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An Roghchoiste um Iompar agus Cumarsáid
Breithniú ar Imleabhar Meastachán Athbhreithnithe (ATHBH) 2024
Votáil 31: Iompar
Feabhra 2024

Select Committee on Transport and Communications
Consideration of Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2024
Vote 31: Transport

February 2024

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Introduction

The Select Committee on Transport and Communications held an engagement with the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan TD, to examine the spending allocations and associated performance metrics for the following Votes:

- **Vote 31: Transport**

Standing Order 95(3) of Dáil Éireann states:

“The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure, and administration under paragraph (1) shall be— (a) for the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and (b) to assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.”

Select Committees are tasked with consideration of the annual Revised Estimates for Public Services (or REV)¹ that fall within their remit. While Select Committees have no role in approving the Estimates, it is an ongoing opportunity for the Committee to examine Departmental expenditure, to make the budgetary process more transparent, and to engage in a meaningful way on relevant performance issues.

The Committee subsequently sent a message confirming completion of its consideration to the Clerk of Dáil Éireann on 07 February 2024 in accordance with Standing Order 101 of Dáil Éireann. Under Standing Order 100(2) of Dáil Éireann, this message is deemed to be the report of the Committee.

¹ The Revised Estimates (comprised of Ministerial Votes / Vote Groups) are included in the Revised Estimates Volume (or REV). REV2024 was published on 13 December 2023.

Reporting on REV consideration

Furthermore, Standing Order 215A of Dáil Éireann states:

Consideration of Estimates by Committees: Report of Committee on Estimate

215A. (1) Subject to Standing Order 215(2) and unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, Committees shall complete their consideration of Estimates referred to them pursuant to that Standing Order not later than 60 days after such Estimates have been so referred.

(2) Any report that a Committee proposes to make arising from its consideration of an Estimate shall be made within a further period of 14 days.

Under SO215A(2), this report summarises issues arising from the Committee's consideration and will be laid before the Dáil and sent to the Minister for consideration. This report will also be provided to the Committee on Budgetary Oversight which will examine all Select Committee reports, collate the information to identify any common issues or concerns, as well as examples of best practice, and make recommendations for the improvement of the consideration process.

Committee commentary on consideration of REV2024

In a letter sent to the Minister from the Committee Leas-Chathaoirleach, a short, non-technical Departmental briefing was requested on 15 December 2023 and a reminder sent on 05 January 2024. The briefing was received on 24 January 2024. The public hearing with the Minister was held on 07 February 2024. There was good engagement with the Departmental officials. The briefing was comprehensive and outlined the key achievements from 2023 and provided a detailed breakdown of the 2023 budget and out-turn. It also provided an overview of the 2024 budget and summarised the financial risks and uncertainties. The engagement with the Minister was substantial and the Committee was satisfied with the direction of the meeting.

Specific allocations that were queried by the Committee were the following:

Vote 31 – Department of Transport

Programme A – Sustainable Mobility 'Active Travel and Greenways'

The Committee highlighted the safety concerns for children travelling to school with a lack of safe walking routes. The Minister outlined the safe routes to school programme with 930

schools having applied for the programme where 167 is funded in phase one and 108 in phase two.

Programme B – Sustainable Mobility ‘Public Transport’

The Committee queried the availability of extra railway carriages due to several services to Dublin being overly busy resulting in many passengers standing. The Minister advised that Irish Rail have taken delivery of 41 new ICR carriages and will deploy those carriages in due course to deal with this issue.

The Committee highlighted the success of Connecting Ireland where 65 new or improved routes were introduced last year, querying whether if this was reviewed each year and if more routes were planned for next year and the year after. The Minister advised that it may not be the exact same number of new and enhanced services as were introduced last year, which was exceptional but that the proposal is to continue to expand and deliver, adding that the real constraints will be budget and availability of drivers.

The Committee noted that the Sustainable Mobility ‘Public Transport’ current expenditure was down by 10% and queried how this will impact upon recruitment and services being delivered. The Minister responded stating that this is an area where it is difficult to get firm commitments from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Programme C – Road Networks and Road Safety

The Committee queried how much additional funding was been allocated towards ensuring road safety. The Minister noted an investment of €40 million in recent years with an increase of €26 million this year to address any black spots. The Committee also queried traffic calming measures near urban areas particularly when travelling from a lower limit to a higher one. The Minister noted that most expenditure has been put into footpaths and traffic calming measures. Additionally, the Minister noted a reduction in speed limits will play an important role in ensuring road safety.

Programme D – Civil Aviation

The Committee queried the timeframe for publication of the regional airports programme review. The Minister acknowledged that the programme was out for consultation and that he expects it to be concluded shortly.

