



THE
Shannon
AIRPORT GROUP



Submission to Bus
Connect Limerick
22nd March 2023



The Shannon Airport Group (the “Group”) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Consultation process on Bus Connects Limerick.

The current draft of Bus Connects Limerick does not incorporate Shannon, noting that this settlement is outside the catchment area of the City Bus network and is instead being covered under Connecting Ireland. Which policy details the plans for bus connections in the future does not directly concern the Group, however, the Group is mindful that strong consideration must be given to appropriate connections between Limerick and Shannon being in place to further the growth of the region and to recognise the dynamics of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area.

Shannon Airport has helped to fuel the Irish economy and create jobs and business opportunities for people throughout this region. The Group’s aviation and property activities supports both the business and tourism sectors that are so crucial to the regional economy. Shannon Airport is vital and necessary to the continued economic and social wellbeing and development of Limerick and the surrounding region. Shannon Airport provides the connectivity necessary for both FDI and indigenous businesses to trade internationally and also to support the tourism industry in the City.

Companies in the Shannon Free Zone have significant educational links to both TUS and UL, while the Shannon College of Hotel Management University of Galway require good reliable public transport connectivity for its students and staff to Limerick City and beyond. The Shannon Campus, comprising the Airport and the Shannon Free Zone, are key employment centres with approximately 10,000 people travelling to Shannon every day for work. In addition, passengers using Shannon Airport exceeded 1.5 million passengers in 2022 and is expected to grow further in the years ahead.

The Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (LSMATS) sets out the framework for the delivery of the transport system required to further the development of the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area. Measure BC9 in the LSMATS sets out that the NTA and the local authorities will improve local and regional bus connectivity to Shannon town centre, Shannon employment areas and Shannon Airport. Specifically, the strategy identifies enhancement to current services as well as the introduction of new services including:

- Limerick City Centre – Shannon Town Centre –Shannon Free Zone – Shannon Airport (Express service).
- Limerick City Centre – Cratloe – Bunratty –Shannon Town Centre – Shannon Free Zone – Shannon Airport;
- Sixmilebridge railway station – Shannon (Shuttle service);
- Shannon – Ennis;
- Shannon to TUS and UL; and,
- The potential for enhanced direct services from Shannon to Cork and Galway will be examined.

The strategy also notes that *“as part of the improvement to Shannon’s bus services, the potential for better integration of these services with flight times to and from Shannon Airport will be taken into account”*.



Under Connecting Ireland, it is proposed to increase the frequency on the Regional Route 51 (Galway to Cork) to every 30 minutes. This is most welcome and will to some degree address the ambition of implementing an express service between Shannon and Limerick City, given that the last section of this route between the two locations only includes a stop in Bunratty. However, this route would benefit from an additional stop in the Shannon Free Zone, and with 10,000 employees located in the Shannon campus we request that the addition of this stop be assessed for inclusion as a service.

The LSMATS also noted the potential for enhanced direct services from Shannon Airport to Cork and Galway. On any given day there are 40 coaches from Galway and 12 coaches from Cork going to Dublin Airport¹. In contrast there are no **direct** services between Galway and Shannon Airport or between Shannon Airport and Cork. Having regard to a primary aim of the National Planning Framework (NPF), being to promote an increased proportion of economic activity in second-tier cities, we consider that a provision for appropriate direct public transport services between Shannon Airport and the cities along the West Coast is of critical importance. We would ask that this is also considered as part of both the Bus Connect Limerick and the Connecting Ireland plans. Furthermore, it is essential that these connections coincide with flight times to ensure optimal usage.

Bus Eireann's current local bus route 343, connecting Shannon Airport with Limerick City, operates twenty-four services daily, includes 28 stops and has a journey time of approximately one hour. The use of the private car for travel between Limerick City and Shannon takes approximately 25 minutes and so there is a need to develop a more efficient and usable service, between Limerick city and the Airport and Shannon Free Zone. Local route 343 is not identified in the current draft of Bus Connects Limerick but rather in Connecting Ireland. The proposal with respect to this route is to operate a new route from Shannon to Limerick via Sixmilebridge, replacing a variant of route 343 with a minimum service of 3 return trips a day. A minimum service of 3 return trips a day when compared to the current service level of 24 services daily would appear inconsistent with all the policy priorities of enhancing public transport to facilitate achievement of Ireland 2040 and the Climate Action Plan. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity as to whether this proposed new route will facilitate the measures set out in the LSMATS of providing connectivity between Limerick City Centre – Cratloe – Bunratty – Shannon Town Centre – Shannon Free Zone – Shannon Airport. We would ask that there is additional clarification provided as to how this route will address the measures identified in the LSMATS and that measures are put in place to ensure that there is adequate bus connectivity and frequency of service between Limerick City Centre – Cratloe – Bunratty – Shannon Town Centre – Shannon Free Zone – Shannon Airport.

Finally, there is no reference in either Connecting Clare or Bus Connects Limerick to the implementation of a service between Shannon and TUS and UL. Enhancing links between Shannon and the Universities in Limerick was identified in the LSMATS. The economic benefits of increasing a community's access to education centres is well documented. Equally improving access between universities and industry allows better knowledge sharing, leads to innovation that solves complex problems, and drives economic growth. On reviewing the

¹ February 2023 is used as an example for departures from Galway to Dublin Airport



Limerick Bus Network plans, it would appear that extending Routes 2A and 6 from Coonagh to Shannon would address this issue by connecting Shannon to both the TUS campus and onwards to UL. We consider that this could be addressed under the current plans and that this route is extended with a direct service to Shannon.

Ensuring appropriate public transport connectivity between Limerick City and Shannon is vital for enabling a number of national strategic objectives identified in Ireland 2040 including: supporting high quality international connectivity, enhanced regional accessibility, a strong economy supported by enterprise innovation and skills and also the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. We welcome the work done to date on the Bus Connects Limerick and Connecting Ireland plans and we ask that the issues identified in this document are considered by the relevant authorities.

