

Opening Statement – Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan TD
Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action
Climate Action Plan 2023 – Transport Chapter

(c. 1130 words, approx. 7 mins)

Thank you Chair, and Committee members for this invitation to discuss my Department's proposed decarbonisation pathway for the transport sector as we have set out in Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23).

I am joined today by a number of my officials, including:

- Caoimhín Ó Ciaruáin - Assistant Secretary and Head of Climate Action and EU/International,
- Aoife O'Grady - Zero Emissions Vehicles Ireland,
- John Martin - Climate Engagement & Governance Division, and
- Andrea Lennon - Climate Adaptation, Research and Energy Division

who lead across key climate mitigation and adaptation efforts and policies in the Department of Transport.

This engagement is timely – I am sure that members will have noted the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's synthesis report announced earlier this week. The report's findings are stark and unequivocal:

- The current pace and scale of climate action is insufficient and there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all;
- Adverse impacts of climate change and extremes will become more widespread and pronounced, with compounding and cascading risks that will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in our societies, who have historically contributed the least to our current climate crisis;
- It is now urgent that we ensure deep, rapid, sustained and accelerated implementation of both mitigation and adaptation actions in this decade and across all sectors and systems to halve our global GHG emissions by 2030.

It is against this backdrop and call for urgency that we as a Government committed in legislation to reducing our national emissions by 51% by 2030, established our carbon budget programme and set out our legally binding sectoral emissions ceilings last July.

CAP23 is the first instance that these carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings have been incorporated into our annual climate action plan and the new Transport Chapter reflects this. Members will be aware that I am on record in stating that I believe achieving our target of 50% emissions abatement in Transport by 2030 will be the most difficult of all the sectors. The Chapter sets out the level of challenge

and the system change required in delivering this level of abatement. It also sets out the wider well-being benefits that can be achieved across society from this transformation of our transport system.

In particular, and as was highlighted in the joint OECD and Climate Change Advisory Council '*Redesigning Ireland's Transport for Net Zero*' report that was published last October, our existing transport system fosters growing car use and emissions *by design*.

In developing the Transport chapter of CAP23, my Department engaged closely with the Climate Change Advisory Council secretariat and OECD team with regard to the key recommendations of their report, in addition to our own review and recalibration of a refreshed 50% transport decarbonisation pathway modelling undertaken with the National Transport Authority.

This consultative process included extensive engagements and workshops with agencies, academia and wider transport stakeholders, I am happy that the CAP23 Transport chapter presents a refocused policy approach to that of CAP21 which takes account of that input as we pivot towards an AVOID/SHIFT/IMPROVE (ASI) framework for greater transport sustainability. This also reflects key recommendations and the approach of this Committee's own report from June 2021 on reducing transport emissions.

In total, we identified 15 key 'high-impact' work programmes that we have grouped under this framework, alongside some cross-cutting and HORIZONTAL and ADAPTATION focused work programmes. These programmes also build on and incorporate key actions and interventions identified under, for example, our National Sustainable Mobility Policy, our Road Haulage Strategy, the ZEVI work programme and our National EV charging infrastructure strategy, our Renewable Transport Fuels policy, all of which have been developed and published over the past 12 months. I believe that our approach has ensured a far greater integration of climate action across all transport modes and ensured these links are also baked into our spatial and land-use planning systems.

I would further note that a number of key assumptions that were included in the 50% decarbonisation pathway modelling should not be interpreted as representing committed Government policy, and further detailed policy work and design of interventions will be necessary over the coming months – such as in the consultation and design of a National Demand Management Strategy. Ultimately, the key objective of this modelling work was to inform our understanding of what a 50% decarbonisation pathway in transport 'looks like' rather than simply modelling of committed measures.

In this way, the modelling makes clear that while it will be extremely challenging, there is an achievable pathway to 50% emissions abatement by 2030. We have set out key KPIs and headline 2030 targets in the chapter to make clear to all just how transformative the level and scale of change that is required to meet a 50% pathway will be. In effect, we will need to:

- Reduce total vehicle kilometres travelled by 20%;
- Achieve a 50% reduction in fossil-fuel usage in transport;
- Accelerate vehicle fleet transition so that approx. 1 in 3 private cars is a battery electric vehicle by 2030;

- Ensure that walking, cycling and public transport account for 50% of daily journeys, which will require a 50% increase in daily active travel journeys, 130% increase in daily public transport journeys; and a 25% reduction in daily car journeys;

I will be happy to speak further to these work programmes and targets in the following discussion, but I will conclude my opening by noting that to increase both the pace of emissions reduction in transport and to improve public well-being, we need to scale and prioritise policies with transformative potential and capacity to shift our transport systems away from car dependency – through measures such as road space reallocation, the mainstreaming of on-demand shared services, communication efforts to address car-centric mindsets, and a rebalancing of our funding programmes to place greater emphasis on supplying the necessary charging infrastructure and enhanced public transport services that can accelerate this transition.

Moreover, while fleet electrification and the continued use of biofuels will provide the greatest share of emissions abatement in the medium term, a key recognition of CAP23 is that the required level of transport emissions abatement cannot be achieved through a reliance on technological improvements alone. Approximately 2 MtCO₂eq. of emissions abatement will have to be achieved through AVOID + SHIFT measures that address the base demand for transport, and support behavioural change and modal shift from private car usage at an individual level.

There is a huge amount of activity underway and some of the key CAP23 work programmes that will require close cross-Governmental participation over the coming months include next steps in the consultation, development and implementation of a National Demand Management Strategy, the continuation of major public transport infrastructural projects through the planning system and roll out of additional rural mobility services through the NTA's Connecting Ireland programme; and a coordinated and targeted Communications Strategy to convey the wider well-being co-benefits that can be achieved through climate action in transport.

Thank you