymakers related to the Review's Goals and Objectives. The recommendations as presented in the Rail Review aim to provide an evidence-based direction for the future development of the rail network on the island, such that rail is the backbone of a high-quality and sustainable transport system. This Strategy document is consistent with the recommendations identified in the Rail Review.

As noted in the Rail Review, further work is required to test each of the recommendations at a more detailed level of feasibility, with each subject to appraisal, environmental assessment, and decisions in line with applicable governance processes.

RAIL REVIEW GOALS, OBJECTIVES

Goals		Objectives
Goal 1 Decarbonisation	Contribute to decarbonisation	Reduce the carbon emissions associated with rail's construction, operation, and maintenance
		Reduce the carbon emissions from motor vehicle travel
Goal 2 Intercity	Improve connectivity between the Island's major cities	Provide an attractive public transport choice for travel between the seven cities of Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Derry~Londonderry, Galway, and Waterford
Goal 3 Regional & Rural	Enhance regional and rural accessibility	Give people in rural and regional areas better access to economic opportunities, and public services
		Improve inter-regional accessibility
Goal 4 Sustainable Cities	Encourage sustainable mobility	Manage demand through compact growth and better integration of public transport with land use
		Enhance the integration of rail with other transport modes
		Minimise negative impacts on the environment
Goal 5 Freight & Economy	Foster economic activity	Contribute to balanced economic growth between urban and regional areas
		Support the efficient movement of goods and people between economic centres and international gateways
Goal 6 Economic Feasibility	Achieve economic and financial feasibility	Plan investment in rail that is financially feasible
		Access potential funding
		Ensure investment in rail is considered alongside meeting objectives

RAIL REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Decarbonisation recommendations

1. Develop and implement an All-Island Rail Decarbonisation Strategy that includes an electrified intercity network.
2. Develop plans to invest in the skills, supply chains, and rolling stock to deliver decarbonisation.
3. Procure hybrid and electric rolling stock in the medium term.

Intercity recommendations

4. Upgrade the cross-country rail network to a dual-track railway (and four-track in places) and increase service frequencies.
5. Upgrade the core intercity railway network to top speeds of 200km/h (125mph).
6. Develop short sections of new railways on congested corridors.
7. Develop a cross-Dublin solution.

Regional and rural recommendations

8. Provide more direct services between Ireland's West and South Coasts.
9. Ensure regional and rural lines have at least one train per two hours.
10. Increase line speeds to at least 120km/h (75mph).
11. Upgrade Limerick Junction and the Limerick Junction -Waterford line.
12. Reinstate the Western Rail Corridor railway between Claremorris and Athenry.
13. Extend the railway into Tyrone, Derry~Londonderry, and Donegal.
14. Reinstate the South Wexford Railway.
15. Develop the railway to boost connectivity in the North Midlands.
16. Integrate bus service and rail service timetables to connect communities where direct rail access proves to be unviable.

Sustainable cities recommendations

17. Connect Dublin, Belfast International, and Shannon Airport to the railway and improve existing rail-airport connections.
18. Extend double tracking in the Belfast area.
19. Segregate long-distance/fast services from stopping services.
20. Explore the case for developing new stations in the Belfast, Cork, Derry~Londonderry and Limerick -Shannon city regions.

Freight recommendations

21. Develop a sustainable solution for first-mile-last-mile rail access for Dublin Port.
22. Reduce Track Access Charges for freight.
23. Strengthen rail connectivity to the island's busiest ports.
24. Develop a network of inland terminals close to major cities on the rail network.

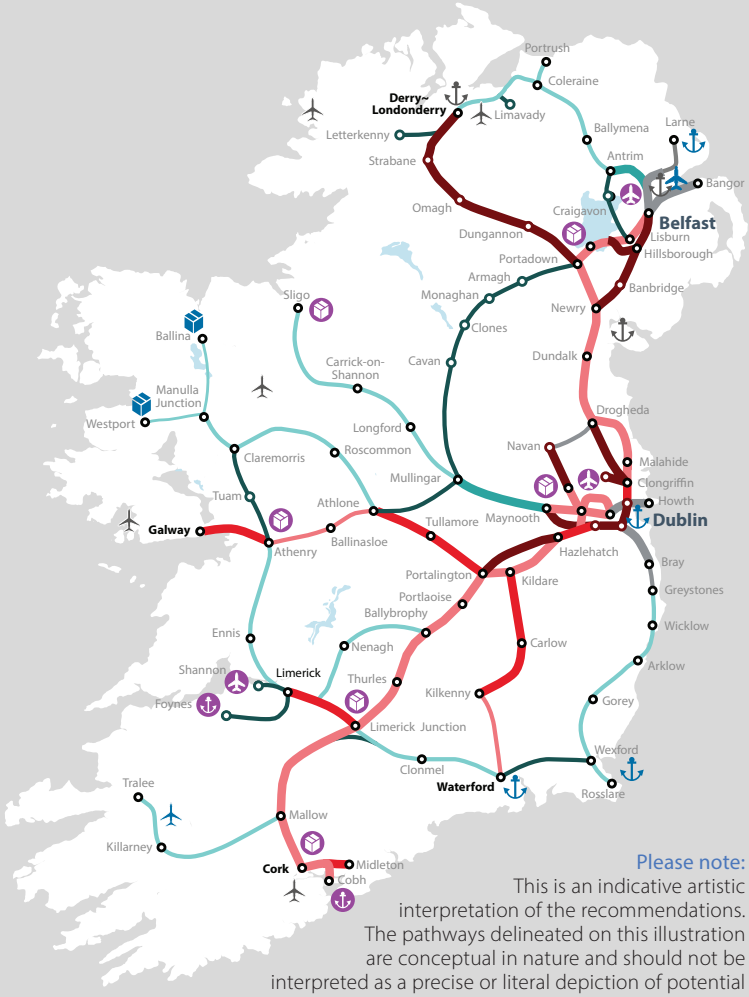
Customer experience recommendations

25. Continue to invest in initiatives that deliver a seamless customer journey.
26. Continue to benchmark and monitor service quality and deliver continuous improvement.
27. Ensure future rolling stock specifications are aligned to the infrastructure-led interventions outlined in this Review.
28. Invest in improving integration within rail and between rail and other transport options.
29. Deliver 'clock-face' timetable calling patterns.
30. Develop cross-border structures to improve the effectiveness of cross-border infrastructure and rail service planning.
31. Invest in a rolling programme of accessibility improvements, including step-free access.
32. Review and update the All-Island Strategic Rail Review once a decade, taking account of latest policies and developments.

RAIL REVIEW - A FUTURE ALL-ISLAND RAILWAY

KEY		Single track	Dual track	New station
Electrified railways	New railway			
	Dual or four-track upgrade			
	Electrification upgrade			
Other decarbonised railways	New railway			
	Dual track upgrade			
	Other improvements			
	Other railways			

	Existing Unconnected	Existing Connected	New Connections
Airport			
Port			
Inland Terminal			



Please note:
This is an indicative artistic interpretation of the recommendations. The pathways delineated on this illustration are conceptual in nature and should not be interpreted as a precise or literal depiction of potential routes or route corridors.

ONGOING ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

The existing rail infrastructure is already being enhanced by a significant number of projects ongoing across the island. Many of these projects are informed by metropolitan/city area plans with some at early-stage development and others at a more progressed detailed planning or construction stage. These are shown on the map to the right. They are all proposed for completion in the next decade subject to securing necessary approvals and funding; and hence are a backdrop for wider projects identified in this Strategy.

Along with the existing rail network and services, the ongoing enhancement projects, as shown in the blue boxes, provide the background context for this Strategy.

Existing network and services + Ongoing network enhancements 2025-2035

Background for Project Prioritisation Strategy

Hyperlinks are provided to project websites where available, providing further detail on the benefits of the projects and their progress status. The benefits of the ongoing enhancements are outlined below.

Benefits and Outcomes	
Passenger service benefits	• Infrastructure capacity/frequency enhancements enabling better reliability and more frequent services • Trains with improved on-board experience through rolling stock procurement and renewal • Continued investment in initiatives that improve customer experience, improve integration, and improve accessibility • Enhanced customer facilities and multi-modal transport options at each of the regional city stations
Freight service benefits	• Reopened rail freight link to Shannon Foynes Port providing more choice for freight customers • Iarnród Éireann's Rail Freight Implementation Plan to identify key interventions across its network to support growth in rail freight
Rail operation & reliability benefits	• National Train Control Centre, Traffic Management System and Initial Rollout of Train Protection System supporting Iarnród Éireann Operations including shared services

TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

- Fleet enhancement
- Local capacity enhancement
- Station/platform enhancement
- Line speed improvement
- Level crossing removal



GALWAY
- Ceannt Station Redevelopment
- Oranmore Station Enhancement

LIMERICK TO ATHENRY
- Capacity/Frequency Enhancements Phase 1 – passing loop, station upgrades

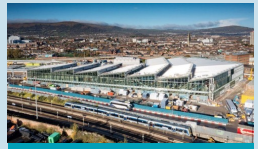


LIMERICK
- Colbert Station Redevelopment
- New stations at Moyross and Ballysimon

LIMERICK TO FOYNES
- Line Reinstatement

LIMERICK TO LIMERICK JUNCTION
- Capacity enhancement between Limerick and Limerick Junction

COLERAINE TO DERRY~ LONDONDERRY
- Line Speed Improvements



BELFAST
- Belfast Grand Central Station
- New Stations and park and rides

BELFAST TO DUBLIN
- Services with reduced carbon emissions through Enterprise Fleet Replacement Project



GREATER DUBLIN AREA
- DART+ - DART+West, DART+ South West, DART+ Coastal North, DART+ Coastal South
- DART+ Fleet
- Navan Line
- New stations and park & rides

ROSSLARE LINE IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 1
- Wicklow Capacity/ Frequency Enhancements



WATERFORD
- New central station as part of Waterford North Quays



CORK AREA
Cork Area Commuter Rail
- Phase 1 - Kent Through Platform, Resignalling, Glouthaune to Midleton Double Tracking
- Phase 2 – New stations, decarbonised rail services, a new depot

CORK LINE
- Cork Line Level Crossing Project

APPROACH TO DELIVERING THIS STRATEGY

Given the growth in rail passenger demand, even with the ongoing enhancement projects as per the previous page, capacity constrains would remain on many parts of the rail network including single track and other bottlenecks, which limit the scope for service improvements.

In line with and building on the Rail Review, this Project Prioritisation Strategy recommends further infrastructure upgrades to enhance capacity across the network so that passengers experience service improvements in the short to longer-run.

Early interventions are incremental projects identified for completion by 2030. They provide for greater network resilience to support existing services and frequency/capacity uplifts which enable growth in demand for services over the coming years. They are relatively minor schemes which are not envisaged to require a Railway Order or significant land acquisition, and will need to pass through the relevant approval processes to meet the 2030 completion timeframe.

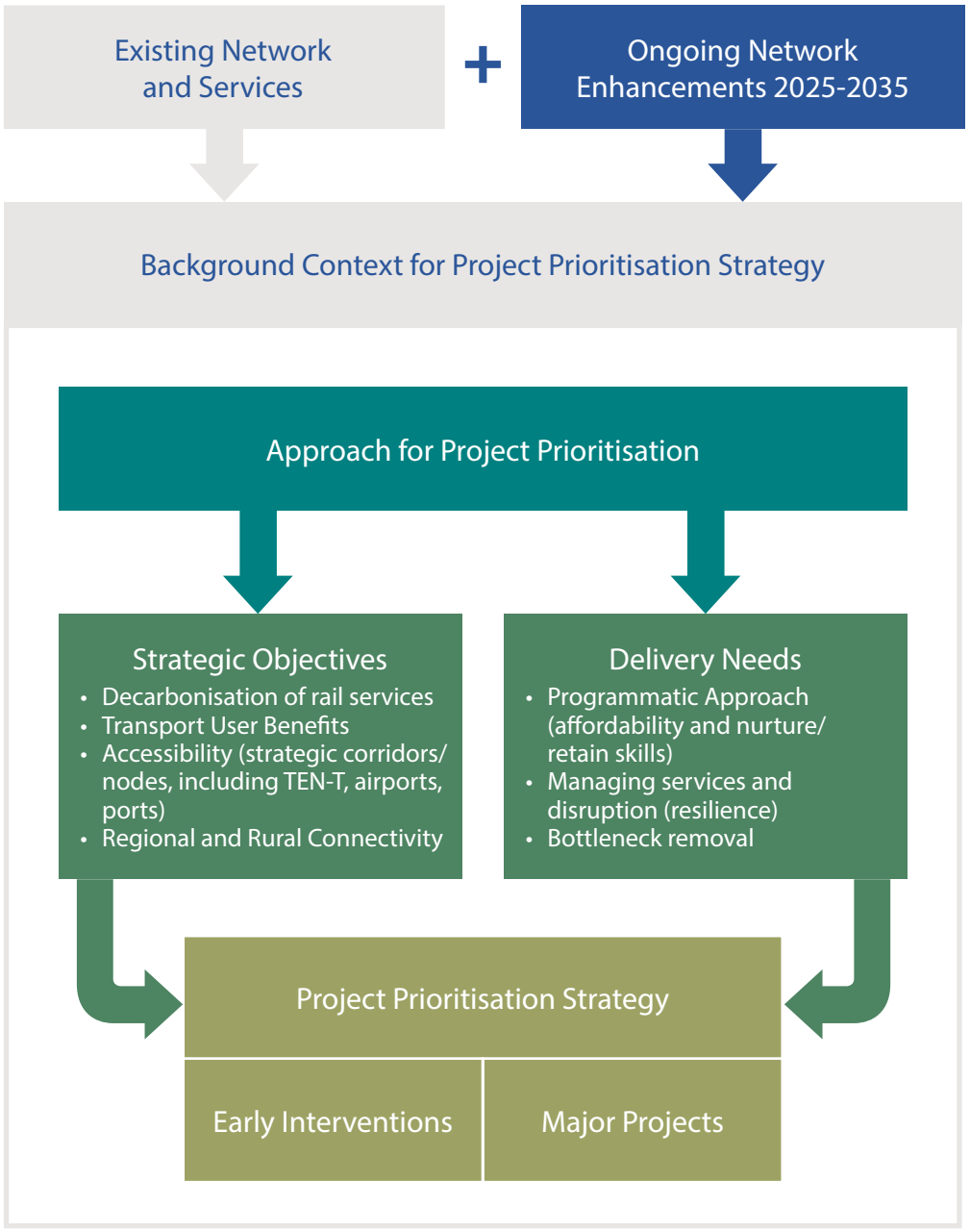
Major projects are shortlisted from the list of infrastructure interventions associated with the 32 recommendations in the Rail Review (see page 4), which include corridor electrification, line speed improvements, line reinstatements, bottleneck removal and capacity/frequency enhancements across the network. As outlined on page 4, they will need to undergo detailed feasibility studies as well as secure the necessary approvals and funding before proceeding to completion.

The shortlisting process to determine the Project Prioritisation Strategy took a balanced approach by assessing the outcomes associated with each potential project, as shown on the graphic to the right:

- how the project meets the strategic objectives of the Rail Review;
- how the project aligns with delivery needs of the Rail Review to develop a sustainable pipeline of investment that unlocks its full potential.

Taken together, this approach identifies the Project Prioritisation Strategy as illustrated on page 7.

Customer experience recommendations in the Rail Review, including new stations, will be progressed as "business as usual" over this period, subject to the necessary approvals and funding.



PRIORITY PROJECTS

EARLY INTERVENTIONS

Early interventions are projects identified for completion in the short-term, that is by 2030, subject to the appropriate approvals. These relatively modest interventions allow for greater network resilience and incremental service uplifts to support growing passenger demand. They are shown in the graph to the right, with their benefits also outlined in the table below.

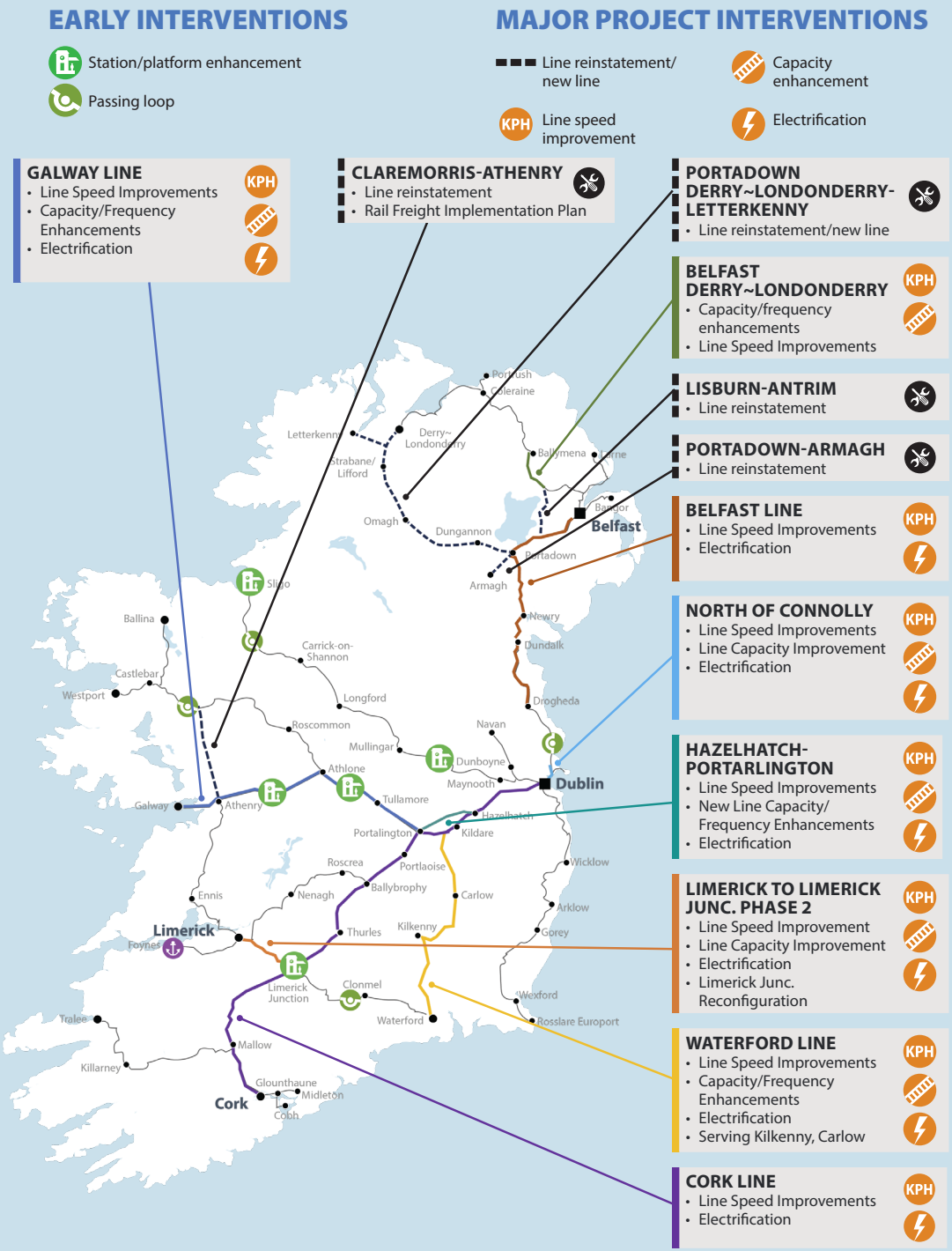
Corridor	Early Interventions	Benefit to passengers
Belfast Line	• Reinstatement of Mosney passing Loop • Increased use of Skerries passing loop	• Support Increased service frequencies to hourly between Dublin and Belfast • Improved journey time and reliability of services along the corridor
Sligo Line	• Recommission Platform 2 at Sligo station • Passing loop between Sligo and Boyle • Second platform at Enfield	• Increased frequency up to an hourly all-day service between Dublin and Sligo • Support scheduling of passing trains to support journey time reliability
Galway Line	• Second Platform at Clara • Second platform at Woodlawn	• Enables increased passenger services and improves scheduling flexibility
Athlone Mayo	• Passing loop between Athlone and Mayo (west of Claremorris)	• Increased service frequency of at least one train per two hours between Dublin and Mayo • Reduce journey time by 10 minutes and support potential clockface integration with Galway Line • Reduce fleet requirements to support wider redeployment
Limerick Junction	• New Platform at Limerick Junction	• Limerick to Waterford services without a circa 10-minute journey time penalty • Support through-services between Cork and Galway via Limerick, and more through movements for Cork-Limerick
Limerick Waterford	• Passing Loop east of Clonmel	• Achieve a two-hourly service frequency between Limerick and Waterford
Portadown	• Portadown Station spur	• The spur will future-proof the line to Derry~Londonderry.

MAJOR PROJECTS

Major projects short-listed from the Rail Review are identified for progression by the medium to long-term and are shown in the boxes on the right hand side of the adjacent graphic. The projects are large and complex with significant levels of intervention along their corridor length. The coloured lines shown for each project represent the location and extent of each scheme on the map. They have costs above €/£200m and will need to go through a robust approvals process and are subject to funding.

Completion of these major projects would transform rail travel across the island when combined with plans for new fleet. The recommended timeline for delivery of the Major Projects is highlighted on page 8 and their significant benefits are highlighted on page 9.

The proposed pipeline of rail projects is ambitious but necessary for many of the benefits of the Rail Review to be unlocked.



PROGRESS PLAN FOR MAJOR PROJECTS

Corridor	Project	Year 1-5	Year 5-10	Year 10-15	Year 15-20	Main Outcomes
Cork Line	• Line Speed Improvements • Electrification • Limerick Junc. Reconfiguration • Higher frequency			KPH		✓ Decarbonisation ✓ Faster journeys ✓ Bottleneck removed
Limerick to Limerick Junction Phase 2	• Capacity/Frequency Enhancements • Line Speed Improvements • Electrification		KPH	KPH		✓ Decarbonisation ✓ Higher frequency ✓ Faster journeys ✓ Bottleneck removed
Hazelhatch-Portarlington	• New Line Capacity/Frequency Enhancements • Speed Improvements • Electrification				KPH	✓ Improved reliability ✓ Bottleneck removed ✓ Higher frequency ✓ Faster journeys ✓ Decarbonisation
Galway Line (Phased Delivery)	• Capacity/Frequency Enhancements • Line Speed Improvements • Electrification		KPH	KPH		✓ Higher frequency ✓ Faster journeys ✓ Improved reliability ✓ Bottleneck removed ✓ Decarbonisation
Connolly-Clongriffin/Malahide	• Line Capacity Improvement • Line Speed Improvements • Electrification			KPH		✓ Improved reliability ✓ Bottleneck removed ✓ Higher frequency ✓ Faster journeys
Belfast Line	• Line Speed Improvements • Electrification			KPH		✓ Decarbonisation ✓ Faster journeys
Waterford Line (Phased Delivery)	• Capacity/Frequency Enhancements • Line Speed Improvements • Electrification		KPH	KPH		✓ Higher frequency ✓ Faster Journeys ✓ Bottleneck removed ✓ Improved reliability ✓ Decarbonisation
Belfast Derry~Londonderry	• Capacity/Frequency Enhancements • Line Speed Improvements			KPH		✓ Higher frequency ✓ Bottleneck removed ✓ Improved reliability
Claremorris-Athenry	• Line reinstatement • Rail Freight Implementation Plan Key Project					✓ New regional and rural rail connectivity ✓ Rail freight opportunities
Lisburn-Antrim	• Line reinstatement					✓ New regional and rural rail connectivity
Portadown-Armagh	• Line reinstatement					✓ New regional and rural rail connectivity
Portadown-Derry~Londonderry-Letterkenny	• Line reinstatement/new line					✓ New regional and rural rail connectivity ✓ Faster journeys to Belfast and Dublin

KEY

Planning Permission/ Approval to proceed

Construction commencement

Phased delivery

KPH Line speed improvement

Capacity enhancement

Electrification

Line reinstatement

This chart provides a summary of how projects could be advanced from Approval Gate 1 (or equivalent) / approval to proceed for planning permission.

The completion of each project/ project phase is indicated by the end of each delivery arrow on the chart.

The projects will need to secure the necessary approvals and funding before proceeding to construction.

The delivery of these major projects enables many of the benefits of the Rail Review to be realised for customers. The positive outcomes are outlined next, on page 9.

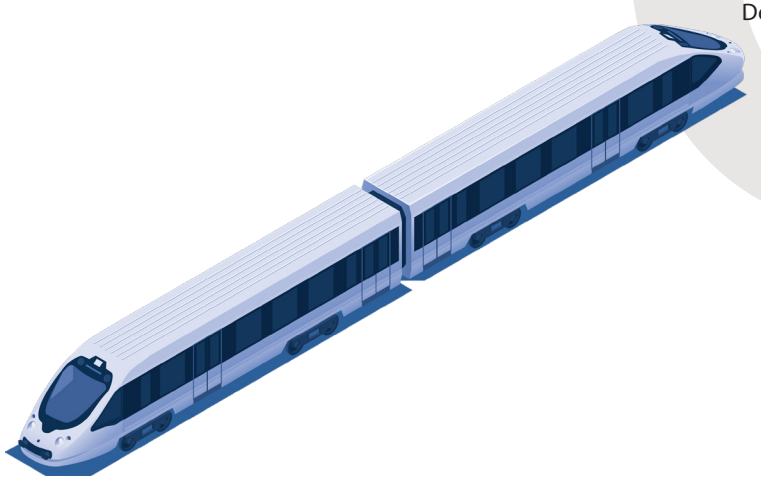
PROJECT PRIORITISATION STRATEGY OUTCOMES

POTENTIAL JOURNEY TIME SAVINGS

Difference in fastest Journey Time by corridor

Present vs **After Ongoing Enhancements & After Priority Projects delivered**

Cork Dublin	~ 2:14 hours	~ 1:41
Belfast Dublin	~ 2:08 hours	~ 1:38
Limerick Dublin	~ 2:00 hours	~ 1:26
Waterford Dublin	~1:55 hours	~ 1:22
Galway Dublin	~ 2:15 hours	~ 1:31



RAIL DECARBONISATION

~ 750km of the rail network electrified with overhead cables capable of powering fast intercity trains.

Avoiding 60,000 tonnes of CO_2 annually based on current operations.

~ 55% reduction in CO_2 emissions across intercity and regional services.

REGIONAL AND RURAL CONNECTIVITY

Enhancing frequency of rail services on regional corridors will support balanced growth. The reopening of lines will make rail accessible to more people, while adding flexibility and resilience across the network.

CONNECTIVITY

~ 250 km of additional rail connectivity , opening opportunities for economic development and freight.

Strategic corridor creation through a continuous rail link from (1) Ballina, Claremorris, Athenry, Limerick and Waterford and (2) Letterkenny Derry~LondonDerry, Portadown. Connecting Armagh and reconnecting Lisburn and Antrim by rail with International connectivity at Belfast Int. Airport.

ADDRESSING BOTTLENECKS

The removal of bottlenecks at critical and strategic locations across the rail network will add capacity for growth, enabling faster, more reliable and more regular services.

A STRONGER BACKBONE OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Strengthening the EU TEN-T Core rail network will bring cities, towns, ports and airports closer together by public transport, making it a more attractive way for people and goods to travel.

A SUSTAINABLE PIPELINE OF INVESTMENT

A sustainable pipeline of investment in rail will encourage lasting mode shift, create a vibrant local rail industry, and foster value for money in a mature market.