

# IMPROVING THE URBAN CYCLING EXPERIENCE



**FIANNA FÁIL**  
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

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# IMPROVING THE URBAN CYCLING EXPERIENCE

Improving the Urban Cycling Experience is the key to helping city dwellers choose the bike over the car in their daily commutes. The groups impacted by improved urban cycling conditions include people commuting to work, students travelling to school or college, social cyclists and tourists. An increase in cyclists on the road will lead to a healthier population, a safer urban environment<sup>1</sup> and a more enjoyable commuting experience.

From being at the forefront of cycling nations thanks to the invention of the pneumatic tyre by an Irishman in the 1880's, Ireland and its urban areas have discarded the bicycle in favour of the car. Ireland has been surpassed by Denmark, Holland and many other countries in terms of creating a suitable environment for cycling. Fianna Fáil proposes that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, in conjunction with the Department of Health should focus on short term, cost effective plans to improve the Urban Cycling Experience.

Shortly after taking office, Minister Leo Varadkar outlined what he wanted to achieve between now and 2016. One of his key policies was *“to encourage more people out of their cars by improving their experience of public transport through initiatives like integrated ticketing, better stations, better bus stops and real-time passenger information, safe cycling and attractive walking<sup>1</sup>”*. We have seen some results in the form of integrated ticketing and real-time passenger information but there has been a lack of focus on the issue that could have the greatest impact, both financially and health-wise, on Ireland's urban commuters. The issue is safe cycling and the benefits to the urban commuter of safer cycling conditions cannot be underestimated.

In 2009, the Fianna Fáil/Green Government launched Ireland's first 'National Cycle Policy Framework' as part of the 'Smarter Travel' transport policy for Ireland from 2009 until 2020. This comprehensive, forward looking document sets out the factors that are required for the creation of a safe cycling experience and in particular, a safe urban cycling experience. Fianna Fáil proposes an increased effort by the Minister to

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.dttas.ie/>

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implement the keys proposals of this policy framework, especially the cost neutral aspects that are most easily achievable. The changes that would involve no costs are those where legislation would need to be amended or statutory instruments implemented. These would include:

- Law requiring mandatory use of cycle lanes by cyclists to be revoked (unsafe for cyclists to use certain cycle lanes due to the condition of the road surface)
- Implementation of a ban on parking in cycle lanes at all times
- Mandatory minimum amount of space to be given by motorists when passing cyclists
- Legalize the practice of cyclists passing cars on the inside
- Integrate cycling with public transport (dedicated carriages on trains and front carriers on buses).

In addition to the 'zero-cost' proposals identified above, certain 'cost neutral' proposals should be prioritised to improve cycling in our cities. Studies undertaken in other countries would indicate that in the long run, most aspects the 'National Cycle Policy Framework' would be cost neutral, as the health of the nation improves<sup>2</sup> and the quality of urban life is enhanced.

The three areas that should be prioritised are 'Cyclist Safety', 'Bike Security' and 'Road Infrastructure'. Fianna Fáil has identified certain policies in each of the areas that could be implemented and would have the most impact:

## Cyclist Safety

- All primary school children to undergo formal cycling training as part of primary level curriculum (Training to be provided by local authority transport departments)
- RSA to dedicate more resources to educating all road users how to ensure the safety of cyclists (and remind cyclists of their responsibilities)
- Publish dedicated Rules of the Road for cyclists to be distributed with all bikes sold.

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<sup>2</sup> "...even after adjustments for other risk factors, including leisure time activity, those who did not cycle to work experienced a 39% higher mortality rate than those who did." *Andersen et al, 2000*

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- Gardaí to enforce laws related to cyclist safety i.e. use of lights, dangerous cycling etc.

### **Bike Security:**

- Database of bike serial numbers for cyclists to register their bikes
- Minimum number of secure bike parking to be made available in all private car parks
- All bike locks to be zero rated for taxation purposes
- No individual to be allowed sell a second hand bike without providing ID
- Garda sponsored bike tagging system to be implemented

### **Road Infrastructure:**

- Set aside portion of €2.25bn stimulus package for construction of new cross city cycle routes
- Prioritise delivery of the s2s (Sutton to Sandycove) cycleway and extend to Howth; this would provide a continuous bike lane (It would have a material impact on commuters, tourists and retailers on the route)
- Urgent upgrade of existing cycle lanes/paths to a minimum standard (width & quality). Majority of cycle lanes are currently unsafe and discourage cycling
- Install cycle contra flows on all one way streets
- All 44 'Dublin Bike' stations to be linked by dedicated cycle lanes (to be planned in conjunction with roll out of new stations in 2012/2013)

Improving the Urban Cycling Experience will have a profound effect on our nation's urban areas. All of the proposals put forward in this document could have a lasting impact on the face of our cities and their inhabitants.

### **Health Benefits:**

At a time when obesity is beginning to take up an increasing portion of Ireland's health budget<sup>3</sup>, programs to promote being active can lead to financial savings in the future. Cycling is good for your heart, your mental health<sup>4</sup>, your muscles and your lifespan<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.imt.ie/news/latest-news/2012/05/cost-of-obesity-doubles-to-e3-billion.html>

<sup>4</sup> "Cycling has a positive effect on emotional health – improving levels of well-being, self-confidence and tolerance to stress while reducing tiredness, difficulties with sleep and a range of medical symptoms" *Boyd, H., Hillman, M., Nevill, A., Pearce, A. and Tuxworth, B. (1998)*

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## Financial Benefits:

The financial benefits of cycling accrue to the individual but also to the state<sup>6</sup>. Commuters save money through lower fuel bills while the government gains through a healthier population leading to increased productivity and lower healthcare costs.

## Community Benefits:

A safe Urban Cycling experience leads to a more pleasurable urban experience for all of the city's stakeholders. Cities with higher cycling rates have better road safety records for all road users<sup>7</sup>, are less polluted<sup>8</sup> and feel more spacious due to the lower number of cars.

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 2

<sup>6</sup> "Almost all of the studies identified report economic benefits of walking and cycling interventions which are highly significant. The median result for all data identified is 13:1 and for UK data alone the median figure is higher, at 19:1." *Davis, 2010*

<sup>7</sup> <http://files.meetup.com/1468133/Evidence%20on%20Why%20Bike-Friendly.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> "Cycling is a pollution-free, environmentally sustainable mode of transport" *Cavill and Davis, 2003*