



Opening Statement

Regarding the

Transport Sectoral Emissions Ceiling

by Marie Donnelly, Climate Change Advisory Council Chairperson

to the

Joint Committee on Transport and Communications April 26th, 2023

Opening Remarks

- 1) Thank you to the Joint Committee on Transport and Communications for the opportunity to attend today and speak on the importance of climate change mitigation in the transport sector to support Ireland's move to a low-carbon economy. My name is Marie Donnelly, Chairperson of the Climate Change Advisory Council.
- 2) I welcome this opportunity to have a conversation on our progress towards achievement of the carbon budgets for the first two periods up to 2030¹. Analysis carried out to support the development of the Council's carbon budget proposals considered a number of scenarios for emissions reductions in the energy sector, including heat, transport and electricity. This analysis noted that a reduction in transport demand and mode switching from private car transport to public and active transport could reduce the costs of transition as well as having important co-benefits related to improving health and easing congestion. Land use planning and public transport infrastructure also have an important role to play in this.
- 3) Last year the Government set out a series of sectoral ceilings, including one for transport. However, the Council underlines the absence of a sectoral ceiling for Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), and that it should also be noted the 26 Mt CO₂ eq of the 2026-2030 carbon budget (the second carbon budget) currently remains unallocated.

¹ Ireland has set legally binding carbon budgets under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 to limit total Greenhouse Gas emissions in the five years from 2021 to 2025 to 295Mt CO₂ eq and to 200Mt CO₂ eq in the five years from 2026 – 2030.



- 4) The transport sector represents the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland. The Sectoral Emissions Ceilings set a target for a 50% emissions reduction in the transport sector from 2018 levels by 2030. This needs to be consistent with a sectoral emissions ceiling of 54 Mt CO₂ eq over 2021- 2025, and a sectoral emissions ceiling of 37 Mt CO₂ eq over 2026-2030. This equates to a target emissions level of approximately 6Mt CO₂ eq in 2030.
- 5) The Climate Change Advisory Council noted in its 2022 Annual Review that the sectoral emissions ceiling for transport is ambitious and will require an early and fundamental shift in the Irish transport system, noting that sufficient measures had not yet been identified to achieve this target. A number of measures to reduce transport emissions have the potential to support improved air quality and reduced noise in addition to improved wellbeing and health outcomes through for example more active modes of transport, while also protecting households from volatile fuel prices.
- 6) The Council welcomes the update of the Transport chapter in the Climate Action Plan 2023 and the focus on the Avoid-Shift-Improve framework.
- 7) Emissions from the transport sector were 10.9 Mt CO₂ eq in 2021, an increase of 6.7% on 2020 with a further increase in transport emissions expected in 2022 based on transport energy demand. This presents a clear challenge to the sector as we are now in year 3 of our first 5-year carbon budget.
- 8) The Climate Change Advisory Council outlined a number of recommendations for the transport sector in its 2022 Annual Review some of which I will present in brief to the Committee.
 - The Council welcomed the reduction in public transport fares and cost of living measures introduced in the transport sector which also reduced vehicle demand, calling for this to be retained along with enhancements to public transport provisions with an assessment of the effectiveness of both measures in terms of supporting the most vulnerable and reducing emissions. The Council is pleased to note that this was reflected with a retention of public transport fare reductions in Budget 2023.
 - The electrification of public transport should be accelerated to support climate and air quality goals particularly in urban spaces.



- The Council recommended that low-cost finance initiatives be extended to include the purchase of EVs. Improvements to the charging infrastructure and incentives for uptake are important and urgent measures.
 - Where viable alternatives to private car use are in place, road space should be reallocated to support public transport, walking and cycling, in consultation with local communities. Local Authorities will have an important role to play in this area.
 - The Council also recommended that measures to address emissions from aviation and shipping should be complemented at a national level, in particular by developing the supply of alternative fuels to these sectors.
 - In the medium to long term, effective spatial planning and transport-oriented development can reduce travel demand and support lower cost and lower emission transport service provision.
- 9) As part of its work programme, the Council commissions and supports research annually. In 2021 the Council commissioned an OECD study on redesigning the Irish transport system for net zero. The report finds that measures to reduce car dependence can greatly enhance wellbeing, improving access to services for both urban and rural isolated communities, improving health and road safety, while also benefiting the environment². In 2022 the Council also commissioned an analysis of the reform of fossil fuel subsidies³, which noted that in addition to any reforms, complementary policies should incentivise the use of active and public transport as well as longer term investment.
- 10) The Council acknowledges the significant challenge ahead, not only for the sector but for the individual households and businesses that will experience significant changes within the first two carbon budget periods. While many changes will be positive, it will be important to ensure that those most vulnerable in society are protected and supported for example where they live in isolated areas, where investments are required in sustainable transport options or where upskilling or reskilling is required.

² Available here;

<https://www.climatecouncil.ie/media/climatechangeadvisorycouncil/contentassets/documents/Press%20Release%20-%20Redesigning%20Ireland's%20Transport%20for%20Net%20Zero.pdf>

³ Available here; <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/councilworkingpaperseries/>



Closing Remarks

11) We are now in Year 3 of the first Carbon Budget. Increased ambition and accelerated action are needed if we are to stay within our carbon budget and meet our 2050 target. The transport sector will play a critical role in this regard. The Council is happy to assist this Committee in its deliberations and I look forward to our discussions today.

Appendix

Transport emissions in 2018	Transport emissions in 2021	Sectoral Carbon Budget 1	Remaining Sectoral Carbon Budget 2022-2025	Sectoral Carbon Budget 2
12.2 Mt CO ₂ eq	10.9 Mt CO ₂ eq	54 Mt CO ₂ eq	43.1 Mt CO ₂ eq	37 Mt CO ₂ eq

Table 1, Transport emissions & Sectoral Emissions Ceiling (Source: EPA)

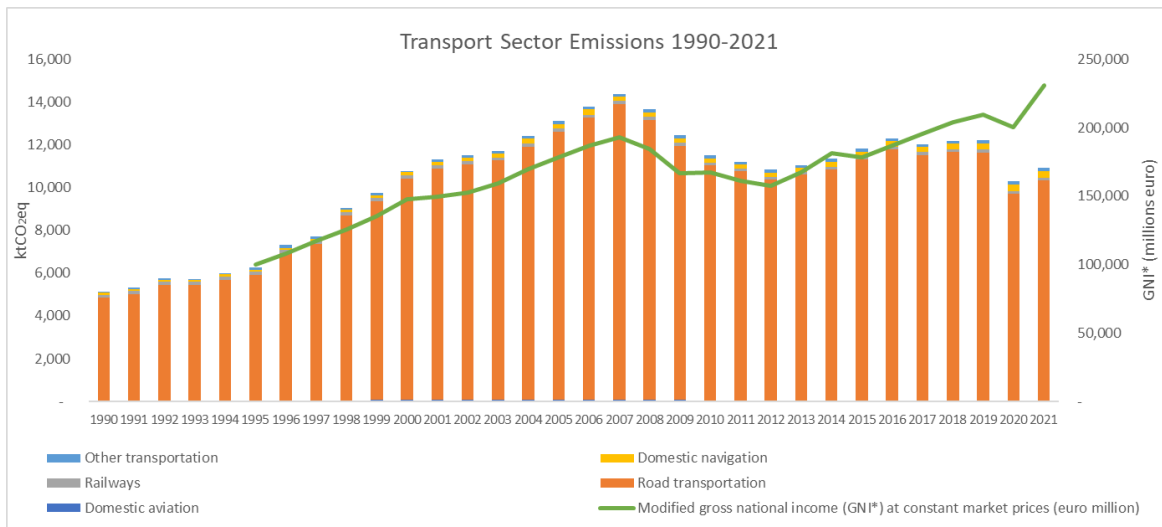


Figure 1, Transport Sector Emissions 1990-2021 (Source: EPA)

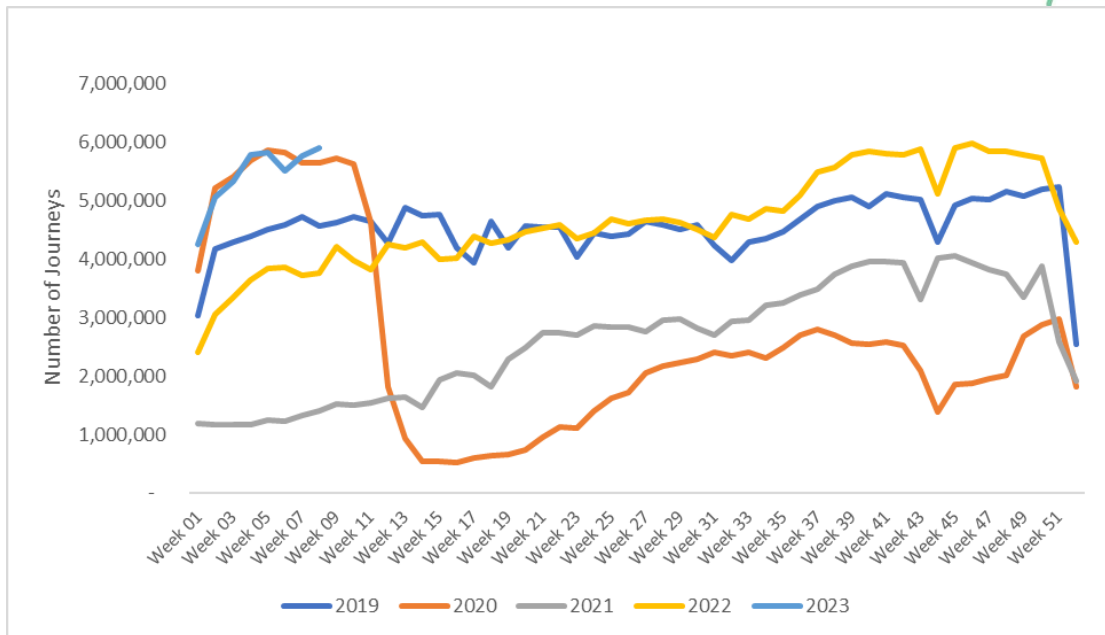


Figure 2, Journeys by Public Transport (Source: CSO)

At the end of 2021, there were just over 47,000 battery electric (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric (PHEVs) vehicles in Ireland. The number of newly licensed electric-only vehicles in 2022 increased by 69% compared to 2021.

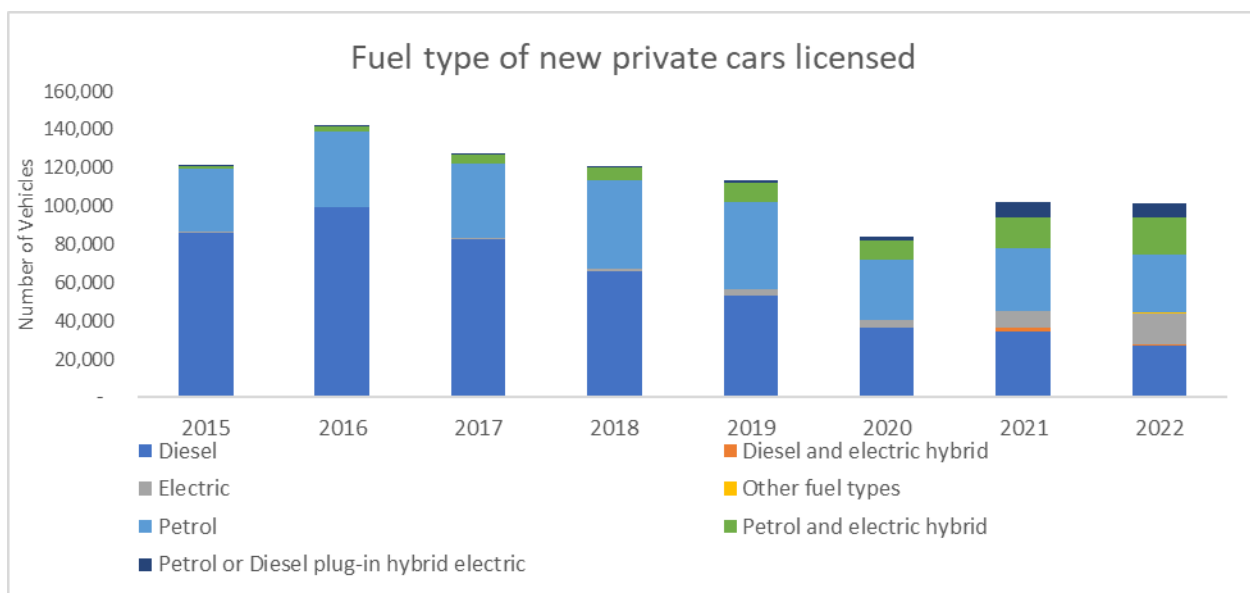


Figure 3, Number of private vehicles licensed for the first time by fuel type (Source: CSO)