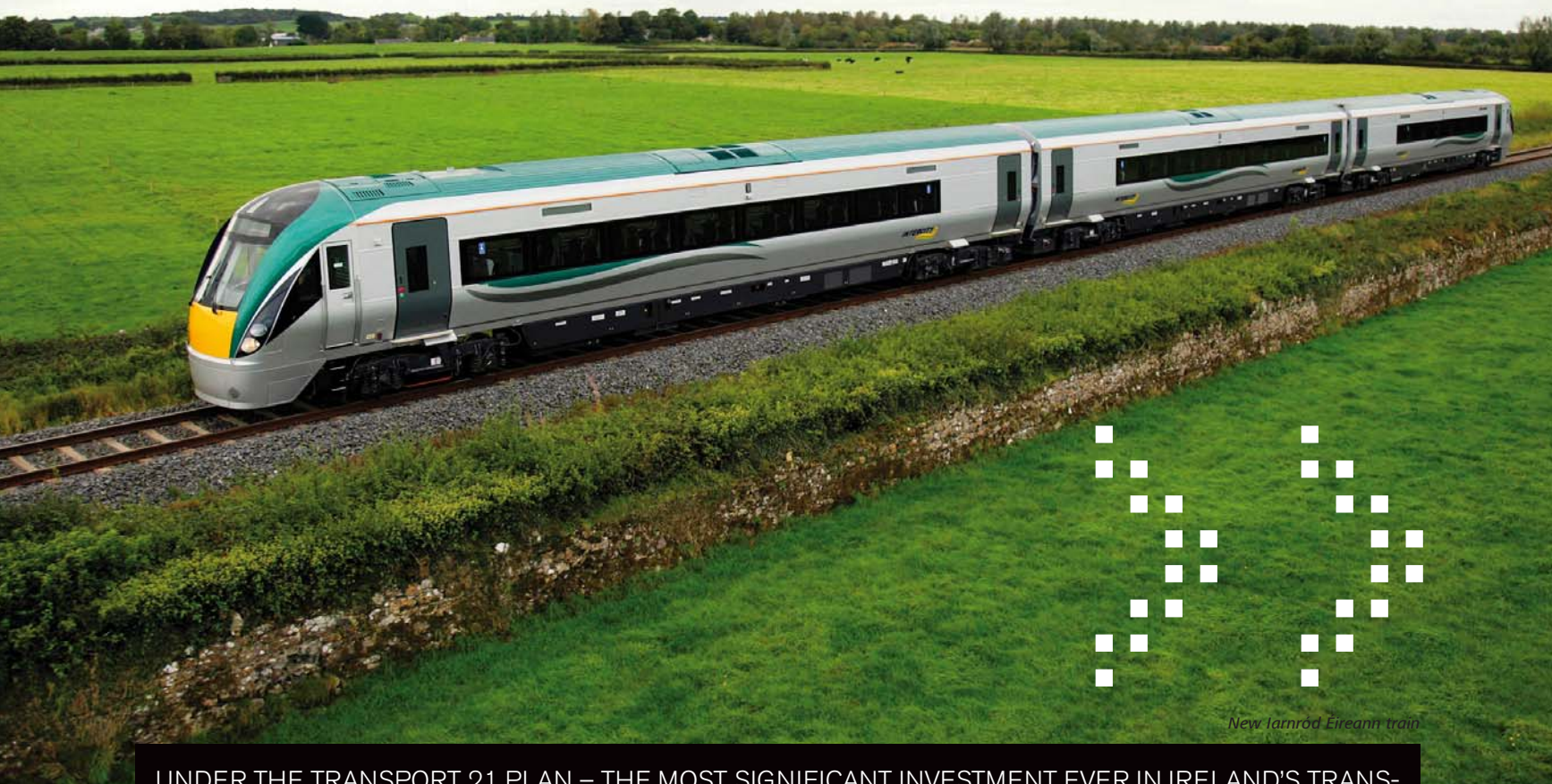


# IRELAND INVESTS IN RAIL



*New Iarnród Éireann train*

UNDER THE TRANSPORT 21 PLAN – THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT EVER IN IRELAND'S TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE – THE COUNTRY'S RAIL NETWORK IS UNDERGOING EXTENSIVE RENEWAL, EXPANSION AND TRANSFORMATION.

## TRANSPORT

systems are of huge importance to every country, and economy, across Europe. Good transport links – road, rail, and bus – are one of the main foundations for business success. But in addition, our transport infrastructure connects towns and cities, and bridges the gap between urban centres and the rural community.

In short, transport is vital. That's why the Irish Government is investing – in a planned and long-term way – for the future development of our transport network. This investment is more significant than at any time in the history of our country. This plan is called Transport 21.

From 2006 to 2015, €34 billion is being inves-

ted in Ireland's transport systems. Across the country, Transport 21 is developing and expanding national road, rail, bus and regional airport links. Already, very significant improvements have been delivered, and considerable work is underway right now. By 2015, our transport systems will work to support the progressive, competitive, business-oriented country that Ireland has become.

The need for a coordinated and planned investment in Ireland's transport system became particularly apparent during the boom years of the late 90s and early 2000s. Unfortunately, in the decades preceding this boom, Ireland's transport networks had not received adequate funding. The recent surge in economic growth – leading to an unprecedented expansion in employment,

and coupled with a growth in population – highlighted the deficiencies in our transport systems.

Put simply, our transport network, laid out in a different time and for a very different Ireland, could not cope with the demands of a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Transport 21 is changing all this. By upgrading and expanding existing services, and by also putting in place a number of radical and extensive new transport options, it is planning for the type of transport system that our country will need for the decades to come.

Over the course of the entire project, €34 billion will be invested in Ireland's transport infrastructure. The project forms a significant part of Ireland's National Development Plan 2007-2013, under which €184 billion will be inves-



Ongoing work on the Kildare Route Project

ted in all sectors of the economy. Last year alone, the Irish Government invested €2.8 billion in it, transforming road, rail and air links across Ireland, a substantial increase of 33% on 2006. Since the project was unveiled, a total of €4.7 billion has now been invested. In addition, almost €3 billion in funding has been allocated for 2008.

Since 2006, Ireland's rail network has benefited considerably from Transport 21 investment, and this will continue for the lifetime of the plan. Today, Ireland's rail network is in the most intensive process of renewal, expansion and transformation.

### Kildare Route project

A number of significant projects are underway – or planned – to expand the rail network in Dublin City, in the Greater Dublin Areas of Meath and Kildare, in Cork and in the west of Ireland. Cumulatively, these projects show that Ireland's rail network is clearly in a renaissance period.

To take the Kildare Route project as an example, – it is clear that significant benefits will be delivered, especially to commuters, from this investment. It is designed to increase the frequency of commuter and other services along the key Kildare to Heuston (Dublin) rail corridor, to allow thousands more commuters every day use rail services. This will be achieved through increasing the number of tracks from two to four along sections of the route, providing two dedicated lines for commuter services and two dedicated lines for Intercity and regional services.

Other major works covered by the project include the replacement or alteration of a number of road overbridges to facilitate the

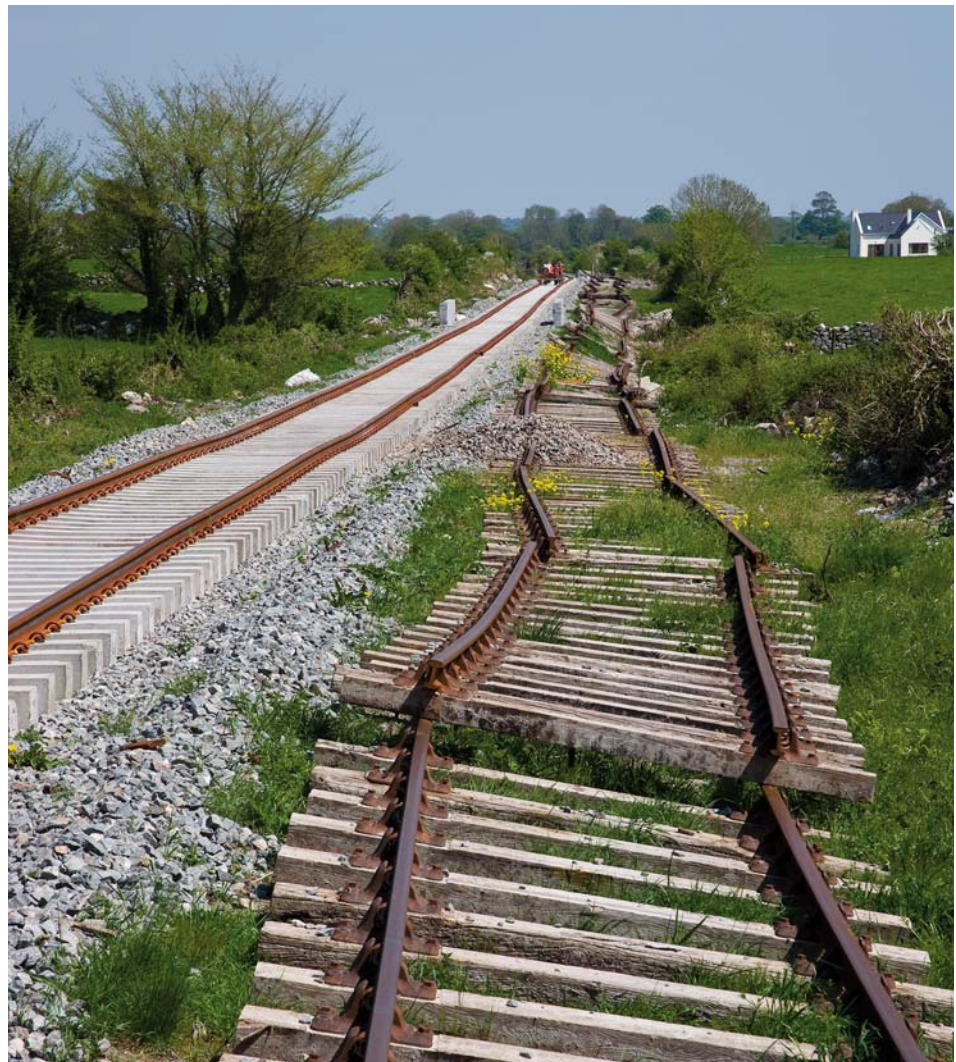
four-tracking of the line, construction of new and relocated stations, enhancement of existing stations and associated signalling works. Work commenced in mid 2007, after enabling works took place. These included activities such as relocation of utility services, erection of temporary fencing, establishing site compounds and access routes, track realignment works, site preparation and consultation with stakeholders.

When completed, Kildare Route will deliver improved transport services to commuters in Kildare, Carlow and Laois. Passenger numbers will be able to increase from 11,050 to 36,400 per day each way, cutting down on the number of car users entering Dublin City from these commuter counties.

Work on the project is advancing well, with track laying, bridge work and the development of new stations and facilities such as link roads and car parking underway. Completion is slated for early 2010.

### Western Rail Corridor

The Transport 21 investment in Ireland's rail network is also bringing substantial benefits to the West and Mid West of the island. Work is now underway on phase 1 of the development of the Western Rail Corridor, from Ennis, County Clare, to Athenry, Co Galway. Trackwork began in October 2007, and the first train services on the line are scheduled to commence in 2009, upon completion of the €106.5 million redevelopment of the Ennis/Athenry line.



New track on the Western Rail Corridor



TODAY, IRELAND'S RAIL NETWORK IS IN THE MOST INTENSIVE PROCESS OF RENEWAL, EXPANSION AND TRANSFORMATION

Ennis to Athenry will allow for direct, regular Galway City to Limerick City services. New stations are being developed, and together with new services, they will greatly expand commuter links to Limerick and Galway. Through the existing rail network, the new line will connect with a range of inter-regional services by linking with Limerick/Dublin and Galway/Dublin rail line. Investment in Phase 1 of the Western Rail Corridor involves the renewal of 36 miles of track, and the construction of a 90 metre platform with furniture, signage, shelters incorporating an ATVM, lighting, car park, local PA, Customer Information Systems, help point and CCTV provision at three new locations. The pre-existing stations at Ennis and Athenry will be upgraded as necessary. All stations will be accessible to the mobility impaired. Repair and improvement works will also be undertaken on bridges on the route.



Work on the Western Rail Corridor

This is an important development for Ireland's West and Mid West regions. The investment is allowing for the opening of the Western Rail Corridor, more than 30 years since the last scheduled services travelling on the line.

**Conclusion**

The Transport 21 package of investment is extremely comprehensive and includes many more rail, metro and tram projects. Investment in rail projects is a critical part of the overall plan, and already rail customers are seeing the benefits. With this historic investment plan, the Government has taken a long term view. The advantages are already being delivered and, with almost €3 billion in spending for 2008, it is continuing to make very significant progress in transforming Ireland's transport infrastructure – for commuters, for business, and for communities ■

For more information visit [www.transport21.ie](http://www.transport21.ie)

Noel Dempsey TD, Minister for Transport, Ireland  
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An Iarnród Éireann Intercity train at the new Traincare Depot in Portlaoise, County Laois

