



## *Border, Midland & Western Regional Assembly Shaping the Region*

### **BMW Assembly Deputation meets Minister for Transport**

A deputation from the Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly met with Minister for Transport, Martin Cullen TD in Enfield on Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> of December to discuss the recently launched Transport 21 investment programme and to highlight issues of concern to the BMW region.

The five member deputation, led by Cathaoirleach, Councillor Michael McGreal, welcomed the Transport 21 announcement, in particular the commitment to upgrade key national primary and secondary routes, the phased re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor, the development of the Atlantic Road Corridor and the commitment to double funding for rural transport initiatives. The deputation stressed that a clear work programme and timescale for the upgrading of the outstanding sections of national primary and secondary routes from 2010 onwards, was needed. Many of these routes had been prioritised in the Regional Planning Guidelines and in the BMW Regional Foresight Strategy launched earlier this year.

Councillor McGreal informed the Minister that he believed that the schedule for the re-instatement of rail services on the Western Rail Corridor could be brought forward as the line was already in public ownership and the absence of rail traffic on it could enable the work to be completed more speedily than projected in Transport 21. He also expressed concern that the timing for much of the work could co-incide with the major public transport investment in Dublin and draw resources away from the Western Rail Corridor project.

The deputation informed the Minister that a number of strategic secondary cross-radial routes should be allocated a greater degree of priority in order to connect the designated gateways and hubs within the BMW region. They also stated that north-south linkages should be considered in prioritising road improvement schemes.

The proposal to develop the Atlantic Road Corridor from Letterkenny/Derry to Waterford was welcomed by the deputation, as it would assist in establishing a counterbalance along the West coast to the economic dominance of the East coast and strengthen the connections to the designated gateways of Galway Sligo and Letterkenny. However, the Transport 21 announcement did not specify any timescale for this proposal.

The deputation also informed the Minister of their support for investment in regional airports, and in particular Ireland West International airport at Knock, which would have a very positive impact on the access to, and travel within the region and provide an immediate boost to tourism. Finally, the deputation called on the Minister to ensure that there are would be synergies between the investment programmes funded by the state and the EU co-funded regional programmes under the next round of structural funds.

In response to the issues raised, Minister Cullen re-affirmed his commitment to deliver all of the road and public transport projects that were included in the Transport 21 announcement by 2015. He informed the deputation that the timeframes in the programme took account of the level of resources to be made available annually over the ten year period. He stated that there had been a re-balancing of funding to the BMW region in recent years and that key national primary and secondary routes within the region will be upgraded where this is necessary.

Councillor Michael McGreal, Cathaoirleach of the BMW Regional Assembly, stated that the meeting with the Minister for Transport had provided a useful opportunity to raise specific issues regarding transport investment in the BMW region. He welcomed the Minister's stated commitment to continue investment in the transport infrastructure in the BMW region.

**ENDS**

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**EDITORS NOTE**

The members of the deputation were as follows:

Councillor Michael McGreal, Cathaoirleach of the BMW Regional Assembly

Councillor Terry Brennan (Louth)

Councillor Jerry Lundy (Sligo)

Councillor Dermot Connolly (Galway)

Mr. Kieran Moylan, Assistant Director

