



PAPER NSMC TRAN 1 (10) JC
NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
TRANSPORT SECTORAL FORMAT
NEWRY

3 MARCH 2010

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighth meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in Transport sectoral format was held in Newry on 3 March 2010.
2. The meeting was attended by Conor Murphy MP MLA, Minister for Regional Development, Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of the Environment and Noel Dempsey TD, Minister for Transport, Minister Murphy chaired the meeting.

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE DUBLIN / BELFAST RAIL LINK

3. Ministers discussed progress on the Dublin/Belfast rail link and noted that the collapsed viaduct at Malahide was repaired ahead of schedule. Passenger numbers on the line have increased since its reopening and the rail companies intend to keep fare promotions under review.
4. Ministers noted that the railway companies have produced costed proposals which are under consideration aimed at improving the reliability of trains on the line by improving the viability of the existing fleet.
5. They also noted that the two railway companies continue to consider fare harmonisation on the Dublin Belfast rail service. However their current focus on passenger growth limits the potential to advance this at present. The development of integrated ticketing systems across the island of Ireland remains a longer term objective.

NORTHERN RAILWAYS CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT STUDY

6. Ministers noted the completion of the Northern Railway Corridor Development study and the main findings and recommendations of the report. The main focus of the report is on development potential along the Ballymena – Derry/Londonderry railway line.

MAJOR ROADS PROJECTS

7. Ministers noted that contractors had been appointed to both the A5 (North West Gateway to Aughnacloy) and A8 (Belfast to Larne) road projects and that work is progressing to meet the next key milestone – Publication of the Draft Orders – by late 2010/early 2011. A payment of €9m was made by the Minister for Transport to the NI Consolidated fund in December 2009 in accordance with the agreed arrangements.
8. It was also noted that construction work had begun on two service stations on the M1, at Castlebellingham, Co Louth and at Lusk, Co Dublin and that these are expected to be open before the end of 2010.

ROAD SAFETY

9. Ministers discussed road safety issues on rural roads in border areas and the current position on road fatalities in each jurisdiction. They noted that cooperation on road safety strategies and enforcement actions in both jurisdictions will continue to focus on rural roads, including in border areas.
10. Ministers noted the introduction, on 28 January 2010, of the Mutual Recognition of Driver Disqualifications between the UK and Ireland. Officials continue to work towards the longer term objective of the Mutual Recognition of Penalty Points.
11. The Council noted that a pilot scheme for the release of vehicle keeper data, on a cross-border, reciprocal basis, to bodies enforcing parking and toll penalties, was launched earlier today.

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION LIMITS

12. Ministers discussed progress in relation to reducing blood alcohol limits in both jurisdictions. The Road Traffic Bill 2009 in Ireland includes proposals to reduce blood alcohol concentration limits. Following public consultation in Northern Ireland, an options paper is being prepared, giving consideration to a range of policy and legislative options relating to the setting of new blood alcohol concentration limits. A coordinated approach to the introduction of new limits will continue to be explored.
13. Ministers noted that officials from both jurisdictions are meeting to discuss the sharing, where appropriate, of information on the procurement of new breath testing equipment.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

14. Ministers noted the publication by the Department of Transport of the National Cycle Policy Framework as a follow up to the Smarter Travel policy and also that the Department for Regional Development, through its TravelWise initiative, actively promotes walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing to businesses, commuters and schools. They also noted that the Department for Regional Development is in the process of forming an Active Travel Forum.
15. The Ministers also noted that officials are actively pursuing the sustainable transport agenda, sharing experience on issues such as public bike rental schemes and progressing plans for an all-island Bike Week 2010 which will take place from 13 to 20 June.
16. They noted that the jointly supported carsharing website for the North West region is now operational and an update will be provided at a future NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.

FREIGHT TRANSPORT

17. Ministers reviewed the outcome of the initial meeting of a Freight Forum which was held in Dublin Castle on 29 January 2010 and attended by a wide range stakeholders with an interest in promoting a sustainable freight sector.
18. They noted that officials in the relevant Departments will set up working groups to examine the priority issues identified:
 - being competitive in a sustainable manner;
 - safer, compliant, eco-efficient, road freight transport;
 - rail freight and other alternatives;
 - international connectivity;
 - network management.

BRIDGES ON THE TYRONE MONAGHAN BORDER / NARROW WATER BRIDGE

19. The Council noted that construction is already underway in Knockaginny Bridge and will be underway on Annaghroe Bridge by mid March with expected completion by winter 2010.
20. Ministers noted that Louth County Council has submitted a report to the Department of Transport in relation to the proposed Narrow Water Bridge project.

COMMUNITY BASED RURAL TRANSPORT

21. Ministers noted that a pilot scheme relating to Cross-Border Community Based Rural Transport was completed at the end of

December 2009 A report on evaluation of the pilot scheme will be presented to the next NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

22. The Council agreed to meet again in the Transport sectoral format in October 2010.

**Joint Secretariat
3 March 2010**