

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications

18 October 2023

Opening statement by John McCarthy, Department of Transport

(Chair of TRA Management Committee)

Cathaoirleach, Members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am joined by colleagues from TII and UCD:

- Dr Albert Daly, TII - TRA2024 Director, with responsibility for delivery of TRA2024 on behalf of DoT
- Dr Ciaran McNally, UCD - Chair of the TRA2024 Programme Committee
- Celine Crawford, TRA2024 Associate Director, with responsibility for Stakeholder Engagement

Background to Transport Research Arena 2024

Ireland is hosting the Transport Research Arena conference, TRA2024, in April next year. The event will be held in the RDS in Dublin from the 14-18 of April 2024 and expected to attract up to 4,000 experts from around the world. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is responsible for the delivery of TRA2024 on behalf of the Department of Transport which is the official host for the event.

Ministers Eamon Ryan and Jack Chambers are President and Vice President of the TRA. They have been very supportive of the conference and have attended a number of supporting events.

The TRA is at its core a research and innovation event. It covers all transport modes including rail, road, water, aviation and cross-modality in both an urban and inter-urban setting.

The first TRA conference was held in Sweden in 2006 and it has taken place in a different European city every two years and has grown to be the largest research and innovation conference of its kind in Europe.

The conference is unique in that it brings together all the sectors involved in transport and mobility, from the policymakers, planners and providers of transport infrastructure, designers, suppliers and researchers. Key partners in the conference include the EU

Commission and a range of European-level stakeholder partners, representing transport research and innovation across different sectors such as aviation, maritime, rail, road transport and logistics.

Benefits to Ireland

This will be a very significant event for Ireland and is supported by Fáilte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, and IDA Ireland. It will provide a huge opportunity to showcase Irelands approach to innovation in transport and initiatives adopted to promote sustainable mobility.

The event will put us in the centre of the mobility research and innovation map for Europe. It will provide a forum for researchers, policymakers, owners, operators, and suppliers to explore and share the latest technological and industrial developments in the sector while also looking at innovative transport policies in Europe and worldwide. It will also provide the opportunity for the Irish transport sector to network with our European colleagues and strengthen links with the wider international community.

A key task for us is to promote and build support for the conference across the transport sector in Ireland, Europe and elsewhere. As hosts we are reaching out to key partners, including UNECE, OECD, ITF, and other stakeholders across the UK as well as the US, Canada and Ireland. It will enable us to experience the future of transport and mobility: the networking opportunity assist us in framing our transport policies in a consistent way with our European partners.

Programme for the conference

The main themes of TRA2024 are Safe and Inclusive Transport, Sustainable Mobility of People and Goods, Collaborative Digitisation and Efficient & Resilient Systems.

The tagline for TRA2024 Dublin is “Transport Transitions: Advancing Sustainable and Inclusive Mobility”. Around this we have identified 4 conference themes, namely:

- Safe and Inclusive Transport
- Sustainable Mobility of People and Goods
- Efficient and Resilient Systems
- Collaborative Digitalisation

These themes cover all the major challenges facing transport – how we deliver a safe and efficient transport systems, while also recognising the green and digital transitions. The conference will address these themes using a variety of sessions at different levels.

- Plenary sessions
- Strategic sessions
- Technical & scientific sessions
- Special sessions on specific topics

A number of high-profile speakers, at Ministerial, Commissioner and CEO level, have been invited to participate in the Plenary and Strategic sessions. We have received around 1,200 abstracts and 900 scientific papers from the international research community, including strong contributions from Ireland that will be presented over four days in the RDS.

The conference venue will be built around an exhibition that showcases how research and innovation is changing all aspects of transport. This exhibition will be supported by key international associations representing all aspects of the transport sector.

These stakeholders are also organising a wide range of side events that will take place alongside the conference, ensuring that all the major actors involved in European transport research, innovation and implementation will be in Dublin in April 2024.

Conclusion

The TRA2024 conference represents an exciting showcase event for transport research and Innovation in Ireland. As organisers, we very much appreciate and the time you have allocated to meet us today and your continued support in publicising the conference across the transport sector. We would welcome to hear from you as to ideas and suggestions for the conference and would like to extend to you and invitation to meet the conference stakeholders and see the venue.

Registration is expected to open soon for which more information is on the conference website www.traconference.eu.

Thank you for your time.