



PAPER NSMC TRAN 2 (09) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

TRANSPORT SECTORAL FORMAT

DUBLIN

4 NOVEMBER 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The seventh meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in Transport sectoral format was held in Dublin on 4 November 2009.
2. The meeting was attended by Noel Dempsey TD, Minister for Transport, Conor Murphy MP MLA, Minister for Regional Development and Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of the Environment. Minister Dempsey chaired the meeting.
3. The Council noted and welcomed progress made since the last meeting in April 2009 and the opportunity to meet to further discuss cross-border co-operation in relation to Strategic Transport Planning and Road Safety.

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE DUBLIN / BELFAST RAIL LINK

4. Ministers discussed progress on the Dublin/Belfast rail link. They noted the updated position in relation to the Malahide bridge collapse and agreed that both rail companies will continue to work to recover passenger numbers after the re-launch of the service.
5. They agreed that the financial implications of the proposals to improve the reliability of trains on the line be reviewed with a view to putting in place a reconfigured fleet as soon as possible.

6. Ministers noted that the new Newry Train Station has been fully operational from 7 September 09. They also discussed the position on development of integrated ticketing systems and the long term aspiration to develop integrated ticketing to apply to North South services.

MAJOR ROADS PROJECTS

7. Ministers noted that both the A5 (North West Gateway to Aughnacloy) and A8 (Belfast to Larne) road projects had achieved the second significant milestone – Preferred Options Report – on target and that work is progressing to meet the third significant milestone – Publication of the Draft Orders – by late 2010/early 2011. Contractors/designers are expected to be appointed for both projects by late Autumn 2009 and payment of €9m will be made by the Minister for Transport to the NI Consolidated fund before the end of 2009 in accordance with the agreed procedure.
8. Ministers also noted the signing of PPP contracts for two service stations on the MI which are due to open late in 2010.

ROAD SAFETY

9. Ministers discussed the current position on road deaths in each jurisdiction. They noted the Declaration recently made to the EU in relation to bilateral application of the Convention on the Mutual Recognition of Driving Disqualifications.
10. Once the mutual recognition of driving disqualifications is in place, a project plan will be developed to pursue the mutual recognition of penalty points. This will be a complex and longer term process, as currently the penalty point systems are different in each jurisdiction.
11. Ministers also reviewed progress on the existing road safety strategies and on a new strategy for Northern Ireland. They also reviewed continuing cooperation between the two jurisdictions in the areas of advertising and publicity, research and enforcement.

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION LIMITS

12. Ministers noted the background and the current position on new lower drink driving limits in both jurisdictions and agreed that the potential for a coordinated approach to the introduction of new limits should continue to be explored.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

13. 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.

14. They also noted that the Department for Regional Development has initiated a review of the Regional Transportation Strategy to ensure more sustainable transport arrangements and has produced a report setting out greenhouse gas emissions from transport.
15. The Council noted that officials are engaging positively on the sustainable transport agenda and are progressing initiatives that underline the all-island dimension and look forward to an update at a future NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.
16. Ministers noted that the jointly supported carsharing website for the North West region is now operational and is expected to be launched formally before Christmas.

FREIGHT TRANSPORT

17. Ministers noted that, as a first step in organising a Freight Forum, the relevant Departments will jointly organise a meeting of key stakeholders in the freight sector would be held in early December 2009, to identify priority issues for consideration by the Forum.
18. These priority issues will subsequently be considered in depth by working groups comprising representatives of key stakeholders and persons with an interest in promoting a sustainable freight sector throughout the island. Ministers requested that a report on progress be made at a future meeting of the North South Ministerial Council.

BRIDGES ON THE TYRONE MONAGHAN BORDER / NARROW WATER BRIDGE

19. The Council noted that a contractor has been appointed to undertake the replacement of the bridges on the Tyrone Monaghan border with a completion date in Winter 2010. Ministers also noted that Louth County Council is continuing to undertake a further appraisal of the proposed Narrow Water Bridge project. Further reports on these projects will be presented to a future NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.

COMMUNITY BASED RURAL TRANSPORT

20. Ministers noted that work is continuing on the pilot in line with the agreed project plan/schedule and the Departments are satisfied that the outcomes will be relevant to consideration of cross-Border transport and social inclusion issues and looked forward to a full report being presented to a future NSMC meeting in Transport sectoral format.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21. The Council agreed to meet again in the Transport sectoral format in March 2010.

**Joint Secretariat
4 November 2009**