

CHAPTER 3

Transport Infrastructure

This chapter reviews the infrastructure available for passenger transport in the South-East Region as well as some of the existing plans for infrastructural improvement. It firstly reviews the road network in the Region. This is followed by a description of the rail, air and sea infrastructures respectively.

The South-East has an above average provision of major roads ...

The national road network in the South-East comprises 720 km. About 70% of this network is national primary road (compared to 49% nationally), with the remainder made up of national secondary roads. Only 0.5 km of the national road network in the Region is of motorway or dual carriageway standard, however.

Relative to area, the national road network in the Region is similar to the national average. Per capita, the South-East has 26% more kilometres of national road than the national average. Total National Development Plan (NDP) investment in national primary and national secondary routes is expected to be €4.3 bn in the Southern and Eastern Region (17 counties) between 2000 and 2006. This will benefit the road network in the South-East (see Map 3.1⁴).

Table 3.1: National Road Infrastructure in the South-East (km)					
	National Primary	National Secondary	Total National	Motorway	Carriageway Dual
South-East	507.2	211.5	718.7	0	0.5
State	2,618.5	2,678.5	5,297.0	101.7	177.5

Source: National Roads Authority 2000

... and there are plans for significant investment in national primary routes.

There are eight national primary routes serving the South-East. These routes link many of the major cities/towns as well as linking the Region with the rest of the country. The existing road quality is poor in places, however (e.g., Carlow/Kilkenny-Waterford). Traffic levels vary on each route, depending on the size and importance of the population centres that they serve. Traffic on individual routes is also higher close to the main urban areas, which is contributing to pressures for road space and the emergence of congestion as an issue for many of the major urban centres.

⁴ Map 3.1 shows national primary routes where plans are in place for motorway construction. The map does not show the proposed routes for these motorways, however. In the case of the proposed M9 motorway from Dublin to Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Waterford will be linked by a single route as opposed to the existing but separate N9/N10 links.

Table 3.2: National Primary Routes in the South-East

	Serves	Planned NDP Improvements
N8	Dublin/Cork	Motorway/high quality dual carriageway.
N9	Dublin/ Waterford	Motorway/high quality dual carriageway (by mid-2007).
N10	Dublin/Kilkenny	Motorway/high quality dual carriageway (by mid-2007).
N11	Dublin/Wexford	Mixture of dual carriageway/wide two lane carriageway.
N24	Waterford/Limerick	Mixture of wide two lane/standard two lane carriageway.
N25	Rosslare/Cork	Mixture of wide two lane/standard two lane carriageway.
N29	Waterford/Belview Port	No planned improvements.
N30	Enniscorthy/New Ross	Standard two lane carriageway.

Note: Based on road types as defined in the 1998 National Road Needs Study.

Source: National Roads Authority

The NDP, following on from the recommendations of the 1998 National Road Needs Study, aims to improve the major inter-urban routes – including the N8 and N9/N10 in the South-East – to minimum LoS C (i.e., average inter-urban speed of 94 kph on dual carriageway and 105 kph on motorway)⁵. The NDP places highest priority on developing the major inter-urban routes, which are the main radial routes out of Dublin. For the rest of the national primary network – the N11, N24, N25 (incorporating the Waterford City by-pass), N29 and N30 in the South-East – planned investment should result in a minimum LoS D (average inter-urban speed of 80 kph on inter-urban journeys) on 90% of route capacity.

Investment needs are also identified for national secondary routes, however ...

National secondary routes are generally medium distance routes connecting important towns, routes serving medium to large geographical areas and links to the national primary roads to form the network of national roads. There are seven national secondary routes in the South-East. Routes in the South-East that have previously been earmarked for NDP investment include the N80 (Bunclody-Stradbally section) – a major link to the proposed M9 motorway – and sections of the N76 (Callan/Kilkenny) and N77 (Kilkenny/N78 Junction).

Table 3.3: National Secondary Routes in the South-East

	Serves	National Road Needs Study Recommendations
N72	Killorglin/Dungarvan	Upgrade to reduced two lane carriageway.
N74	Tipperary/Cashel	No upgrading required.
N76	Clonmel/Kilkenny	Upgrade to standard two lane carriageway in its entirety.
N77	Kilkenny/Durrow	Upgrade to standard two lane carriageway in its entirety.
N78	Kilkenny/Kilcullen	No upgrading required apart from by-pass of Athy in Kildare.
N80	Enniscorthy/Moate	Upgrade to reduced two lane carriageway.
N81	Bunclody/Dublin	No upgrading required within the South-East sections of the route.

Source: National Roads Authority

⁴ "LoS" is an abbreviation for level of service. The major inter-urban routes affecting the South-East are Waterford to Dublin (N7/N9) and Cork to Dublin (N8).

... and the extensive non-national network needs improvement.

Non-national roads represent 91% of the entire road network in the State. The South-East contains 14% of all non-national roads in mileage terms, and has more non-national roads per 100 km² than the national average. It also has more non-national roads per capita than nationally.

Table 3.4: Non-National Roads in the South-East			
	Non-national Road (km)	Non-national Roads per 100km²	Non-national Roads per 100 residents
South-East	12,299	130.1	3.1
State	87,412	124.4	2.4

Source: Department of the Environment and Local Government

The quality of the non-national road network is generally inferior to the quality of the national primary and secondary routes. The 1997 Non-national Road Condition Survey identified reconstruction, skid resistance and restoration needs for all types of non-national road in the South-East and other regions. Some, but not all, of these needs have since been met. Local authority resources to develop the network, meanwhile, remain limited, being used mainly for ongoing maintenance of the existing network. Under the NDP, it is planned to invest about €1.4 bn in the non-national road network in the Southern and Eastern Region (17 counties).

Rail infrastructure in the South-East is limited to a few lines ...

Rail infrastructure in the South-East is limited to three key lines – the lines from Waterford-Dublin, Rosslare Harbour-Dublin and Rosslare Harbour-Limerick Junction (see Map 3.2). All three of these lines carry passenger rail services. Apart from these lines, there is also a rail freight line from New Ross to Waterford and a disused freight line from Dungarvan to Waterford.

... though some investment is being provided under the NDP.

At present, the track on the Region's rail network is a mixture of continuous welded rail (CWR) and older jointed rail. The Waterford-Dublin and Rosslare Harbour-Dublin tracks are to be completely upgraded to CWR by 2003. Track renewal on the Rosslare-Limerick Junction line, meanwhile, is to commence in 2003, with completion in the next phase of Iarnród Éireann's investment programme.

Track renewal investment should provide some improvements in journey times on South-East rail services (see Chapter 4). Topography has been cited as a limiting factor on some routes, however. Iarnród Éireann states that the topography of the Rosslare Harbour-Dublin line will not allow rail speeds of 144 kph (90 mph), while the sharing of track infrastructure with the DART service in Dublin also constrains journey time through the capital.



South-East Regional Passenger Transport Strategy
Map 3.2: National Rail Network in the South-East

Air access capacity in the Region is also limited ...

The South-East Regional Airport near Waterford City provides direct air access capacity in the South-East. Its maximum passenger throughput and ability to accommodate certain types of aircraft is limited, however. Terminal capacity is 150,000 passengers per annum. Runway length also limits the type and size of aircraft that operate from the airport. Passenger jets cannot operate there because of this, while 50-seat turbo-prop aircraft can only operate at a limited capacity (36 seats). In addition, road access to the airport is poor, and public transport access is restricted to a dedicated phone line for on-call taxi/hackney service.

Plans have been submitted to the Department of Public Enterprise for NDP capital investment of €6.5 mn to extend the runway to 1,800 metres (and thus eliminate the existing seat restrictions) and to upgrade other facilities in order to maximise the benefit from passenger turbo-prop operations. This investment, if approved, would still not accommodate passenger jet operations.

... though the Region is strategically important for sea access.

Rosslare Europort is one of Ireland's largest sea ports for passenger ferry services, handling a throughput of about 1.5 mn passengers a year. It is the only sea port providing passenger services in the South-East. Being the closest point from Southern Ireland to the UK and Continental Europe, it is a hub for all the major roll-on, roll-off passenger services operating the Southern Irish Sea and the Continental European routes, giving it a national as well as regional significance. It is also a rail connected port, operated by Iarnród Éireann.

Recent capital investment has concentrated on providing the infrastructure necessary to cater for expanding car and freight requirements through handling ro-ro vessels. Iarnród Éireann has also sought Exchequer funding at a rate of 35% for four prioritised projects, namely:

- approved funding for upgrading of Berths 1 and 2 (€5.8 mn);
- provision of a new Berth 2 linkspan for European services (€3.4 mn);
- essential works on the outer breakwater (€1.9 mn);
- re-alignment of the port to the new N25 by-pass (€4.1 mn).

Although it is not a passenger port, the major commercial port at Belview is an important goods access point that has a knock-on effect on road and rail transport in the Region. Belview is Ireland's third largest commercial port, and is the closest commercial port to Europe, giving it also a national as well as regional significance.

Chapter Summary

- Relative to other parts of Ireland, the South-East has an extensive national road network, with NDP plans for substantial investment in the region's national primary routes.
- There are also important investment needs for some of the Region's national secondary routes, however, and for its non-national road network.
- Outside of the road infrastructure, the South-East's capacity for other forms of passenger transport is very limited. Rail and air travel in particular are not widely available.
- The Region does provide strategically important sea access to Ireland, however, as Rosslare Europort is one of Ireland's largest sea ferry ports.

