

**Meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and
Communications,
02 March 2022
Opening Statement**

Chairman, Deputies, Senators, on behalf of Bolt I want to thank you for this opportunity to make a submission in advance of the upcoming Committee stage of the Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021.

Bolt is a European transport mobility platform which launched in Estonia in 2013. Our mission is to help build cities for people, not cars, with enough on demand transport available so that people do not need to own a private vehicle. Bolt is currently providing sustainable mobility solutions to more than 100 million customers in 45 countries across Europe and Africa. The services available include taxis, ebikes, scooters, car sharing, food delivery and fast grocery delivery.

In Ireland, we currently provide our taxi dispatch service in Dublin and will be launching in Cork in the coming weeks.

We intend to considerably expand our transport offering here, launching electric bikes and car sharing schemes later this year. Our approach works best where we provide a multi-modal offering, so our users can access multiple forms of transport through one app; they might cycle or scoot out, perhaps incorporating public transport into their journey, in the afternoon, but get a taxi home that night. With an established customer base in Ireland already, we know that by providing easy and convenient transport options, we can nudge our users towards more sustainable journeys.

Our analysis shows that there is no time to lose. Consumer analysis conducted by Bolt and Bounce Insights last week in Ireland showed that:

- With current alternative options, only **1 in 10** Irish car owners see it as possible to give up their private vehicle in the next five years.

- **6 in 10** of Irish car owners use their vehicle every day, and **8 in 10** use their vehicle for 'recreational' journeys that are the most suitable to switch.
- There is a growing willingness to switch if options are available; rising fuel costs, environmental concerns and concerns over parking are key reasons listed to switch.

Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021

Bolt welcomes the recent decision of the cabinet to approve a range of amendments which will soon come before the Committee for your consideration. With regards to Powered Personal Transporters (PPTs) we particularly commend the Minister for listening to the industry and advocacy groups, such as the IWA and the NCBI, and proposing to remove the maximum power and maximum speed provisions from the Bill, as contained in Section 16. We agree that these provisions are best dealt with in the secondary legislation, which will allow the Minister to consider best practices at present, but also maintain the ability to easily amend these provisions as the technology changes. I hope the Committee also agrees with this approach.

Several operators have already appeared before you today and outlined the reasons why a number of us had concerns about the max power provisions in the Bill as initiated. We look forward to engaging with the Minister, the Department and the Committee to ensure that the speed and vehicle max power provisions in the regulations are workable and allow for a safe transport mode for all road users.

Areas for further consideration

Bolt hopes to engage with all parties as the regulations are drafted to ensure that the future shared electric scooter schemes truly prioritise multi-modality.

Last month, in partnership with the Norwegian Institute of Transport Economics, TØI, we released research which shows that that in-app

encouragement will cause 60% more users to shift from taxis to scooters for short trips.

This was determined on foot of pilot modal shift study where randomly selected groups of Bolt customers from 10 European cities received in-app encouragement to switch from taxis to a scooter for trips shorter than three kilometres.

The implications of the findings are significant and reinforce our view that a multi-modal offering is the key to facilitating a wide scale modal shift. Across Ireland, nearly half of all car trips are less than four kilometres long, with this figure even higher in cities. 40% of Bolt taxi trips in Dublin are four kilometres or shorter. This means that encouraging users to adopt a shared mobility option, whether that is scooters or Ebikes, for shorter journeys can have a considerable impact. It also confirms Bolt's long held belief that where users are presented with easy, convenient and affordable alternatives, they will readily choose the more sustainable option.

Encouraging customers to use scooters and bikes to replace personal vehicles and short car trips is part of Bolt's mission. We would like to see the upcoming legislation prioritise integrated approaches to ensure future operators facilitate and encourage more sustainable commuting habits through their operations. The type of behavioural shift we need in Ireland will not happen without an integrated approach.

Bolt also believes data sharing with transport and local authorities is essential. Bolt works closely with local authorities across Europe to provide regular updates on usage rates, patterns, demographics and high frequency areas. This data provides invaluable insight for cities and can help improve and shape future transport services. Bolt hopes that the regulations will place a heavy emphasis on a need for this cooperation with cities.

Ultimately, the Minister, the Department and this Committee will have to carefully consider the needs of all road users and ensure that the

legislation and subsequent regulations deliver a safe and sustainable form of transport for all road users. In circumstances where journeys by private car still accounted for 74% of all trips in 2019, it will be essential that the schemes put in place are structured to ensure they can facilitate a real modal shift. This will be essential in contributing to the effort to meet Ireland's 2030 emissions targets.

Ultimately, one issue unites all of the operators you have met today – a desire to help transform the transport offerings in Irish cities and do it in a safe and sustainable manner. We might disagree on who can do that best, but we are all striving towards the same goal.

I look forward to answering any questions you might have this afternoon.