

Chapter 8

Transport and Communications

8.1 Introduction

The availability of a high quality, sustainable transport system and telecommunications network is essential for economic developments and improvement to the quality of people's lives. County Louth is fortunate in having well developed transport facilities, based on a hierarchy of roads, motorway, national, regional and local, as well as a main line rail service with busy stations in both Dundalk and Drogheda.

Significant improvements in transport infrastructure have been made during the course of the 2003 – 2009 *County Development Plan*. This includes the completion of the M1 motorway, the Dundalk western by-pass and the Dundalk to Newry link road. This means that the County Louth section of the strategic Euro 1 route, that connects the key ports of Larne, Dublin and Rosslare with Europe, is now completed.



Improvements have also been made in the quality and frequency of the rail service in County Louth. This includes improvements to the line, rolling stock and the availability of park and ride facilities at Dundalk and Drogheda.

Road transport is by far the main form of transport within County Louth and plays a crucial role in contributing to the business life and industrial competitiveness of the county. However over dependency on the motor car as the primary means of personal transportation is unsustainable in the long term having regard to the finite nature of fossil fuel resources and their impact in contributing to global warming. The Plan will therefore seek to promote alternative sustainable modes of transport.

There is an intrinsic link between land use and transportation and therefore the settlement strategy and policies contained in the Plan seeks to locate the majority of new development within existing towns and other settlements where car dependency can be reduced and public transport can more economically and sustainably be provided.

The vital role of telecommunications and broad band availability in enabling the county to reach its full economic potential is recognised. There are a number of areas where

broadband coverage is hampered for various reasons including the lack of suitable communication mast towers, topographical features and low customer numbers. Louth Local Authorities, in conjunction with service providers are working in order to eliminate these black spots and will continue to do so until the county has complete coverage.

The aim of this chapter is to set out a coherent set of policies that will seek to improve the transportation system and communications network within the county in a manner that is sustainable and supports economic development and improved quality of life for the people of the county.

8.1.1 Louth County Development Plan 2003 – 2009

The *Louth County Development Plan 2003 – 2009* prescribed a clear framework which guided and facilitated public investment in physical infrastructure throughout the county which has underpinned continued economic and social development. In addition to the improvements in the national road network, improvements were also made to a number of regional roads including the Dundalk - Greenore Road, the Greenore - Omeath Road and improvements to Wallace's Road, Blackrock and Tierney Street, Ardee.

8.2 National Transportation Policy

8.2.1 Transport 21

Transport 21 is the government's principal transport policy and capital investment programme through which the transport system in Ireland will be developed over the period 2006 to 2015. This framework addresses the twin challenges of past investment backlogs and continuing growth in transport demand as a result of continuing economic growth and rapidly rising population. It provides for an investment in public transport of €16 billion directed towards the provision of greater choice and alternatives to the private car, particularly in major urban areas. It also aims to affect a modal shift from the private car to less polluting and less energy intensive public and private modes of transport. Over the period of investment through *Transport 21*, Ireland's transport system will be transformed with a particular emphasis on developing an integrated network.

While *Transport 21* provides capital funding only for major infrastructural projects, it is however complementary to other government initiatives such as the *Rural Transport Programme 2007* and the *Sustainable Travel and Transport Action Plan 2008*. Projects proposed in County Louth under *Transport 21* include the N2 Ardee By-Pass (N2/N52), the upgrade of the N2 Ashbourne to Ardee road, together with ongoing investment in new buses and trains for Bus Eireann and Iarnród Eireann respectively.

8.2.2 A Sustainable Transport Future –A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020

In February 2009 the government published the document *A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 -2020*. This concluded that transport and travel trends in Ireland are unsustainable. Even with the much needed investment proposed in *Transport 21* if we continue with present policies, congestion will get worst, transport emissions will continue to grow, economic competitiveness will suffer and quality of life will decline.

The policy document outlines a suite of actions that will have complementary impacts in terms of travel demand and emissions. These are grouped into the following overarching actions:

- Reducing distances travelled by the private car and encourage smarter travel, including focusing population growth in areas of employment and to encourage people to live in close proximity to places of employment and the use of pricing mechanisms or fiscal measures to encourage behavioural change.
- Ensuring that alternatives to the car are more widely available, mainly through a radically improved public transport service and through investment in cycling and walking.
- Improving the fuel efficiency of motorised transport through improved fleet structure, energy efficient driving and alternative technologies
- Strengthening institutional arrangements to deliver the targets.

It is important to understand that the targets and actions proposed are relevant to both urban and rural living. The government is committed the implementation of this strategy including improved bus services in rural areas and actions to promote modal shift.

8.2.3 National Roads Authority - Policy Statement on Development Management and Access to National Roads 2006

The National Roads Authority's (NRA), *Policy Statement on Development Management and Access to National Roads 2006*, aims to contribute to well informed planning decisions that represent the best option for sustainable development and achieve consistency of approach nationally to planning and development issues affecting national roads.

In summary the objectives of this policy statement are to:

- Protect the substantial investment being made by government in upgrading national roads
- Maintain the intended transport function, traffic carrying capacity and efficiency of the network of national roads
- Ensure high standards of safety for road users and that these standards are not compromised by risks arising from traffic movements associated with multiple access points to the network
- Extend the service life of the national road network
- Protect the routes of future roads, including road upgrades, from development;
- Strongly advocate the use of established town and district centres as the preferred locations for new retail developments that attract many trips, and establish a presumption against large retail centres being located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads and motorways as such centres can lead to an inefficient use of costly infrastructure.

The council has had regard the NRA objectives in formulating policy in the Plan.

Policy

- TC 1** To fully capitalise on the transportation advantages which County Louth possesses through pursuing an integrated transport approach to development which facilitates access to a range of transport modes and provides genuine transport choice.
- TC 2** To support the implementation of government transport policy as expressed in *Transport 21, a Sustainable Transport Future –A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 -2020 and the NRA's Policy Statement on Development Management and Access to National Roads 2006* .
- TC 3** To promote land use planning measures which aim for co-ordination and integration between land use and transport throughout the county, thereby maximising the potential of the county's transportation network and encouraging travel by public transport, walking and cycling.
- TC 4** To encourage the provision of modes of transport which are accessible to all, including people with impaired mobility by reason of disability, age or care roles.

8.3 Road Infrastructure

Road transport is the dominant mode of transport within County Louth and plays a crucial role in contributing to business and industrial competitiveness. The county is fortunate in having an excellent road network comprising motorway, national primary and secondary routes, strategic regional roads and a dense network of local roads. Significant expenditure on road infrastructure has taken place in recent years and this is reflected in the excellent quality of the county's roads.

8.3.1 Motorways

Louth is strategically located at an approximate midway point on the EO1 Euro route. This links the port of Larne in Northern Ireland with Rosslare in County Wexford. The section of the EO1 through County Louth, which encompasses the M1 motorway and the Dundalk to Newry link road (A1/N1), is now completed and carries in excess of six million vehicular journeys per year.

8.3.2 Motorway Services

The provision of motorway services is essential for the convenience and safety of the travelling public. The policy of the National Roads Authority (NRA) in relation to the provision of such services originally was that



these should be provided off line at suitable interchanges through the normal planning process. Therefore planning permission was granted for such off line services at Dunleer

and Newtownbalreggan. The policy of the NRA on this matter has changed and it now proposes to provide on-line motorway services through a public private partnership mechanism (PPP). The planning process is currently underway for on-line motorway service facilities at Whiterath, Dromiskin.

8.3.3 National Routes

Louth is benefiting from very significant investment that has taken place in its national road network. The NRA advocates that the strategic role of this road network in catering for the safe and efficient movement of major inter-urban and inter-regional traffic be safeguarded to allow for the effective delivery of these investments. Table 8.1 outlines the number of national routes that run through County Louth.

Table 8.1: National Routes in County Louth

National Primary	National Secondary
N2 Dublin – Derry	N51 Drogheda – Slane
	N52 Dundalk - Kells
	N53 Dundalk - Castleblayney

This council will continue to implement measures to safeguard the capacity and safety of these national routes so that they can continue to perform their strategic role and maintain their importance to the future development of the county.

8.3.4 Regional and Local Roads

Regional and local roads form the life lines of transportation needs across the county. It is via these roads that the vast majority of smaller towns, villages and dispersed rural communities and services are accessed.

Since 2000, many regional and county roads have benefited from significant investment under the *National Development Plan 2000 – 2006*. Notable projects completed include the R173 Rampart – Bellurgan road, thereby providing enhanced access to the Cooley Peninsula and the commercial port at Greenore.

Policy

- TC 5** To provide and maintain a road hierarchy based on motorway, national routes, regional routes and local roads and to maintain the carrying capacity and lifespan of the road network and ensure high standards of safety for road users.
- TC 6** To support the implementation of the NRA's policy in relation to the provision of on-line motorway services.
- TC 7** To prohibit all developments within 100 metres of the fence line of the M1 motorway and Newry to Dundalk link road (N1/A1), outside of any zoned land.
- TC 8** To prohibit any external lighting or illumination and any advertisement signs that would interfere with the free flow of, or distract traffic, using the road network.

8.4 Protected National and Regional Routes

The council considers it necessary to restrict new accesses and the intensification of existing accesses along national and certain strategic regional routes in order to preserve their carrying capacity, their life span and in the interest of traffic safety. Details of these roads including restrictions and exemptions are set out in table 8.2 (national routes) and table 8.3 (regional routes).

Table 8.2: National Routes - Restrictions and Exemptions on Access

Road Category	Restrictions	Exemptions
Motorways	No direct access	None
Dual carriageways	No direct access	None
Single Carriageways (National Primary and National Secondary Routes)	No new access or intensification of existing access	1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard. 2. Where a new access is required for any major employment generating activity, including tourism or development of national or regional importance. 3. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard. 4. Where a new access is to a fixed natural resource of national or regional importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided.

Table 8.3: Protected Regional Routes - Restrictions and Exemptions on Access

Routes	Restrictions	Exemptions
• (R173/R175 Dundalk -Greenore • R173/R176 Greenore – • Carlingford – • Omeath (Cornamucklagh) • R178-Dundalk – • Carrickmacross (Essexford) • R171 Dundalk – • Louth Village • R169 Dunleer – • Collon • R168 Drogheda – • Collon • R166 Drogheda – • Termonfeckin • R132 Dundalk – • Drogheda • R177 Dundalk - • Armagh • Port Access Northern Cross Road* • Former N52 from urban boundary to Ballybarrack	No new access or intensification of existing access.	1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard. 2. Where a new access is required for any major development, including tourism developments, of national, regional or local importance- 3. Where new access is to a fixed natural resource of national, regional or local importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided. 4. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard 5. Dwellings required to satisfy the housing needs of persons who have lived for not less than 10 years in the area, where no other site is available off a minor road, and where the existing entrance servicing the family home is used. Where the entrance to the existing family home cannot be used, consideration will be given for one new entrance only onto the adjoining protected regional route. A condition confining occupancy to a family member for a minimum of 7 years will be attached to any permission granted under this exemption.

**It is anticipated that this road will be constructed during the period of this plan.*

Policy

TC 9 To prohibit the creation of new accesses or intensification of existing accesses onto national routes and protected regional routes as set out in tables 8.2 and 8.3.

8.5 Entrances

The provision of suitable and safe entrances is essential to facilitate traffic flow and movements and to protect the safety of roads users. Visibility standards in respect of new entrances onto all categories of roads and vehicle dwell areas are set out in table 8.4 and 8.5.

Table 8.4: Minimum Visibility Standards

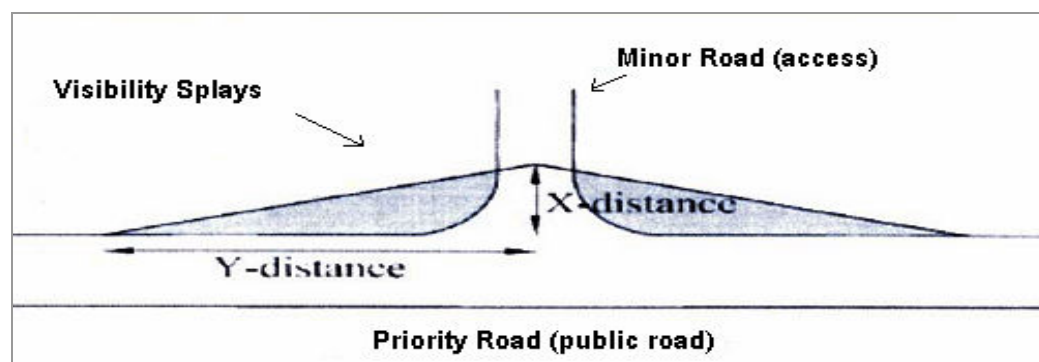
Road Category	Sight distance (Y)	Visibility requirement over ground	Distance back from edge of Carriageway (X) (1 to 6 houses)	Distance back from edge of Carriageway (X) (More than 6 houses and non-domestic developments)
National and Protected Regional Routes	215m	0.6 -1.05m	2.4m	4.5m
Regional	125m	0.6 -1.05m	2.4m	4.5m
Local Class 1	75m	0.6-1.05m	2.4m	4.5m
Local Class 2	75m	0.6-.05m	2.4m	4.5m
Local Class 3	75m	0.6-1.05m	2.4m	4.5m
Cul de Sac	75m	0.6-1.05m	2.4m	4.5m

* Where the 85% percentile speed on a local class 2 or a local class 3 road is shown to be below 50 kilometres per hour, the minimum sight distance requirements contained in the document National Roads Authority –Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, shall apply.

Table 8.5: Vehicle Dwell areas

Domestic accesses	Commercial accesses
Gradient 0% to 2% for at least 5 metres	Gradient 0% to 2% for at least 15 metres

Figure 8.1: Visibility splays



Policy

TC 10 To apply the visibility standards and vehicle dwell areas requirements as set out in tables 8.4 and 8.5

8.6 Vehicular Parking Standards

The parking standards required by the council in respect of specified uses are set out 8.6 below. In the case of any uses not specified, the standard for the closest similar use will apply, or such other requirement as may be determined by the council.

Table 8.6: Car Parking Requirements

Land-use	Urban/Brownfield No. of Spaces per Unit	Sub-urban/Greenfield No. of Spaces per Unit
Dwellings	1 per dwelling	2 per dwelling
Apartments	1 per dwelling	2 per dwelling
Residential Institutions	1 per two units	1 per two units
Retail	1 per 20m ²	1 per 10m ²
Bar /Discos/Dancehalls	1 per 5 m ² public space	1 per 5 m ² public space
Restaurant/Function Room	1 per 10 m ² public space	1 per 5 m ² public space
Hotel/Guest House	1 per 2 bedrooms	1 per bedroom
Offices	1 per 40 m ²	1 per 30 m ²
Banks /Financial Inst.	1 per 30 m ²	1 per 25 m ²
Industrial	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 50 m ²
Warehousing	1 per 100 m ²	1 per 75 m ²
Retail warehousing*	1 per 40 m ²	1 per 25 m ²
Cash & Carry	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 25 m ²
Showrooms	1 per 50 m ²	1 per 25 m ²
Cinemas/ Theatres	1 per 10 seats	1 per 5 seats
Conference Halls/churches	1 per 10 seats	1 per 5 seats
Schools	1 per class room	1 per class room
Clinics/Doctor's Surgery	3 spaces per consulting room	3 spaces per consulting room
Leisure Centres/ Clubs	1 per 50 m ² public space	1 per 30 m ² public space
Nursing Homes	1 per employee and 0.5 per bed	1 per employee and 0.5 per bed

**Retail warehouses or warehouse buildings for the purpose of retailing bulky products such as furniture, white electrical goods, DIY and carpets which are difficult to retail in town centre locations.*

Parking bays shall be a minimum of 5 metres x 2.5 metres with circulation aisles at least 6 metres wide. Parking for persons with mobility impairment should be provided at a rate of one space per ten spaces, and each space shall be a minimum of 3.5 metre wide.

In addition to the car parking standards, sufficient space will be required for all service vehicles involved in the operation of the business or building within the curtilage.

Policy

- TC 11** To require compliance with the parking standards as specified in table 8.6.
- TC 12** To require the provision of car parking spaces for persons with impaired mobility at a rate of one space in ten.
- TC 13** To permit a reduction of the above standards in respect of certain town and village centre developments and developments adjacent to transportation nodes or where the developer provides acceptable alternative modes of transport. Where a reduction in car parking standards is accepted, a contribution in lieu of the provision of car parking will normally be required.

8.7 Roads Improvement Programme 2008 -2015

The council's *Road Improvement Programme* covers the period 2008 to 2015. This programme, which is set out in table 8.7, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10 will be implemented by the council and the NRA over the period of the Plan. Where the proposed road works are of such a scale and magnitude that warrants the preparation of an environmental impact statement, planning approval will be required from An Bord Pleanála.

Table 8.7: Motorways and National Routes

Road Number	Location and Proposed Works
N2	Ardee By-Pass
N52	Ardee By-Pass
N2	Ashbourne to Ardee
N51	Drogheda to Slane
N53	Dundalk to Castleblayney
N33	Junction improvements and new access to Cappockgreen

Table 8.8: Regional Routes

Road Number	Location and Proposed Works
R178	Dundalk to Carrickmacross

Table 8.9: Strategic New Roads

Location and Proposed Works
Port Access Northern Cross Route (Drogheda)
Dundalk Western Infrastructure Relief Route
Narrow Water Bridge

Table 8.10: Proposed Capital Works Programmes

Road	Location and Proposed Works
Boyne Bridge, East of Viaduct	New Bridge
R173	Bellurgan and Omeath to Border
R165	Shanlis to Lowtown
R168	Hill of Rath to Collon
R171	Ardee to Louth Village to Dundalk
R 169	General Improvements
R172	General Improvements
R177	General Improvements

Policy

TC 14 To secure the implementation of the council's *Road Improvement Programme 2008 – 2015* as detailed in table 8. 7, 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10.

8.8 Gateway and Hub Links

Discussions are ongoing with Cavan and Monaghan County Councils with a view to progressing upgraded links between the Dundalk gateway and the hubs towns of Cavan and Monaghan. The upgrade of these routes will improve links across the Border Region to the gateways of Sligo and Letterkenny.

It is proposed that the Louth section of the Dundalk to Cavan route via Carrickmacross and Dundalk to Monaghan route, via Castleblayney, will be upgraded during the course of this plan.

Policy

TC 15 To seek improvements in the linkages between the border regional gateways of Dundalk, Sligo and Letterkenny and with the hub towns of Cavan and Monaghan.

8.9 Transport Audit and Mapping

Louth is currently embarking on a number of important new developments aimed at improving the quality of life of its citizens and making its public services more responsive to the needs of key target groups. Providing appropriate passenger transport options within existing resources will be critical to the success of these initiatives. For this reason the council will carry out a transport audit and mapping study.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify effective ways of improving access to important services through a more comprehensive local passenger transport service to meet the needs of key target groups.
- Identify opportunities for rationalisation and better deployment of existing resources.

The study will be primarily focussed on those who are vulnerable to a lack of transport. The key groups include older people especially those living in isolated rural areas, young people, people on low incomes and people with mobility, sensory or cognitive impairments. The mapping exercise will include transport services provided by private, public and voluntary organisations. The study will examine the potential for public service vehicles to provide a wider public service when not needed for their primary function.

Policy

- TC 16** To carry out a transport audit and mapping study of County Louth to examine the way in which local transport passenger services can be improved and the potential for public service vehicles to provide a wider public service when not needed for their primary function.

8.10 Public Transport

Public transport in County Louth is provided by way of bus and rail services together with taxi and hackney services. Public transport is at its most effective when operating in corridors where there is a medium or high density of population. In County Louth, there are good quality public transport services between Dundalk and Drogheda.

Through the local area plans process, the council will seek to promote the enhancement of public transport services and infrastructure, in the main towns, villages and rural areas. Gaps and inadequacies in public transport services are notable in many parts of the county, especially in dispersed rural areas. This affects primarily older people, the young, people with limited mobility and those on low incomes.

Policy

- TC 17** To co-operate with the relevant transport authorities and operators, both public and private, to secure improvements in and expansion of the public transport in the county.
- TC 18** To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes such as public transport, cycling and walking.

8.11 Rail Transportation

The Dublin – Belfast rail line crosses the county on a north south axis. There are two operating railway stations at Dundalk and Drogheda. At present, Iarnród Éireann and Northern Ireland Railways jointly operate the Enterprise rail service on a frequent basis between Dublin and Belfast. There are proposals to introduce an hourly inter-city service on this route by 2010. Both Dundalk and Drogheda are also linked to greater Dublin and beyond by Iarnród Éireann's commuter services. Drogheda in particular benefits from a

very high frequency service to Dublin and the town itself is the site of Iarnród Éireann's national centre for servicing commuter trains.

County Louth will benefit substantially from a number of capital programmes currently being progressed by Iarnród Éireann. These include resignalling projects around Greater Dublin and the Dublin Inter-connector which will re-route DART services underground, thereby allowing more frequent commuter rail services from Louth. Iarnród Éireann has stated that they will continue to work closely with all stakeholders regarding the potential for new stations in County Louth. These include a potential site serving the North Drogheda Environs, Dundalk South West and Dunleer.

The policy of the council in the *2003-2009 County Development Plan* was to secure the re-opening of the Dunleer railway station. It was also the policy to secure the provision of new railway stations in the Dundalk South West and the North Drogheda Environs. It remains the policy of the council to secure, in co-operation with Iarnród Éireann, improved rail services in County Louth, particularly for the mid and south Louth areas.

8.11.1 Drogheda Navan Rail Link

Drogheda is linked to Navan by a freight rail link. The council will support the upgrading of this link to full passenger rail status.

8.11.2 Rail Based Park and Ride Facilities

Park and ride facilities operate at both Dundalk and Drogheda rail stations. These facilities are heavily utilized, operating well in excess of their capacities. Additional rail based park and ride capacity is required at both these stations and this issue will be addressed through their respective development plans.

Policy

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| TC 19 | To secure, in co-operation with Iarnród Éireann, improved rail services in County Louth, particularly for the mid and south Louth areas. |
| TC 20 | To support the opening of the Drogheda to Navan railway line for passenger services. |
| TC 21 | To support the improvement of rail based park and ride facilities in Dundalk and Drogheda and in conjunction with any new railway station located in the county. |

8.12 Bus Transportation

Bus Éireann provides the mainstay of public bus services within County Louth. Over the course of the previous plan, the core services running through the central spine of the county linking Dundalk with Drogheda and Dublin have been considerably improved. There is now a high frequency service linking the capital to the county utilizing modern vehicles. The service operates both as an express link using the M1 Motorway and also as a local service calling at the various towns and villages along the route.

The county has also benefited from an increasing frequency of long distance bus services operated by Bus Éireann and Ulster bus linking Dublin with Belfast and Dublin

with Derry. Both services now operate on a high frequency twenty four hour basis. Other long distance services operate to Athlone and Galway, albeit on a less frequent basis.

With the funding provided through *Transport 21*, Bus Éireann has committed to improving bus services through certain areas of the county. This includes the enhancement of services around the Cooley Peninsula together with improved frequencies between Dundalk and Newry, some of which will operate via the Cooley Peninsula.



Local bus services link Dundalk and Drogheda with surrounding towns and villages in the county. However links with more distant towns in adjacent counties are relatively poor. In particular, links with the neighbouring NSS hubs of Monaghan and Cavan are extremely poor.

County Louth is also well serviced by private bus operators with the two major towns linked to greater Dublin by private operators.

The rural areas of the county have access to a limited bus service provided by both Bus Éireann and private operators.

8.12.1 Bus Based Park and Ride Facilities

There is potential for the development of a network of bus based park and ride facilities in the county at transport intersections. This is particularly the case at the urban interchanges adjacent to Dundalk and Drogheda. There may also be limited opportunities for similar facilities at other strategic locations.

Policy

- TC 22 To work in co-operation with other public bodies, agencies and community groups, to secure improvements in public transportation within the county and greater integration of existing and any new services.
- TC 23 To encourage the provision of enhanced public transport services and infrastructure both within and between the main towns of the county.
- TC 24 To ensure that bus routes and adequate services are provided within all new proposals for substantial residential developments.
- TC 25 To investigate the feasibility of the provision of bus based park and ride facilities at urban based motorway interchanges and other strategic locations elsewhere in County Louth.

8.13 Rural Transport Programme

The lack of public transport options represents a serious issue for many people living in rural areas of County Louth. This has been identified as a key factor underlying levels of exclusion in rural areas. A *Rural Transport Service Audit and Needs Assessment* carried

out in the county in 2001 identified that as many as 25% of people have a public transport need. Much of this segment of the population comprises older people, people with disabilities, young people and people on low incomes. Transport provision in rural areas is poorly integrated, resulting in uneconomic and inefficient use of existing resources. The main types of journey for which provision is required include work, shopping, education and health journeys.

The *Rural Transport Programme (RTP)* was launched in 2007, building on the success of the *Rural Transport Initiative 2000 – 2006* and putting the former pilot scheme on a permanent mainstream, with significantly more funding. It was set up to address social exclusion in rural areas arising from unmet public transport needs. The scheme provides funding for community organisations and community partnerships to address the transport needs of their area.

In February 2008, Louth Leader Partnership commissioned a review and further survey of the transport needs of people living in rural areas of the county. This survey will assist the partnership in devising a public transport system to service those most in need. Funding is available under the NDP 2007 - 2013 for the provision of rural based public transport.

Policy

TC 26 To support Louth Leader Partnership in the provision of improved public transport in the rural areas of the county.

8.14 Ports

County Louth has three commercial ports and one fishing port within its boundaries. These are located at Drogheda, Dundalk, Greenore and Clogherhead, the latter being a major commercial fishing port. The ports of Drogheda, Dundalk and Greenore operate as independent port authorities whereas Clogherhead falls under the remit of Louth County Council. The council has invested heavily in the improvement of facilities at Clogherhead over the course of the previous plan period. During the course of the Plan, it is anticipated that there will be significant investment in Greenore Port. Greenore has significant potential for development as a deep water port catering for both lo-lo and ro-ro traffic.



The M1 motorway provides excellent road linkages from the county's commercial ports to the rest of the country and ultimately to the wider markets of the UK, Europe and beyond.

Policy

- TC 27** To support the development and expansion of the ports of Drogheda, Dundalk and Greenore.

8.15 Airports

Although there are no airports located within County Louth, the county enjoys the benefit of rapid access to both Dublin and Belfast airports. This provides international linkages and significant economic development opportunities, particularly with regard to the attraction of foreign direct investment and visitors to the county.

8.16 Cycling and Walking

The policy document, *Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland* identifies the increased provision of cycle lanes and safer facilities for pedestrians as a key priority. These can be facilitated by improvements in the design of roads and should be incorporated as part of the design schemes for all new residential, educational, employment and recreational developments. Good quality and safe cycling and walking facilities and their use, particularly in urban areas, can make a valuable contribution to the reduction in traffic congestion and the encouragement of significant modal shift away from dependency on the use of the private motor car.

Policy

- TC 28** To provide where possible, traffic free pedestrian and cyclist routes especially where they would facilitate more direct, safer and pleasant alternatives routes to those of the private car.
- TC 29** To incorporate, where feasible, provision for cycle and pedestrian paths within new road proposals and improvement schemes.
- TC 30** To promote the development of cycling by the provision of cycle routes in both rural and urban areas.
- TC 31** To investigate the possibility of developing linear cycle routes utilizing existing natural or manmade corridors such as riversides and abandoned road and rail infrastructure.
- TC 32** To encourage the provision of secure bicycle parking facilities in towns, at neighbourhood centres and at public facilities such as schools, libraries and in all new developments.

8.17 Communications

8.17.1 Telecommunications

Over the course of the previous *County Development Plan 2003 – 2009*, there has been a roll-out of quality broadband services across the whole country funded largely by the *National Development Plan* but also with significant private sector involvement. The *Metropolitan Area Network (MAN)* programme has seen the roll-out of broadband infrastructure to Drogheda, Dundalk and Ardee. The remaining deficiencies in the broadband network will be addressed under the



National Broadband Scheme (NBS) during the course of the Plan.

Policy

TC 33 To secure the provision of high quality broadband and telecommunication infrastructure within the county in the interests of promoting economic growth and competitiveness.

8.17.2 Broadband

The vital role of high quality telecommunications in enabling the county to reach its full economic potential is recognised. High speed broadband is an important asset in order to attract inward investment into the county and to promote indigenous businesses and commercial activity. County Louth is relatively well serviced by broadband, however, some gaps remain in the level of availability. There are a number of areas where broadband coverage is hampered for various reasons including lack of suitable communication mast towers, topographical features and low customer numbers that affects economic viability. Louth Local Authorities, in conjunction with service providers, are working in order to eliminate these black spots and will continue to do so until the county has complete coverage.

Because of rigidities in the market place, the government has increasingly encouraged local authorities to become directly involved in the provision of broadband and associated technologies. In this regard, the council is jointly involved in two initiatives, the Dundalk Technology City Project and the North East Broad Band Proposal (encompassing Monaghan, Cavan and Louth), in order to provide the infrastructure to enable existing and new high technology and knowledge based enterprise to grow and develop.

The government has made significant investments in the communications sector through international connectivity, backhaul infrastructure, and in the MANS. MANs have been operational in Dundalk and Drogheda since 2005 and more recently in Ardee. The network is publicly owned but allows all telecommunication operators open access to it.

Policy

TC 34 To support a programme of broadband connectivity throughout the County and facilitate the expansion of broadband in more remote areas.

8.17.3 Open Access Ducting

The council will require that open access is made available to all ducting networks provided within the Plan area in order to support a competitive telecommunications service and to safeguard existing roads and footpaths from unnecessary excavation. These networks will remain in the ownership of the developer until taken in charge by the council. The council will require by way of condition attached to any grant of planning permission that the service provider enter into an agreement with the council to ensure that open access at an economic cost is provided.

Policy

- TC 35** To require that open access ducting for new developments is made available to all service providers on a non-exclusive lease basis at an economic cost.

8.17.4 Land Based Telephony

The importance of the traditional land based telephony has decreased over recent years due to the rapid upsurge in demand and developments in mobile telephony. Nevertheless, land based telephony remains an essential part of the telecommunications networks. The service is well developed and of a high standard throughout the county and is continually being upgraded by the service providers. The two major telephone exchanges located within the county are located in Dundalk and Drogheda.

8.17.5 Mobile Telephony

There have been considerable advances made in extending the mobile telephony network and service in the county in recent years. A high quality reliable phone service is a necessity for both business users and the public alike. It is important that the Plan contains guidance for the appropriate provision of the required infrastructure. When suitably located and designed this infrastructure can go unnoticed to the untrained eye.

Policy

- TC 36** To require that all new mobile telecommunication installations comply with the guidelines issues by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources publication *Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields, 2007*.
- TC 37** To ensure that all mobile telecommunication infrastructures comply with the standards set out in the document *Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996* issued by the DoEHLG and the development management assessment criteria set out in 8.16.8.
- TC 38** To operate a presumption against the location of antennae support structures where such structures would have a serious negative impact on the visual amenity of sensitive sites and locations.
- TC 39** To require operators to share antenna support structures and sites where feasible.

8.17.6 Development Management Assessment Criteria for Telecommunication Structures

Planning applications for telecommunications will in addition to the above, be assessed having regard to the following:

- Applicants should demonstrate that they are locating telecommunications equipment in accordance with the sequential approach outlined in the telecommunications guidelines *Telecommunications and Antennae Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1999)*. Only as a last resort will free standing structures be permitted where there is a perceived threat to the visual or aesthetic amenity of a place.
- To ensure that the proposed siting for free standing antenna support structures should be suitably located and designed in order to reduce visual impact. It is

accepted that operators require certain sightlines in order to provide coverage, however it must be demonstrated that the location is not unduly obtrusive. Setting installations against an appropriate backdrop may mitigate negative impacts. The site should be made secure using appropriate fencing and natural landscaping. Anti-climbing devices should be employed.

- Applicants must undertake to make their antenna support structures available and/or ducting to other service providers at an economic cost.
- All installations attached to structures should employ the latest technology and stealth techniques (wall mounting, painting, cable tray covers, set back distances from roof edge etc.) in order to minimise their size and visual impact. Each piece of equipment should be justified.

8.17.7 Obsolete Telecommunications Structures

Technology in the field of telecommunications is constantly advancing. This results in infrastructures rapidly becoming outmoded. In order to prevent a proliferation of such infrastructures which would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the county's landscape, permission will normally be for a period of five years only, whereon obsolete mobile telecommunication infrastructures must be removed by the operator and the site re-instated. A bond or cash deposit will be sought to ensure compliance with any such condition imposed. Any permission granted for a further period on the site will be conditional on the replacement of the obsolete technology with more modern and environmentally friendly designs where these have become available.

Policy

TC 40 To grant planning permission for telecommunications related structures for a maximum period of five years, except in exceptional circumstances, and to require the removal of all obsolete telecommunication structures and re-instatement of sites to the satisfaction of the planning authority. A cash bond and development levies will be imposed.

8.17.8 Domestic Satellite Dishes

Satellite dishes, if inappropriately sited, can materially harm the character and appearance of historic buildings, important townscapes and the character of rural areas. While satellite dishes can be erected as exempted development under the *Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended)*, these provisions are not applicable where the dwelling is a protected structure or the dwelling is sited within an architectural conservation area.

Policy

TC 41 To prohibit satellite dishes where they would materially harm the character and appearance of a protected Structure, an architectural conservation area or in any other area where they would cause unacceptable harm to the visual amenities of the area.

