

Chapter 8: Sustainable Transport Strategy

8.1 Aim

Offaly County Council will strive to support enhanced regional accessibility; the use of sustainable modes of transport; the integration of spatial planning with transport planning; the transition to a low carbon transport system; and the development of a safer, more efficient, effective and connected transport system within Offaly.

8.2 Policy and Legislative Context

This chapter is prepared in the context of the following documents:

- National Planning Framework 2018-2040
- National Development Plan 2018-2027
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019
- Spatial Planning and National Roads, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013, as updated in 2019
- Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018-2022
- National Mitigation Plan 2017 (or subsequent editions)
- National Policy Framework; Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017-2030
- Permeability Best Practice Guide by National Transport Authority
- National Cycle Manual by National Transport Authority 2011
- Age Friendly Strategy for Offaly 2018-2021
- The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads by Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Offaly County Council recognises that the provision of a sustainable, safe, efficient and effective transport network in the county is a major determinant of its level of competitiveness and its capacity to address some of its major social and environmental needs. The pursuit of sustainable transport and accessibility in Ireland, in the region and indeed County Offaly is underpinned by a national and regional policy context that seeks to integrate landuse and transportation policy.

The overarching goals are prioritising sustainable transport modes in order to achieve improvements in air quality, reduction in both CO₂ emissions and noise levels. Offaly County Council encourages the provision of low carbon alternative forms of transport that reduce dependence on the private car, such as public transport initiatives and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians. The provision of good

public transport, greenways and cycleways can enhance areas, contribute to liveable places and create opportunities to be physically active.

Offaly County Council will support increased sustainable mobility, accessibility and connectivity between key urban centres of population within the county, region and between regions.

8.3 Integrated Land Use and Transportation

Population growth, labour force participation, settlement patterns and changes in the affordability of transport have an impact on travel demand. Effectively meeting travel demand in a manner that avoids congestion and limits greenhouse gas emissions requires effective spatial policies to be implemented. The spatial relationship between where a person lives, works, goes to school, shops and socialises forms the basis for travel demand. The relationship between transportation and land use is a key determinant in achieving sustainable development. The dispersal of land uses results in an increased demand for transportation because of greater travel distances, which is unsustainable. Walking and cycling, in particular, become more viable as transport options when the distance between services is reduced.

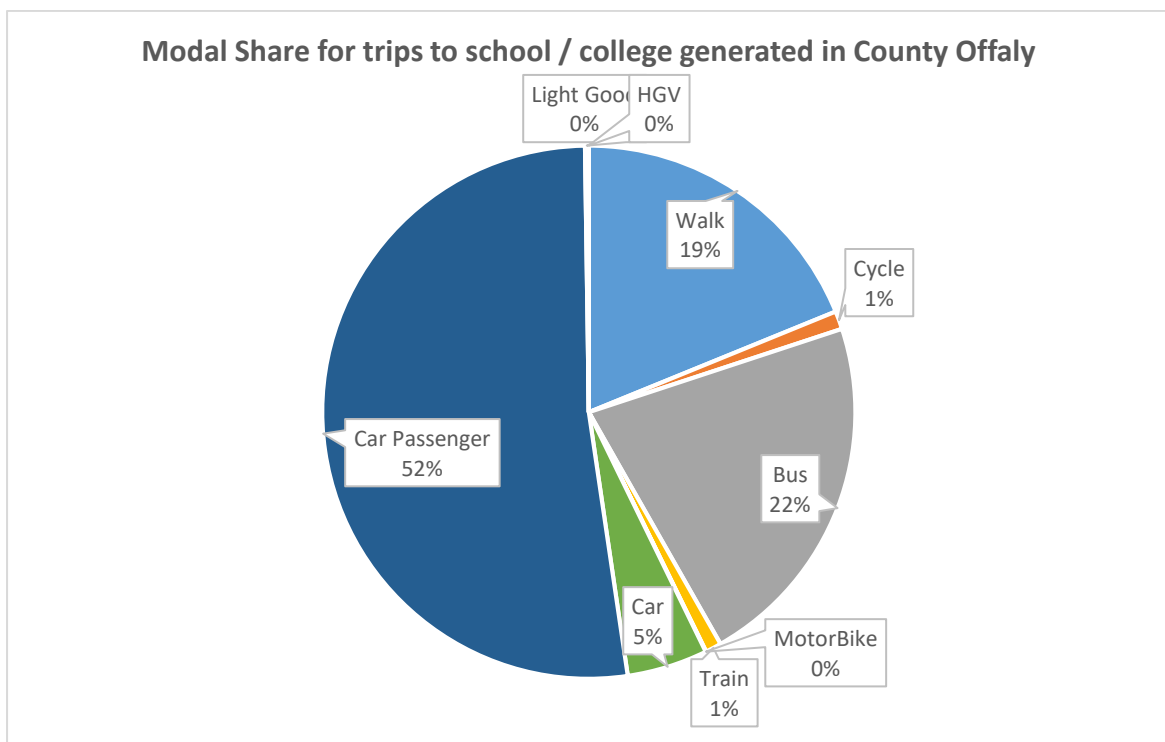
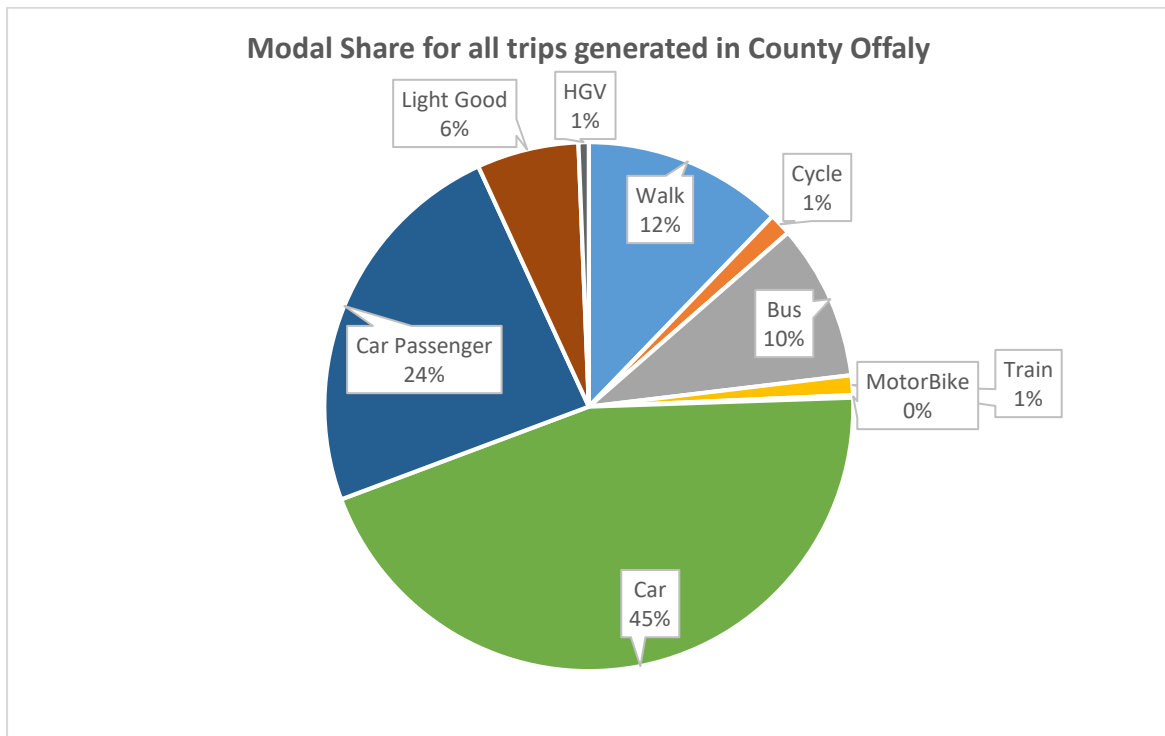
Integrating transportation and land use is the most effective means of providing an efficient transportation system and is essential in the provision of a sustainable spatial framework for economic, social and cultural development. Ensuring that the places where people live are located either close to or are connected by public transport to their places of work or education and by providing for higher density development along public transport corridors, this allows people to use the most sustainable modes of transport, namely walking, cycling, and public transport.

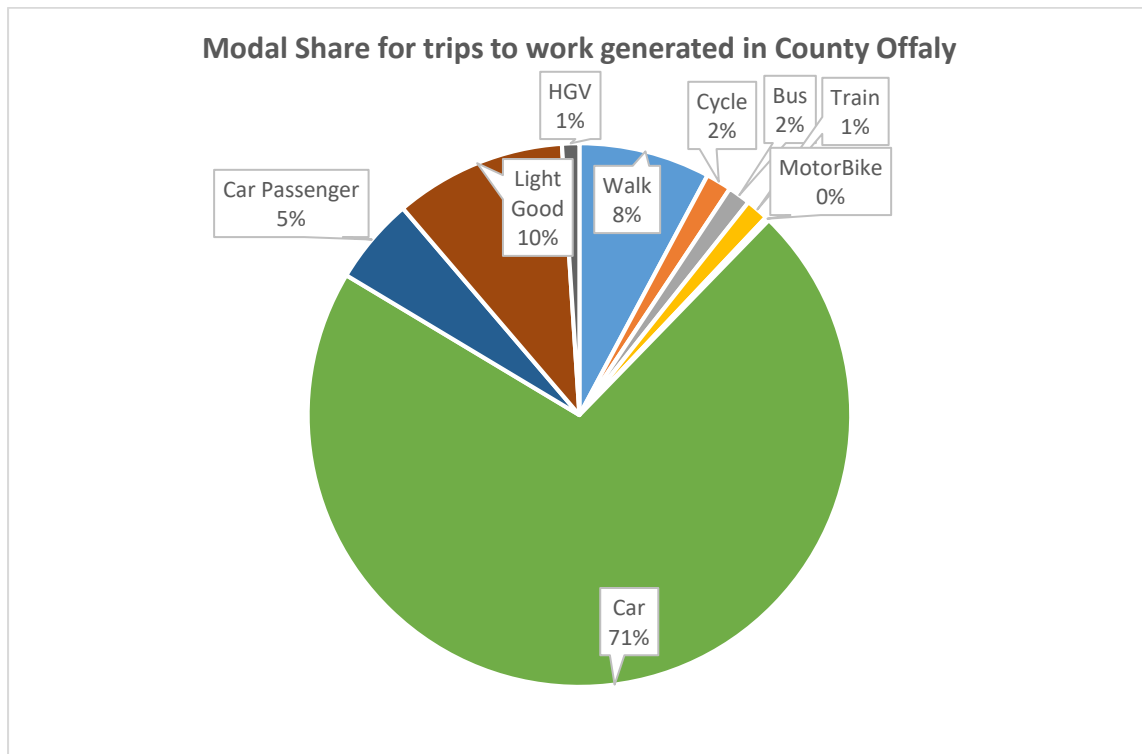
It is a challenge for County Offaly to embrace the integration of land use and transportation given the predominantly rural nature of the county, dispersed settlement pattern and car ownership levels. Within this context, high densities and mixed uses will be encouraged to locate within walking distance of public transport nodes and at accessible sites throughout the county, such as those within town centres, in a compact format.

8.4 Modal Share

A summary of the travel patterns by all (only students and workers combined), students and workers in the County in 2016 is as follows based on the charts below.

- The car is the most popular mode of transport for students and workers combined with 69% of all trips made by car / car passenger (45% and 24% respectively)
- 57% of students are travelling to school by car / car passenger (5% and 52% respectively);
- The car is the dominant mode of transport for workers with 76% travelling to work by car / car passengers (71% and 5% respectively);
- There are a high proportion of students utilising available bus services at 22%;
- There are fewer workers travelling by bus (2%) than there are car sharing (5%);
- Travelling by train is low at 1% for each category namely students and workers;
- Only 1% trips made by students are by cycling. The figure is 2% for workers.





This data confirms and highlights the challenges facing the County with regard to promoting a modal shift away from the car. This Plan will strive to reduce the reliance on the private car by promoting and facilitating more sustainable modes of transport and supporting development in locations that would reduce the need to travel.

The Council will, in improving the modal share shift away from the car, exercise an Avoid – Shift – Improve framework as set out hereunder:

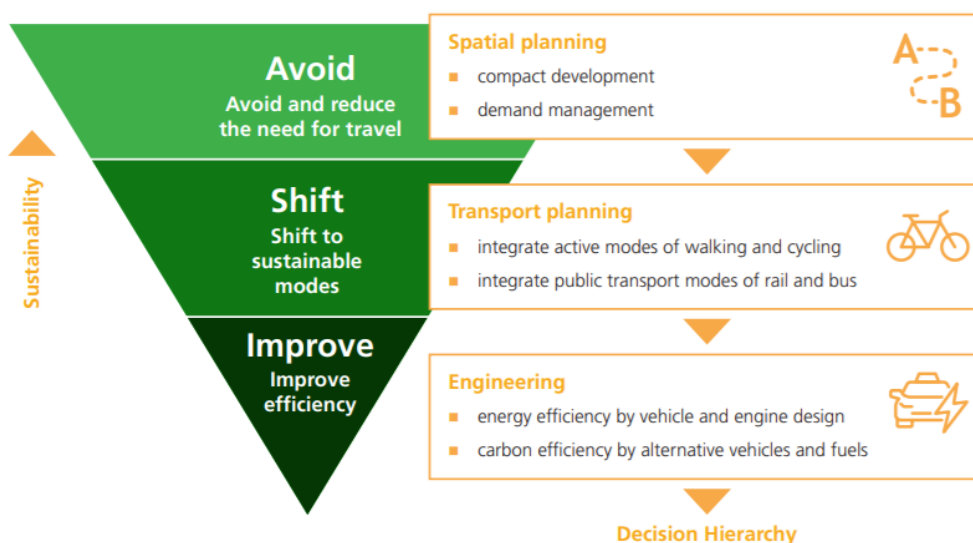


Figure 8.1 Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework (Source: EPA document titled ‘Ireland’s Environment - An Integrated Assessment 2020’)

Appendix 1 of this Plan includes a list of policies, objectives and standards within many chapters of the Plan that strive to encourage a higher proportion of modal share for sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling, bus and rail.

Each town plan includes graphs depicting its baseline modal share figures with accompanying objectives tailored to its specific needs in an attempt to improve sustainable modal share.

8.5 Sustainable Mobility

The challenge is to facilitate the shift towards alternatives to the private car and promoting greater efficiency in the use of our transport networks. There is a need to ensure that alternatives to the car are integrated in the design of streets and public spaces, prioritising cycling and walking as active transport modes.

Achieving sustainable mobility will require a suite of actions which involves:

- Focusing population and employment growth in urban areas;
- Providing alternative options to the car, namely, walking, cycling and public transport;
- Improving fuel efficiency, promoting energy efficient driving and alternative technologies; and
- Permeability and accessibility improvements.

Reduction in trip generation is a particular challenge for County Offaly as access to a car stands at a rate of 85% (2016 Census). This high rate can be partially attributed to the predominantly rural nature of the settlement pattern of the county. The challenge for Offaly however, within the lifetime of this plan, is to integrate landuse and transportation policy and give due emphasis to the factors that have a positive role in promoting sustainable transport to reduce levels of car dependency such as:

- Promoting higher densities at appropriate locations;
- Mixing landuses;
- Designing for compact settlement forms; and
- Concentrating appropriate development on transport corridors and linkages.

The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking and cycling to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

8.5.1 Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling have the lowest environmental impact of all travel modes. The promotion of walking and cycling requires pedestrian and cycle facilities that form an integrated, safe, convenient, direct and comfortable network of routes. Offaly County Council promotes walking and cycling as a means of transport; as a means of recreational activity, particularly given the terrain in Offaly; and for the purposes of mental and physical health and wellbeing. The Council will endeavour to make provisions for pedestrians and cyclists in both urban and rural areas of the county. Chapter 6 Tourism and Recreational Development deals further with walking and cycling. Cycle parking should be appropriately designed into the urban realm and into new developments at an early stage to ensure that adequate cycle parking is provided.

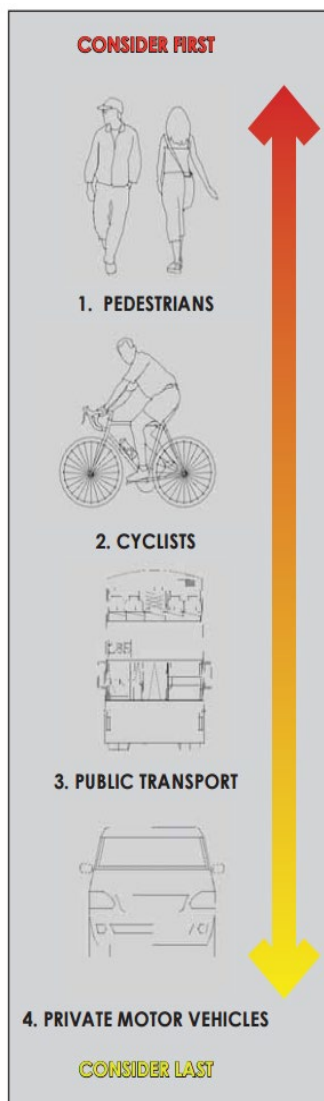


Figure 8.2 Extract from Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets

Electric Vehicles, Autonomous Vehicles and Fuel Cell Vehicles

The Council will promote and support the development of appropriate reliable charging-point infrastructure to accommodate a change to electrically powered vehicles and to assist in achieving Ireland's target of ending the sale of new cars powered solely by fossil fuels by 2030. The Council will also promote and support the development of the necessary infrastructure required by Government to accommodate autonomous vehicles (self-driving) and fuel cell vehicles.

'Hydrogen fuel cell vehicles' use fuel cells to combine stored hydrogen with oxygen to generate electricity (as opposed to electricity from the public grid which currently is part generated from fossil fuels), which then powers the vehicle's electric motors. They offer greater range and faster refueling.



Figure 8.3 Grand Canal Greenway



Figure 8.4 Lloyd Town Park, Tullamore



Figure 8.5 Mount Lucas Windfarm Walk and Cycle Park

8.5.2 Public Transport

The provision of a well-functioning, integrated public transport system and enabling mobility choices for citizens is paramount to providing a viable sustainable alternative transport mode. By encouraging employment and residential development to locate in towns and villages, it will be possible to take full advantage of existing and future investments in public transport and strengthen public transport connectivity with improved services and reliable journey times. Due to the predominantly rural nature of County Offaly and its dispersed population, it is considered that small-scale public transport initiatives could be viable. The Council will co-operate and seek to find opportunities within the Local Link Rural Transport Programme under the auspices of the National Transport Authority to continue addressing rural social exclusion; to integrate rural transport services with other public transport services; and to address the needs of people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments. An integrated and environmentally sustainable public transport system is required to service our climate action goals.

Rail Infrastructure

County Offaly is centrally located along national interconnecting strategic rail corridors. The 2030 Rail Network Strategy Review was published in 2011 and its purpose is to provide the Government with a basis for establishing a strategic policy framework for the future development of the rail passenger and rail freight sectors in Ireland.



Figure 8.6 Train at Tullamore Train Station

The Review informs the strategic priorities and future investment strategy up to 2030 and the outstanding improvements in rail services to County Offaly include double tracking from Portarlinton to Athlone (2020-2025) and the Electrification of Dublin to Galway line (2025-2030).

The Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027 aligns Iarnród Éireann with the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and retains the objective for Dual Tracking between Athlone and Portarlinton, albeit it is pushed out to the 2040 timeline as a long-term strategic objective.

Offaly County Council will co-operate with Iarnród Éireann to encourage and secure the upgrading of the existing rail linkages between Offaly and Athlone as this represents a major opportunity to establish good physical links between Tullamore (a Key Town) and Athlone (a Regional Growth Centre). As part of this, there is an opportunity for Tullamore train station and adjoining lands to be developed as a transport (bus / rail) node. This would allow for the integration of local bus services, including a possible future town bus service with the rail network. Clara station could be developed similarly to increase service provision in the town. The Portarlinton Land Use and Transportation Study (2004) identified the railway station as a key asset in the development of the town.

The provision of a rail link from Mullingar directly to Clara would create an integrated rail network linking Longford, Mullingar, Ballinasloe, and Athlone with Tullamore, Portarlinton, Kildare and Portlaoise.

The final link in the network could involve the provision of a new rail line from Enfield to Edenderry with a continuation to Portarlinton (possible junction at Garryhinch). This rail line, if provided, would be of great strategic importance in the context of the midlands. Many of the wayleaves between Portarlinton and Enfield are in the ownership of Bord na Móna.

It is important to maintain the rail link between Dublin and Tullamore train station. Offaly County Council recognises that it would be valuable to the citizens of both the county and the region to provide double rail lines between the two locations.

Improving the frequency of train journeys between Athlone and Dublin and the manning of train stations in Offaly would also attract increased usage of the rail service.

Bus

Bus Éireann and private operators operate public bus services in Offaly. Offaly County Council will facilitate the improvement and expansion of public bus services where they strengthen linkages to other areas of the county, the midlands and the rest of the country.

8.6 Roads

The position of Offaly in the centre of Ireland means that serviced strategic transport routes traverse the county. The Council recognises the importance of providing a safe and efficient road system in the county in order to facilitate the development of the local and national economy; to protect the safety of users of public roads; and to safeguard public investment in their provision. The Council is aware of the vital importance of Motorway and National Routes to the economic and social development of County Offaly and the country. The Council will require the reservation of corridors of land, free from future development, for the provision of road improvements or new roads including bypasses and relief routes serving towns and villages.

Offaly has a higher car ownership rate at one car per 2.6 persons compared to the national average of 1 car per 3.4 persons¹.

As of 2020², County Offaly has approximately 2,220 kilometres of roads, which are categorised as follows:

Table 8.1 Categorisation of Roads in County Offaly

Road Type	Distance (km)	% Share of Offaly's Roads
Motorway	15	0.7%
National Roads	116	5.2%
Regional Roads	392	17.7%
Local Roads	1697	76.4%
Total	2220	100%

¹ 2016 Census of population figures

² MapRoad PMS Schedule June 2020

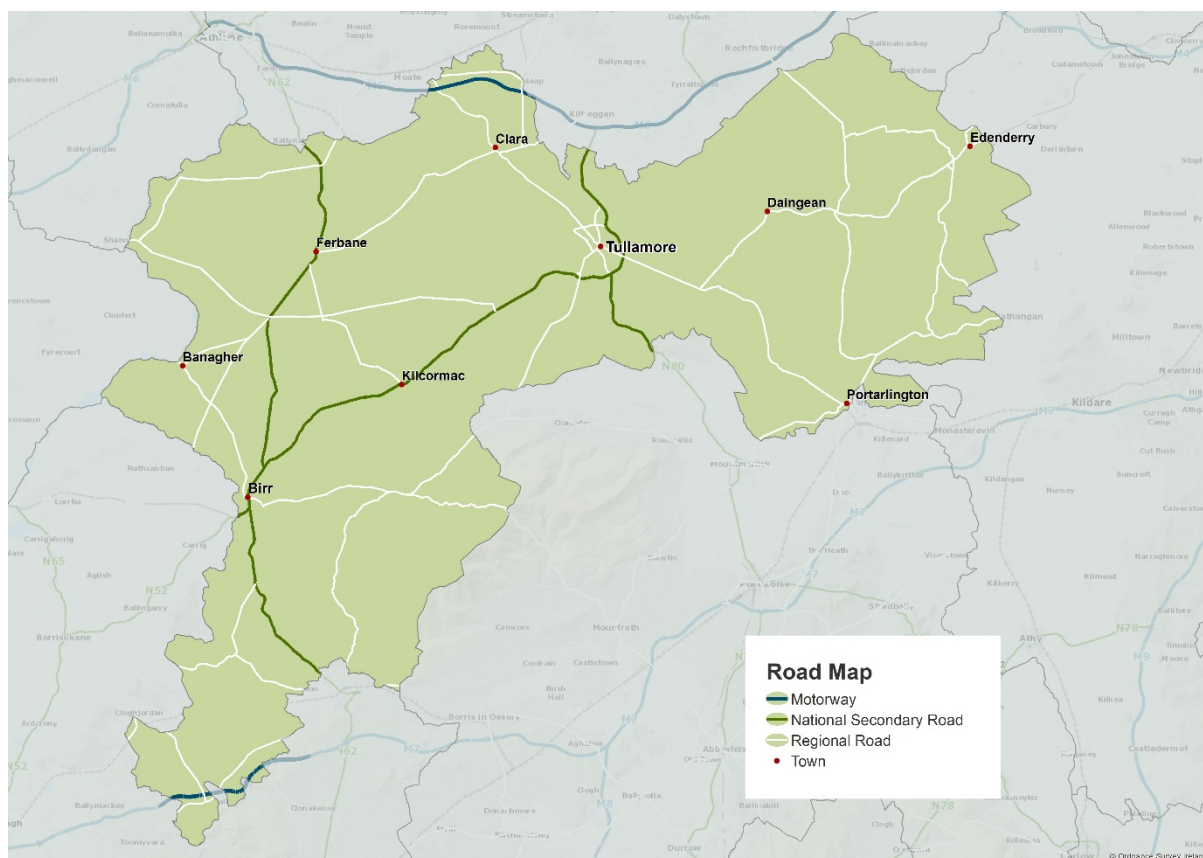


Figure 8.7 Motorway, National and Regional Routes in County Offaly

Urban Roads and Streets

There is an appreciation that urban roads and streets are much more than traffic corridors. They should be places where people want to live and spend time. The key is to improve street design for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, and to reduce the impact of vehicles on residential streets. A well designed network of streets, which are place-based in their scope and design, has the ability to promote active transportation. As a result, they encourage improved public health while shifting transportation towards sustainability, mitigating the impacts of climate change in the process.

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets as published jointly by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in March 2013, and updated in 2019, outlines practical design measures to encourage more sustainable travel patterns in urban areas and best practice in the design of street networks and individual streets. The Manual sets out design guidance and standards for constructing new and reconfiguring existing urban roads and streets, incorporating good planning and design practice. The complementary publication The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads by Transport Infrastructure Ireland should be consulted also in this regard.

8.6.1 Motorways and National Routes

The M6 (Dublin to Galway) and the M7 (Dublin to Limerick) motorways assist substantially in improving the county’s accessibility and attracting inward investment. Offaly County Council will continue to assist and facilitate the achievement of road objectives, together with associated ancillary and infrastructural services that Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) may be undertaking in the future in the county.



Figure 8.8 M7 Motorway in County Offaly

Table 8.2 Motorways and National Roads in Offaly

Road Type	Description
Motorway	M6 – Dublin to Galway. An 8.2 km section traverses North Offaly.
	M7 – Dublin to Limerick. A 6.5 km portion traverses through South Offaly.
National Secondary	N52 – Links Dundalk and Nenagh through Mullingar (including Mullingar By-Pass), Tullamore (including Tullamore Bypass) and Birr.
	N80 – Links the N52 South of Tullamore to the N11 at Enniscorthy via Portlaoise.
	N62 – Links Athlone with the N8 south of Thurles, passing through Birr.

Offaly is where some key national secondary routes interconnect: the (N52) Dundalk - Nenagh and the (N80) Enniscorthy-Moate routes. These routes and their improvement make the county more accessible to ports such as Drogheda, Bellview and Rosslare. They are also fundamental in providing connections with other urban centres in the midlands. In addition, the N52 and N62 link Birr to Athlone.

To ensure that past and future public investment in road improvements is not diminished in whole or in part and to ensure the safety and free flow of traffic, future development requiring direct access onto National Secondary routes will be restricted and assessed against the provisions of the Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidance for Planning Authorities issued by the DoECLG in January 2012.

The Council will actively pursue the upgrading and improvement of the N52, N62 and the N80 including the provision of appropriate bypasses, where considered necessary. The strategic transport function of national roads and associated junctions needs to be maintained and supported. The Council supports the provision of the Tullamore-Kilbeggan link road as identified in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, with Offaly as the lead authority working with the TII and The National Design Office to deliver the project.

Offaly County Council considers that there are currently no exceptional circumstances as set out in section 2.6 of the Guidelines on Spatial Planning and National Roads that would require the identification of stretches of national roads where a less restrictive approach to that identified in Table 8.3 below may be applied.



Figure 8.9 Saints and Scholars Public Art on Tullamore By-Pass

Table 8.3 Policy as per National Roads and Spatial Planning, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012

Location	Policy (as per National Roads and Spatial Planning, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2012)
Lands adjoining National Roads to which speed limits greater than 60 km/h apply:	To avoid the creation of additional access points from new development or the generation of increased traffic from existing access to national roads for all development types.
Transitional Zone i.e. sections of national roads on the approaches to or exit from urban centres that are subject to a speed limit of 60 km/h before a lower 50 km/h limit:	To provide for a limited level of direct access to facilitate orderly urban development. Proposals must be subject to a road safety audit carried out in accordance with Transport Infrastructure Ireland’s requirements and a proliferation of entrances, which would lead to a diminution in the role of such transitional zones, must be avoided.
Lands adjoining National Roads within 50 km/h speed limits:	Access will be considered by planning authorities in accordance with normal road safety, traffic management and urban design criteria for built up areas.

8.6.2 Regional Routes

In the case of Regional routes, especially those which carry higher volumes of traffic, the Council shall adopt a restrictive policy in relation to new development in the interests of preserving the traffic capacity of these routes and in order to avoid the creation of traffic hazards. These routes are of strategic importance to the county and region. Applications for rural housing requiring access onto restricted regional routes will be assessed against Policy SSP-27 (Policy for Housing in Areas under Strong Urban Influence and in Stronger Rural Areas and in Areas of Special Control) as set out in Chapter 2 (Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy).

Four of the county’s regional routes have been identified as Key Amenity Routes which offer very attractive “cross section” views of differing landscapes of the county. The enjoyment of such varying landscapes for the visitor, the person who regularly traverses the county or the local person can be lessened by insensitive levels of roadside development and indeed excessive levels of development.

Table 8.4 Restricted Regional Routes in County Offaly

Restricted Regional Route	Location	Reason
R356	Cloghan to Banagher	Carrying Capacity
R400	Rhode to county boundary toward Rochfortbridge, link to M6	Carrying Capacity
R402	Ballina Cross to Edenderry	Carrying Capacity
R420	Tober to Tullamore	Carrying Capacity
R420	Tullamore to Portarlinton	Carrying Capacity
R436	Ferbane to county boundary toward Kilbeggan	Carrying Capacity
R439	Birr to Banagher	Carrying Capacity
R445	Dunkerrin through Moneygall to county boundary	Carrying Capacity
R446	Horseleap to the county boundary towards Moate	Carrying Capacity
R440	Birr through Kinnitty to county boundary towards Mountrath	Amenity
R357	Cloghan to Shannonbridge	Amenity
R421	Tullamore to Kinnitty	Carrying Capacity and Amenity
R357	Cloghan to Blueball	Carrying Capacity and Amenity

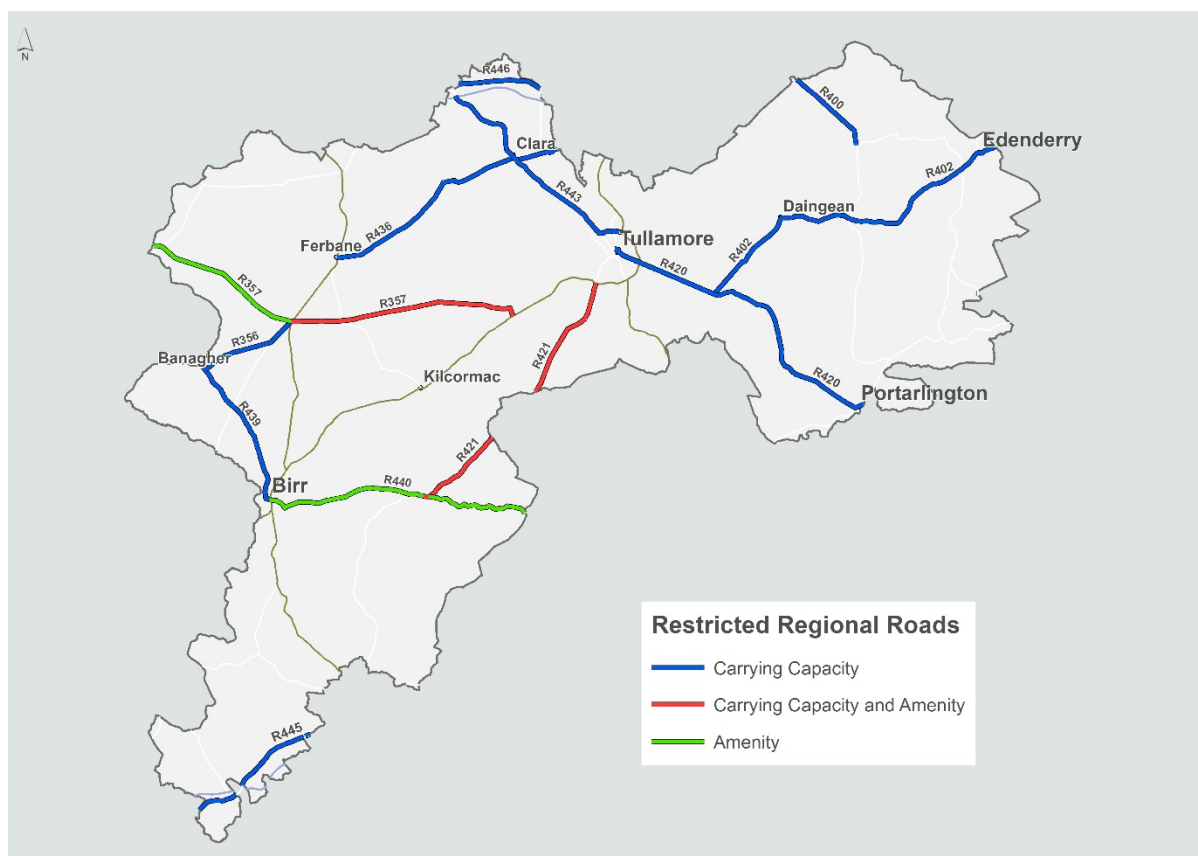


Figure 8.10 Restricted Regional Routes

8.6.3 Local Roads

Local roads are divided into Local Primary Roads, Local Secondary Roads and Local Tertiary Roads. The undulating nature of many of the roads in Offaly can be attributed to subsurface peat, which is prevalent in Offaly. The peat substrate or bog ramparts present a particular issue in Offaly resulting in costly and frequent maintenance of the road network.

Offaly County Council will enhance and improve this road network, in line with the annual roads programme and allocated budgets, as it is of major importance to the communities and economy of the county.

8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process

The following Corridor and Route Selection Process will be undertaken for relevant new infrastructure, however this would not apply to national road schemes which are progressed in accordance with statutory processes and TII publications, including various TII Planning Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Impacts that include headings such as “Constraints Study”, “Route Corridor Selection” and “Environmental Impact Assessment:

Stage 1 – Route Corridor Identification, Evaluation and Selection

- Environmental constraints (including those identified in Section 4 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report) and opportunities (such as existing linear infrastructure) will assist in the identification of possible route corridor options;
- Potentially feasible corridors within which infrastructure could be accommodated will be identified and these corridors assessed. The selection of the preferred route corridor will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists; and
- In addition to the constraints identified above, site-specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate corridors.

Stage 2 – Route Identification, Evaluation and Selection

- Potentially feasible routes within the preferred corridor will be identified and assessed. The selection of preferred routes will avoid constraints and meet opportunities to the optimum extent, as advised by the relevant specialists, taking into account project level information and potential mitigation measures that are readily achievable;
- In addition to the constraints identified above, site specific field data may be required to identify the most appropriate routes; and
- In addition to environmental considerations, the identification of route corridors and the refinement of route lines is likely to be informed by other considerations.

8.7 Air Transport

Connectivity and access through international and regional airports are vital for our tourism industry in particular. Offaly County Council recognises the significant role that regional airports have in promoting balanced development and supports the location of an airport in the county or within the midlands.

8.8 Sustainable Transport Strategy Policies

Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility

SMAP-01 It is Council policy to support sustainable mobility, enhanced regional accessibility and connectivity within County Offaly in accordance with the National Policy Outcomes of the National Planning Framework 2040 and the National Development Plan.

SMAP-02 It is Council policy to support the growth in the use of electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles and fuel cell vehicles; prioritise car parking spaces for these vehicles; and facilitate the provision of battery charging infrastructure and refuelling infrastructure for these vehicles where considered appropriate.

SMAP-03 It is Council policy to promote the transition to a low carbon integrated transport system by firstly reducing the need for travel through the use of design solutions and innovative approaches with regards to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the complementary publication The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and subsequently to shift to environmentally sustainable modes of transport.

SMAP-04 It is Council Policy to continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking, cycling) with public transport.

Land Use and Transportation Integration

SMAP-05 It is Council policy to promote the integration of landuse and transport planning to:

- (i) Ensure a sustainable, safe, coherent, efficient, and effective approach to transport provision for development in County Offaly;
- (ii) Support permeability, accessibility and connectivity in settlements (both in terms of new development and retrofitting into existing built-up areas);
- (iii) Strive to continue decreasing the distance between housing and employment;
- (iv) Reduce energy demand in response to the likelihood of increases in energy and other costs due to long-term decline in non-renewable resources;
- (v) Reduce anthropogenic greenhouse house emissions; and
- (vi) Address the necessity of adaptation to climate change

In particular, having regard to location, layout and design of new developments.

SMAP-06 It is Council policy that larger-scale, trip intensive developments, such as high employee dense offices and retail, should in the first instance be focused into central urban locations and developed in a sequential manner and may be subject to Mobility Management / Travel Planning.

SMAP-07 It is Council policy that all proposed major employment developments and schools shall be subject to Travel Plans in a manner consistent with National Transport Authority Guidance.

Trip Generation/Modal Shift

SMAP-08 It is Council policy to promote more compact development forms that reduce overall demand for private transport and private transport infrastructure and support proposals that encourage modal shift towards sustainable travel modes.

SMAP-09 It is Council policy to encourage better integration of transport services with the aim of reducing car trips by encouraging and fostering improved consultation and co-operation between both public and private providers of transport services operating in the county and in the midland region, including all providers of bus and rail services.

SMAP-10 It is Council policy to allow for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable town centre locations in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

Walking/Cycling

SMAP-11 It is Council policy to prioritise the need for people to be physically active in their daily lives; to improve permeability and to promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces as an alternative and sustainable mode of transport; and to support safer walking and cycling routes to schools under the Green Schools Initiative subject to appropriate environmental assessments, including Habitats Directive Assessment.

SMAP-12 It is Council policy to support the pedestrianisation and permeability of town and village centres where appropriate, in order to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe places. In doing this the Council will strive to support the;

- (i) Provision of 'cycle friendly' towns and villages;
- (ii) Provision of key cycling routes through larger towns;
- (iii) Potential for a walking and cycling route around Tullamore incorporating the Grand Canal, the banks of the Tullamore river and inside the barriers of the Tullamore by-pass.

SMAP-13 It is Council policy to facilitate and support, subject to appropriate environmental assessments (including the 'Corridor and Route Selection Process' set out in section 8.6.4 of this Plan), the continued development of walking and cycling routes including greenways, blueways and peatways in County Offaly for recreational and utility purposes.

SMAP-14 It is Council policy to support the provision of secure cycle parking facilities in the public realm of towns and villages, at all public service destinations and in other developments.

SMAP-15 It is Council policy to be supportive of exploring opportunities for the provision of cycle lanes along the N80, preferably off road cycle tracks separated from vehicular traffic where feasible, subject to adhering to road safety standards and complying with Transport Infrastructure Ireland's Publications, safeguarding the strategic function of the N80 and the undertaking of a safety audit.

Public Transport

SMAP-16 It is Council policy to co-operate with and encourage Iarnród Éireann to (i) secure the upgrading of the existing rail linkages between Athlone, Clara, Tullamore and Portarlinton (ii) improve the frequency of trains between Athlone and Dublin and (iii) ensure that train stations in County Offaly are manned and have frequent services.

SMAP-17 It is Council policy to promote and facilitate, in co-operation with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Iarnród Éireann and adjoining local authorities, the provision of a second rail line between Portarlinton and Athlone. In conjunction with this there is an opportunity for:

- Tullamore Train Station and adjoining lands to be developed as a transport (bus/rail) node with possible integration of local bus services to serve the town and catchment area; and
- Clara Train Station and adjoining lands to be developed as a transport (bus/rail) node with possible integration of local bus services to serve the town and catchment area.

SMAP-18 It is Council policy to support the reopening of Geashill Train Station.

SMAP-19 It is Council policy to support and develop public transport routes throughout the county through collaboration with the National Transport Authority and other relevant statutory bodies.

SMAP-20 It is Council policy to support and facilitate the operation and improvement of existing bus services and connections, and to facilitate the provisions of improved facilities and services for bus users in towns and villages including the provision of set down areas for coaches and bus shelters at all bus stops where feasible.

SMAP-21 It is Council policy to support the Local Link Rural Transport Programme 2018-2022 in County Offaly and subsequent programmes, including 'Connecting Ireland: Rural Mobility Plan', providing for social and economic connectivity between settlements and rural areas.

Roads

SMAP-22 It is Council policy to facilitate development of the road network in Offaly and the midland region in accordance with the National Development Plan and with Government policy. The Council will also support the relevant agencies and bodies involved in achieving such development including Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority.

SMAP-23 It is Council policy to strictly control development, outside of identified settlements, which could generate significant additional traffic, thereby potentially compromising the capacity and efficiency of the national roads/restricted regional roads and associated interchanges and possibly lead to the premature and unacceptable reduction in the level of service available to road users. This policy will also apply to national roads which may be downgraded during the lifetime of this Plan but which will still comprise high quality regionally important links.

SMAP-24 It is Council policy to maintain and protect the safety, strategic transport function, capacity and efficiency of national roads, motorways and associated junctions and in accordance with Strategic Planning and National Roads Guidelines 2012 or any subsequent edition.

SMAP-25 It is Council policy that development(s) requiring a new direct access or an intensification of an existing access onto a National Secondary road, or onto a privately owned road leading onto a National Secondary road where a speed limit greater than 60 km/h applies will be avoided in accordance with the provisions of Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities, January 2012. Exceptional circumstances may be considered where the development is of national and regional strategic importance, is plan-led and complies with the criteria set out in the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines in this regard.

SMAP-26 It is Council policy that proposals for rural dwellings that are seeking direct access onto a restricted regional route as identified in Table 8.4 and Figure 8.10 of this plan, will only be permitted provided all of the criteria are complied with as set out under Policy SSP-27 (Policy for Housing in Areas under Strong Urban Influence and in Stronger Rural Areas and in Areas of Special Control) in Chapter 2 Core Strategy, Settlement Strategy and Housing Strategy.

SMAP-27 It is Council policy to improve the road links between the national roads network and identified settlements within Offaly's Settlement Hierarchy in order to cater for anticipated additional traffic flows and to facilitate the economic development of these settlements.

SMAP-28 It is Council policy to ensure that developments which have the potential to generate significant traffic movement are subject to a Traffic and Transportation Assessment, Quality Audit and Road Safety Audit as appropriate.

SMAP-29 It is Council policy to support the upgrading of the R422 from the M7 motorway in County Laois to Mountmellick in County Laois where it links with the N80 route that links to Tullamore a Key Town.

SMAP-30 It is Council policy that development at national road interchanges or junctions shall be carried out in accordance with the procedure set out in section 2.7 of the Ministerial Guidelines Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines 2012 or subsequent edition.

SMAP-31 It is Council policy that the capacity and efficiency of the road network drainage regimes in County Offaly will be safeguarded for road drainage purposes.

Air Transport

SMAP-32 It is Council policy to support the provision of a green international trade and distribution zone based on international air connectivity within the county or the midlands where it would contribute towards the proper planning and sustainable development of the county, comply with all environmental legislation, policies and objectives contained within this Plan and would be consistent with higher level planning documents, including the National Planning Framework and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

General

SMAP-33 It is Council policy to improve deficiencies in pavement surface, riding quality and general alignment to protect the heavy investment in existing facilities in line with the annual roads programme and allocated budgets.

SMAP-34 It is Council policy to recognise the importance of hedgerows and roadside boundaries for wildlife and biodiversity when designing or inputting into road schemes. Retention of such features should be incorporated into design and where this is not possible, replacement planting with native species of indigenous provenance shall be provided.

SMAP-35 It is Council policy that in considering applications for quarries, the Council shall seek to ensure access to the highest possible category of the road network hierarchy.

SMAP- 36 It is Council policy that proposals for rights of way extinguishment should only be considered where these do not result in more circuitous trips for local residents accessing public transport, or local destinations.

8.9 Sustainable Transport Strategy Objectives

Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility

SMAO-01 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of transport infrastructure in County Offaly in line with national policy as outlined in the National Development Plan, Government policy and also in line with the Councils own programme of works.

SMAO-02 It is an objective of the Council to prepare a Local Transport Plan in accordance with 'Area Based Transport Assessment Guidance' by TII and NTA, for the Key Town of Tullamore in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and in tandem with the Local Area Plan, and to prepare Transport Plans for other towns that are subject to Local Area Plans, namely Birr, Edenderry and Portarlington subject to the provision of funding and agreement with statutory agencies.

SMAO-03 It is an objective of the Council to specify baseline figures and targets for modal share in new / varied Local Area Plans in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

SMAO-04 It is an objective of the Council to improve the baseline modal share figures for the county that are set out in this Development Plan, in particular a reduction in the percentage usage of the car which shall be informed by measures set out in Appendix 1 of this Development Plan including the improvement of rural accessibility through rural transport systems, improvements in inter-settlement and intra- settlement accessibility and improvements advocated by Local Transport Plans, all in conjunction with setting modal share targets within the county in cooperation with NTA, CARO, EMRA and other relevant stakeholders and in accordance with any relevant Guidelines that may come into effect.

SMAO-05 It is an objective of the Council to identify suitable areas in towns and villages for age-friendly parking bays, in accordance with the Age Friendly Strategy for Offaly 2018-2021, and any future editions.

Walking / Cycling

SMAO-06 It is an objective of the Council to implement Connecting People Connecting Places: A Strategy for Walking and Cycling in Offaly September 2015.

SMAO-07 It is an objective of the Council that cycle lanes are designed and maintained in accordance with the National Cycle Manual by the National Transport Authority 2011.

SMAO-08 It is an objective of the Council to collaborate with Bord na Móna and Coillte in the development of the 'Major Cycling Destination in the Midlands of Ireland – Feasibility Study 2016' and to pursue the development of greenway links to adjoining counties.

Public Transport

SMAO-09 It is an objective of the Council to safeguard all existing rail infrastructure, to encourage the re-opening of rail stations, and to preserve disused stations / halts and tracks, appropriate to future strategic county public transport needs.

SMAO-10 It is an objective of the Council to improve poor road alignment and junctions where incidents of collision are recorded and funding is available. In general, the decision regarding which road section will be prioritised for improvement will be guided by the following considerations:

- The need to provide strategic links to National Road access;
- The elimination of traffic hazards;
- The development of industry, agriculture, forestry, housing and commercial development wherever such development would be of substantial social or economic benefit to the county; and
- The need to provide for essential communications at an acceptable social and economic cost.

Roads

SMAO-11 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the development of the national secondary road network in Offaly through the continued construction, upgrading and improvement of the national secondary roads in the county, the N62, the N52 and the N80 where on examination it is found to be feasible, including as outlined in the accompanying table:

Scheme Description
<p>N52: To support the construction of a road between Tullamore and Kilbeggan (Link Road) in accordance with National Development Plan investment objectives taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan and in accordance with statutory processes and TII Publications subject to compliance with requirements of various TII Planning Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Impacts that include headings such as “Constraints Study”, “Route Corridor Selection” and “Environmental Impact Assessment”.</p>
<p>To examine the feasibility of the provision of a Western Bypass/Relief Road to the west of Tullamore town linking the R420 to the north west of the town with the N52 to the south west of the town taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. The line on the map in Volume 2 is indicative only.</p>
<p>To co-operate with Transport Infrastructure Ireland in the examination of the feasibility of providing a bypass for the following towns and villages, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only.</p>

- N52: Kilcormac
- N80: Killeigh

N62: To investigate the feasibility of upgrading, widening and reconstructing the N62 from Kennedy’s Cross to the county boundary at Ballynahown taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

N62: To investigate the feasibility of constructing a Birr Relief Road and construction of Birr By-pass and Distributor Road Network (Birr LUTS), taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. The lines on the map in Volume 2 are indicative only.

N62: To investigate the feasibility of carrying out Birr-Riverstown road improvements taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

SMAO-12 It is an objective of the Council to construct, upgrade and improve, where necessary, the regional roads in the county as outlined in the accompanying table, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only. The Council will have regard to national and regional transport plans and the Council’s programme of works. The undertaking of any works will be subject to examination of its feasibility including the availability of finance and resources and will be subject to environmental assessments where necessary:

Scheme Description
R402: Examine the feasibility of the construction of Edenderry by-pass and relief roads.
R420: Examine the feasibility of the construction of by-passes and relief roads for both Portarlinton and Clara.

To secure the provision and undertake upgrades of regional roads in the county where necessary, feasible and as funds allow.

R420: To examine the feasibility of providing a bypass for Cloneygowan and to protect from development any reservation bands / corridors so as to avoid compromising the construction of the road.

R420: To examine the feasibility of securing the provision of a bypass for Geashill, and, where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

R420: To co-operate with Laois County Council to examine the feasibility of providing the following:

1. Relief road from the Tullamore Road to Botley Lane, Portarlington.
2. Long-term bypass to the south of Portarlington.

SMAO-13 It is an objective of the Council to examine the feasibility of providing effective linkages between national and county roads taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility.

SMAO-14 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the continued improvement and upgrading of all roads, should their status be re-graded, under the national roads programme and / or the Council's road programme. The Council will seek and support the upgrading of the status of regional roads in the midlands which perform functions akin to National Secondary Routes for example the R420 Tullamore to Monastervin road and the routes that link Tullamore to the M6 at Enfield via Edenderry, namely the R420 and R402.

SMAO-15 It is an objective of the Council to improve and maintain regional and county roads in line with the annual roads programme and allocated budgets.

SMAO-16 It is an objective of the Council to examine the feasibility of providing future relief / distributor roads adjacent to / within the following towns and villages, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only.

- Tullamore
- Birr
- Clara
- Ferbane

- Portarlinton
- Cloghan
- Killeigh
- Geashill
- Cloneygowan
- Edenderry
- Kilcormac

SMAO-17 It is an objective of the Council to improve and upgrade bridges in the county as identified in the annual roads programme and budget allocation.

SMAO-18 It is an objective of the Council to protect the study area, route corridor options and thereafter the preferred route corridor selected for the national road schemes being progressed in the Development Plan in accordance with National Development Plan Objectives and to prohibit development that could prejudice their future delivery.