

NEW POLICY DRIVES ‘10 MINUTE TOWN CONCEPT’ IN THE SOUTHERN REGION

The Southern Regional Assembly is promoting the increased use of sustainable transport and reduced carbon emissions with local authorities in the region, using its new 10 Minute Town Framework and Methodology report. The SRA’s EU Projects Officer Rose Power outlines the background to the regional action plan and their involvement in the MATCH-UP project.

In June 2018, the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) became a partner in the Interreg Europe MATCH-UP Project – a sustainable transport project involving partners from Italy, Portugal, Germany and Romania. Since then the SRA has participated in interregional learning experiences between partners to assist in improving policies in the Southern Region.

In September 2020, the Interreg Europe Joint Secretariat validated the Regional Action Plan that resulted from our participation in the MATCH-UP project. One of the main actions in the Action Plan was to create a framework and methodology tool to assist Local Authorities in implementing the 10-minute concept for cities, towns and neighbourhoods across the region.

The ‘10 Minute Town Concept’ – a Regional Policy Objective (RPO) of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region – came into effect on 31 January 2020.

To assist the early implementation of the ‘10 Minute City and Town’ concept, the Southern Regional Assembly commissioned ARUP to assist in designing a good practice framework and methodology. This, in turn, could be used by local authorities as an implementation tool and a resource to achieve the ‘10 Minute’ concept.

There are 14 key towns identified in the RSES, therefore, to create the ‘10 Minute Town’ Framework and methodology we first piloted the framework with the assistance of Carlow County Council, Kerry County Council and Clare County Council on three key towns – Carlow, Tralee and Ennis. This would provide proof of concept and allowed us to fine-tune the methodology before disseminating it across the Southern Region.



The RSES is the long-term, statutory strategic development framework providing for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region, seeking to achieve balanced regional development based on the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework (NPF).

RSES RPO 176 states: "It is an objective to attain sustainable compact settlements with the "10-minute" city and town concepts, whereby, a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycle timeframes from homes or are accessible by high quality public transport services by connecting people to larger scaled settlements delivering these services."



David Kelly, Director of Southern Regional Assembly

The MATCH-UP 10 Minute Town Concept Framework and Methodology, which was presented to the SRA’s elected members in September 2020 to coincide with European Mobility Week, is divided into two main strands; firstly, the establishment of baseline conditions, and secondly, the accessibility and infrastructural requirements.

Geographical data for essential services including healthcare, education, retail, leisure and public transport in each location was collected from the official Government open data portal www.data.gov.ie and from OpenStreetMap, which, was then analysed in ArcGIS. (GIS package used to map the 10 Minute Town geographical data)

This information was then validated by the relevant local authority. A high-level review of the existing walking and cycling network was undertaken on Google Maps and Google Streetview to verify the accuracy of the street network.

To conduct the analysis, an 'end to end' routable network was created in a GIS package. The package used in this study was the Network Analyst extension within the Esri ArcGIS package.

Public transport interchanges and connections to the wider area were then incorporated into the analysis. Once these parameters were defined, the GIS package determined both the range that can be travelled and the time taken to access all essential services.

This was included into the presentation maps. The 2016 Census data for Small Areas and Workplace Zones was used to calculate the number of people resident or employed within the catchment area.

The study included an analysis of the baseline conditions as follows:

- Demographics (population and car ownership);
- Location of existing services (i.e. healthcare, education, retail, leisure and public transport);
- Current travel patterns (i.e. means of travel for the town);
- Catchment analysis (i.e. 10-minute walking and cycling catchment for each existing service or facility).



Throughout the analysis, it was found that there was a common trend in constraints across the three towns:

- Lack of direct walk/cycle access from residential estates to local and regional roads, limiting the connectivity between important education, employment, leisure, healthcare and retail services;
- Severance between residential estates (e.g. cul-de-sacs and fences);
- Low cycle usage;
- Bus services are generally limited (e.g. infrequent and does not cover parts of the towns) and tend to only cover specific corridors within the towns;
- Poor infrastructure, particularly for cycling;
- Lack of services, particularly on the outskirts of the towns.

Improvements were proposed to address permeability and to increase the 10-minute catchment areas in each of the three key towns. These proposals demonstrate what local authorities could undertake to develop the concept in their areas:

- Provision of walk/cycle bridges across rivers to connect areas deprived of services;
- Provision of new connections between residential estates, for example, through knocking down walls and fences, as well as providing paths between cul-de-sacs;
- Provision of connections to existing walking and cycling facilities;
- Improvement to bus services with provision of local services within the town, increase in frequency and widening the public transport catchment through additional bus stops and new bus services.

Finally, it was found that a range of supporting initiatives to change travel behaviour, such as, promotion of the use of new walking and cycling routes, public awareness campaigns and increased use of wayfinding and signage will be needed for a greater uptake in walking and cycling.

Therefore, there is a need for a twin track approach; to support the provision of facilities (e.g. new cycle lanes and secure parking) and the promotion of the use of sustainable modes of transport to the residents and visitors of the three towns.



The SRA's 10 Minute Town Framework and Methodology report implementation tool is now available to assist local authorities.

The '10 Minute Town' concept is about creating connected communities. It increases our understanding of how our neighbourhoods work. It maps out how a more compact and permeable urban form can provide high quality and safe links to public transport, shops, services, green spaces and to other neighbourhoods. This will in turn reduce the need to travel by car and therefore reduce carbon emissions.

In conjunction with National Transport Agency and Transport Infrastructure Ireland initiatives and analysis tools, Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies, local transport plans and other sustainable mobility projects with local authorities, our report is advancing '10 Minute City and Town Concepts' in the Southern Region. It is positively promoting increased use of sustainable transport and reduced carbon emissions in the region.

For further information visit www.southernassembly.ie.