

N3 VIRGINIA BYPASS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION No. 3 OPTIONS SELECTION EMERGING PREFERRED OPTION CORRIDOR

August 2021



An Roinn Iompair
Department of Transport



Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Introduction

Cavan County Council, in partnership with Meath County Council and in association with Transport Infrastructure Ireland, is progressing the development of the **N3 Virginia Bypass** scheme. The scheme commences at the end of the existing N3 dual carriageway at Derver, north of Kells in Co. Meath and extends to the existing N3 north of Virginia Town in Co. Cavan.

This is an important project to enhance regional connectivity to the North West and Border Region, reduce congestion in Virginia Town and to improve road safety on the N3. Cavan County Council has appointed Barry Transportation as Technical Advisor to progress the scheme through the Planning and Design phases.

Following the second non-statutory public consultation and completion of Stage 2 of the Options Selection Process by the Project Team, the Emerging Preferred Option Corridor has now been identified in accordance with the TII's Project Management and Project Appraisal Guidelines.

Project Background

The M3 motorway and N3 National Primary Route form the strategic radial corridor linking Dublin with Cavan and onward to Enniskillen and beyond to Sligo and Letterkenny. The M3 motorway extends from Clonee (at the Co. Dublin / Co. Meath border) to the north side of Kells. From Kells the N3 continues in a northwest direction along a Type 2 Dual Carriageway for approximately 9.5km which terminates at Derver (at the Co. Meath / Co. Cavan border).



Virginia is the last remaining Town on the N3 National Route from Dublin to the NI Border which has not been bypassed. A bypass of Virginia will greatly improve the regional connectivity to the North-West which is a strategic priority of the National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040).

Project Ireland 2040 was announced by the Irish Government in February 2018. This policy initiative is underpinned by the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 to 2027. One of the Ten Strategic Outcomes identified by Project Ireland 2040 is to enhance regional accessibility, particularly in the Northern and Western regions. The **N3 Virginia Bypass** is one of the sections of road specifically highlighted in the NDP 2018 - 2027 and it will significantly improve accessibility

and journey times between Dublin, Cavan Town and the North West and Border Region.

For a number of years Cavan County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have been investigating options for the alleviation of traffic congestion in Virginia and its approach roads. A bypass of Virginia was previously granted Part 8 planning approval by Cavan County Council in 2003. This scheme was not advanced further after 2003. The route of the 2003 N3 Virginia Bypass has been protected within the various Cavan County Development Plans since 2003.

In view of the time that has elapsed, the significant changes to design standards and environmental considerations and the substantial increase in traffic volumes, it was necessary to re-appraise the project from the beginning.

Project Objectives

A number of objectives have been established for the project including:

- improving regional accessibility,
- reducing traffic congestion in Virginia Town
- improving journey times; and
- improving safety along the route.



The Current Stage

The project is currently at **Phase 2 (Options Selection)** of the TII's Project Management Guidelines. Following the first public consultation, Stage 1 Preliminary Options Assessment was completed in November 2020. Stage 2 of the Option Selection Process commenced in November 2020 and the 'Emerging Preferred Option' Corridor has now been identified in accordance with TII's 'Project Management Guidelines'.

Stage 1 (Preliminary Options Assessment).

Within the Study Area, initial constraints were identified and the planning and design work commenced with the identification of initial potential options. Ten main options and an additional 19 option variations were assessed under the following three criteria to determine a short list of options to be brought forward to Stage 2.

- Economy • Environment • Engineering

Stage 2 (Project Appraisal Matrix). Five main options and an additional 5 option variations were assessed under the following six criteria to identify the emerging preferred option corridor.

- **Economy • Environment • Safety**
- **Accessibility and Social Inclusion**
- **Integration • Physical Activity**

What Happens Next

Following on from this Public Consultation, the feedback received will be considered by the Project Team before a Preferred Option is finalised.

Stage 3 (Preferred Option). The Preferred Option will be finalised and published along with the Option Selection Report. As indicated on the Public Consultation Roadmap on the next page, this is expected to take place in Q1 2022. Updates, news and details will be published on www.n3virginiabypass.ie and through local press and social media.

After a Preferred Option Corridor is finalised, Phase 3 of the planning and design process can commence (subject to relevant approvals). **Phase 3 (Design and Environmental Evaluation)** of the project will involve further development of the scheme, including design of the road, identifying the land take required, junction design and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment. During this phase further engagement with landowners and interested parties will be undertaken as part of the ongoing design process.

This Public Consultation

This is the third non-statutory public consultation for the N3 Virginia Bypass. The consultation period is running from **19th August 2021 until 13th September 2021**. Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions it is not possible to hold a large scale public event at this time. In response to the Covid-19 restrictions, an Online / Virtual Public Consultation Room has been developed and is accessible via www.innovision.ie/n3virginiabypass.

Information can also be viewed / downloaded online on the project website at www.n3virginiabypass.ie, or linked via the Cavan County Council website at www.cavancoco.ie/n3-virginia-bypass.

This online virtual public consultation room will allow stakeholders and the general public to view

maps, project information and express their opinion in a safe and accessible environment.

It is understood that online information cannot be accessed by everyone and to this end a range of options will be available for people to speak directly with and meet members of the Project Team during the public consultation period, including:

- A call back appointment can be requested by calling **01 485 1400** (normal working hours), and arrangements will be made for a member of the project team to get in touch to give an overview of the project and answer general questions.
- Email queries will be accepted throughout the public consultation period.
- From the afternoon of **19th August until 3rd September 2021**, in-person meetings will be available by appointment only, at the Virginia Show Centre. These in-person meetings will allow for social distancing and will adhere to all COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions to safeguard the health of the public and staff. The meetings will be limited to a **maximum of 3 attendees**.
- An online meeting can also be arranged with a member of the project team by calling **01 485 1400** (normal working hours), or by emailing n3virginiabypass@jbbarry.ie.

Anyone directly affected by the Emerging Preferred Option Corridor or with an interest in the scheme is encouraged to make an appointment to speak with or meet the Project Team. Please contact us **01 485 1400**, email n3virginiabypass@jbbarry.ie or book online via the project website www.n3virginiabypass.ie.

HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

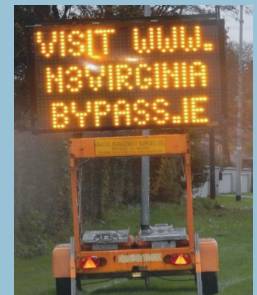
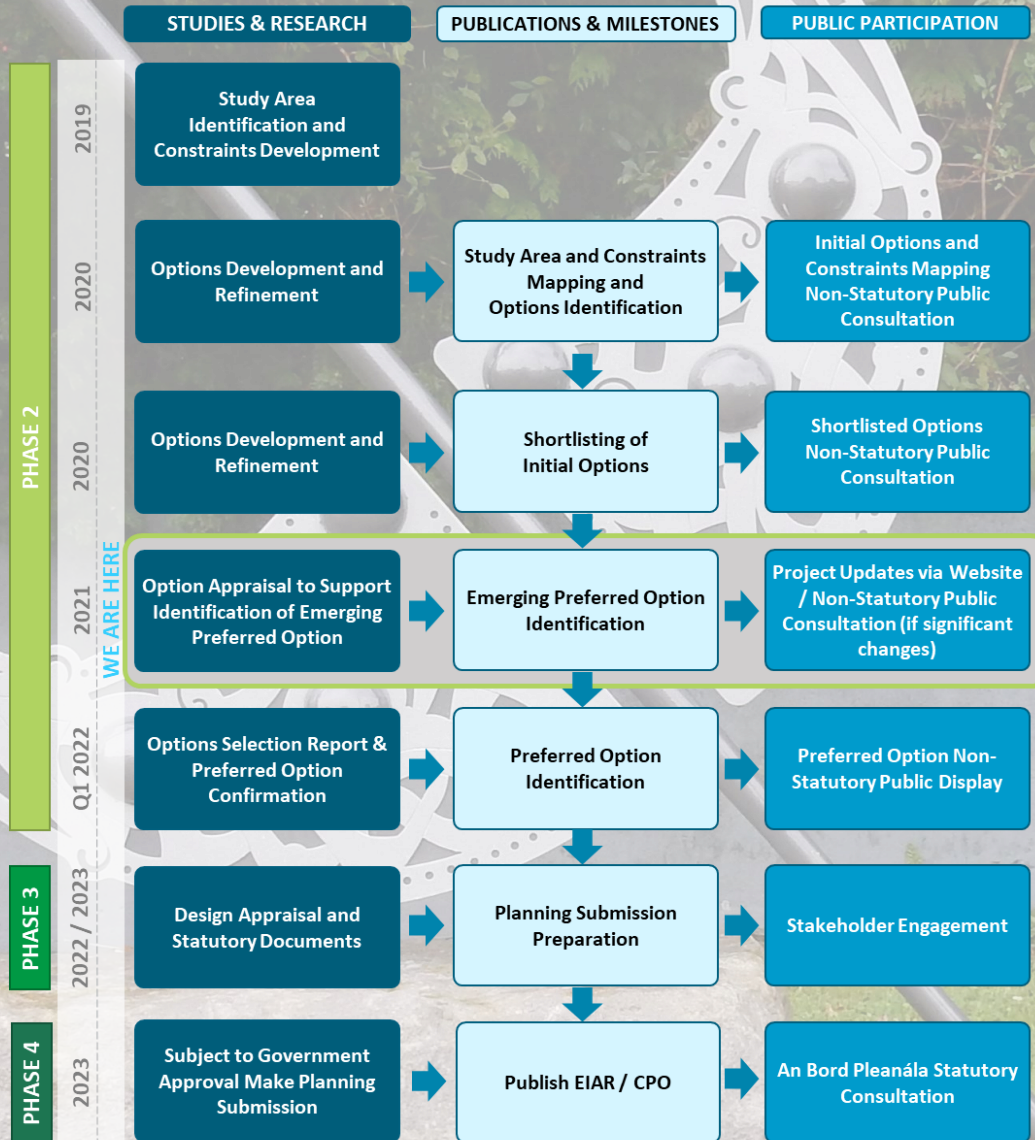
A feedback form can be downloaded or submitted through the Online / Virtual Public Consultation Room, through the project website: www.n3virginiabypass.ie, by post or email by 13th September 2021 to:

Email: n3virginiabypass@jbbarry.ie

Post: N3 Virginia Bypass Team, Cavan County Council, Road Design Office, Courthouse Farnham Street, Cavan, H12 R6V2



N3 Virginia Bypass Public Consultation Roadmap



EMERGING PREFERRED OPTION CORRIDOR

The **Emerging Preferred Option Corridor** (EPO), which has been identified through the Option Selection Process is Option C Variant 2 (CV2). This option is a combination of the Options D, C and A as presented at Public Consultation 2 in November / December 2020, with some localised corridor widening (see section on 'Option Corridor Width' below).

General Option Description

The EPO is approximately 14.5km in length. The corridor commences at the end of the N3 Dual Carriageway at Derver in Co. Meath and continues in a northerly direction bypassing to the east side of Whitegate Cross, east of Maghera and east of Virginia Town passing through the townlands of Derver, Killyconny, Fartagh, Edenburt, Enagh, Lisduff, Bruse, Carrakeelty Beg, Carrigabuse, Drumheel, Burrencarragh, Burrenrea, Lislea, Ballaghanea, Cornashesk, Rahardrum, Mullaghmore, Curraclaghan, Aghnadrung and Murmod. After the Emerging Preferred Option Corridor crosses the River Blackwater to the north of Virginia Town, the corridor returns to follow along / adjacent to the existing N3 and continues to the northside of Lisgrea Cross, passing through the townlands of Virginia, Cornaslieve, Crannadillon, Dunancory, Lisgrea and Drumagora.

Approximately 60% of the length of EPO corridor follows a similar route as the '2003 N3 Virginia Bypass' scheme protected within the various Cavan County Development Plans.

Indicative details of the new N3 route and associated link roads and potential indicative junction corridors are presented on the drawing overleaf. These details were used for the purposes of informing the Option Selection Process, are subject to change, and are being shown to encourage feedback from the public and stakeholders through this Public Consultation process. When a Preferred Option Corridor is finalised, the proposed route and junction details will be further developed and refined through the TII **Phase 3 'Design and Environmental Evaluation'** process.

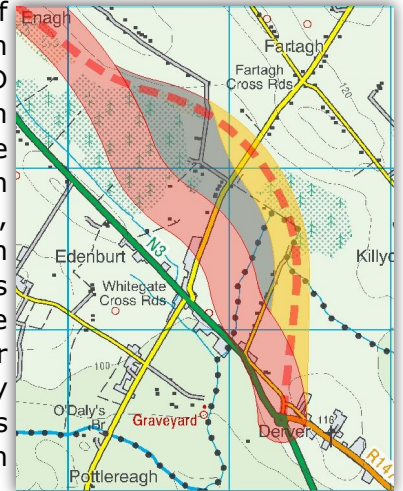
Option Corridor Width

The Emerging Preferred Option Corridor displayed in the maps is typically 300m wide and does not represent the actual width of the scheme, nor the lands to be acquired for the scheme. They indicate the lands within which a scheme could be developed. The exact details of the land take, earthworks, junction, side road and service road / accommodation road designs and property

impacts will be developed during Phase 3 of the planning and design process.

Following completion of Public Consultation 2 and through the Option Selection process, it was identified that variations to the option corridor width was required at the southern and northern tie-ins of the scheme and at the Burrencarragh Link Road.

At the southern end of the scheme an option between Option D (Orange) and Option C (Red) in the townlands of Derver in Co. Meath, Killyconny, Fartagh and Enagh in Co. Cavan was required. The additional corridor area not previously identified is highlighted in grey in the adjacent image.

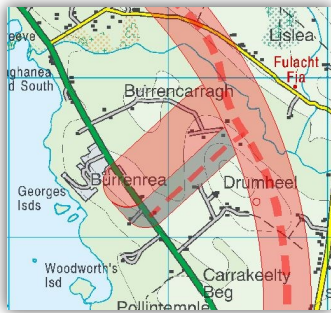


The amendment to the option corridor is approximately 1000 metres in length and an additional 500 metres, approximately, at its widest point. The amendment is required to allow future flexibility in assessing and mitigating against potential impacts on existing property, cultural heritage sites and a seasonally flooded grassland area at Edenburt.

At the northern end of the scheme the corridor is also widened to allow future flexibility in assessing and mitigating against potential impacts on existing property and agricultural impacts in the vicinity of Lisgrea Cross in the townlands of Lisgrea and Cornaslieve. The wider corridor follows the alignment of Option A (Green) and the Option C variant (Red) west of Lisgrea Cross as presented at Public Consultation 2 in November / December 2020. The amendment to the option corridor is approximately 1200 metres in length and an additional 360 metres, approximately, at its widest point. An additional area between the two previous corridors is shown in grey in this adjacent image.



In the vicinity of the proposed Burrencarragh Link Road, the corridor has been widened to allow future flexibility in assessing and mitigating against potential impacts in the townlands of Burrenrea, Drumheel and Burrencarragh. The



The amendment to the link road corridor is shown grey and is approximately 780 metres in length and an additional 175 metres, approximately, at its widest point.

Why is the Improvement Necessary?

The existing N3 between the Derver Roundabout in Co. Meath and Lisgrea Cross north of Virginia in Co. Cavan has a number of key deficiencies. The N3 carries a high volume of traffic with a high proportion of Heavy Goods Vehicles and the conflict of strategic and non-strategic traffic through Virginia, Whitegate and Maghera and the varying speed limits result in significant traffic congestion and unreliable journey times for users of the N3 national road. The current N3 traffic volume exceeds the capacity of the road and congestion is likely to further deteriorate as traffic volumes increase over time. The N3 has a poor collision history with a high Personal Injury Collision rate when compared to the national average. The N3 has a varying and inconsistent cross section along the route and there are no dedicated facilities for pedestrians or cyclists outside the built environment of Virginia and Maghera. A significant proportion of the route has substandard alignment, substandard forward visibility and stopping sight distances and substandard overtaking opportunities. There are a number of substandard side road junctions with high collision rates onto the N3 and numerous direct accesses to properties along the route, many with substandard visibility requirements.

The **“Need for the Scheme”** is defined by the identified existing deficiencies along the existing route in combination with National, Regional and Local Policy objectives. One of the Ten Strategic Outcomes identified by Project Ireland 2040 is to enhance regional accessibility, particularly in the Northern and Western regions. The **N3 Virginia Bypass** is one of the sections of road specifically highlighted in the NDP 2018 - 2027 and it will significantly improve accessibility and journey times between Dublin, Cavan Town, the North West and Border Region.

The proposed scheme seeks to provide enhanced

and safer road infrastructure and improve accessibility to the North West and Border Region. In order to meet the future demand of the route in a safe and efficient manner, a Type 2 Dual Carriageway road cross section with a pedestrian / cycle facility, separated from traffic, has been initially selected for the assessment of the Option Corridors and the identification of the Emerging Preferred Option Corridor. Typical details of this cross section type are provided in the supporting public consultation documentation. The final road cross section will be determined during the TII Phase 3 ‘Design and Environmental Evaluation’ process.

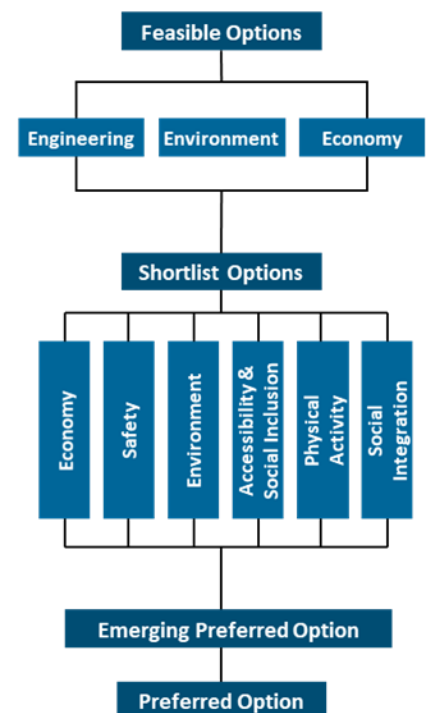
Stage 2 Option Selection Process

The Option Selection Process for the proposed Scheme is being undertaken in accordance with TII’s Project Management Guidelines, in combination with TII’s Project Appraisal Guidelines, and applicable regulations and guidance. The Option Selection Process examines the alternatives/options against defined criteria and sub-criteria, and the scheme objectives through a systematic three Stage appraisal approach. The three stages of the Option Selection Process are shown in the diagram below.

Stage 1: Preliminary Options Assessment
Comparative assessment of the impacts of the identified Options using Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) against the assessment criteria of Engineering, Environment & Economy.

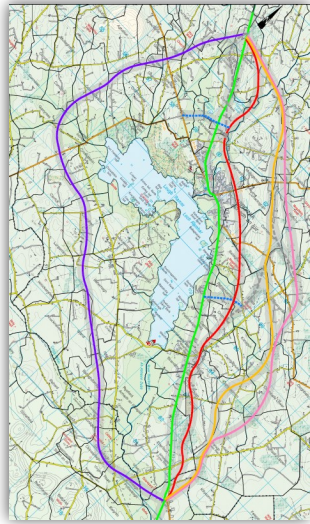
Stage 2: Project Appraisal Matrix
More detailed comparative assessment of the impacts using MCA and Cost Benefit Analysis against the assessment criteria of Economy, Safety, Environment, Accessibility & Social Inclusion, Physical Activity and Social Integration.

Stage 3: Preferred Option
Assessment of the emerging preferred option using the Project Appraisal Balance Sheet (PABS). Identification of the Preferred Option.



The purpose of the Option Selection Process is to identify the optimum solution (or ‘Preferred Option’) having regard to the overall benefits and impacts based on the six criteria to be considered for road transport projects.

Following completion of Public Consultation 2, feedback received on the Shortlisted Option Corridors, (shown here), was considered by the project team. A Stage 2 appraisal was undertaken on the five option corridors and the additional 5 option variations in line with the TII Project Appraisal Guidelines.



The impact and performance of each of the Option Corridors was assessed against the six Stage 2 Main Criteria and associated sub-criteria. The overall impact and performance of each option was determined using the TII defined Stage 2 Appraisal Matrix and an Emerging Preferred Option Corridor was identified.

Why is Option C Variant 2 (CV2) the 'Emerging Preferred Option' Corridor?

Following completion of the Stage 2 Project Appraisal Matrix, Option CV2 was identified as the Emerging Preferred Option Corridor having regard to the overall benefits and impacts based on the six criteria to be considered for road transport projects.

Economy: Option CV2 has a very positive Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR), where the benefits are expected to outweigh the scheme costs. Transport reliability is also improved through Virginia as a result of the envisaged high reduction of traffic within Virginia Town.

Safety: Option CV2 is one of the better performing options. It has one of the highest collision saving and highest monetised Collision Reduction Benefits over the assessment period. The envisaged high reduction of traffic within Virginia Town ensures a safer and secure environment for vulnerable road users.

Environment: Option CV2 has been assessed as an intermediate option under 'Environment'. By utilising a hybrid option and combining sections of different Option Corridors, more biodiversity impacts were avoided by Option CV2. Option CV2 was the joint preferred option for Air Quality & Climate, Waste and Hydrogeology.

Accessibility & Social Inclusion: Overall, all options performed similarly against this criterion, with a positive impact in terms of Vulnerable Groups, as the potential junctions along the scheme has the potential to allow for more efficient and safer accessibility for these groups and areas.

Integration: Option CV2 is one of the best performers, in terms of Transport Integration, relating to better connectivity for buses and better support for sustainable transport modes. In addition, Option CV2 is one of the best performers in terms of Regional Balance as the option provides for better links between urban centres.

Physical Activity: Although all options provide a positive impact for Vulnerable Road Users, as the proposed scheme will make provision for dedicated pedestrian and cycle facilities along the route, Option CV2 is one of the best performers. The envisaged high reduction of traffic within Virginia Town ensures a safer and secure environment for vulnerable road users and therefore encourages / facilitates a better uptake towards Active Travel within the town. In addition, Option CV2 provides better linkage with existing walking routes in the vicinity of Virginia.

Options Selection Report

The Option Selection Report, which contains the Stage 2 appraisal results, is still to be finalised, as feedback received through this public consultation process will be considered by the project team and amendments may be made to the Option Corridor before a Preferred Option Corridor is finalised. The Preferred Option Corridor and Option Selection Report will then be published.

After a Preferred Option Corridor is finalised the next Phase of the planning and design process can commence, (subject to the relevant approvals to proceed). This will involve further development of the scheme, including design of the road, junction design, identifying the landtake required, and the preparation of an Environmental impact Assessment. During this phase further engagement with landowners and interested parties will be undertaken as part of the ongoing design process.

EMERGING PREFERRED OPTION CORRIDOR

