

Review of Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024

Introduction

June 2022 saw the launch of the second Road Safety Strategy for County Tipperary. The Strategy covers the period to 2030 and includes a Phase 1 Action Plan to 2024. Further Action Plans will be developed for the years 2025 - 2027 and 2028 - 2030.

This is a joint Strategy and Action Plan involving Tipperary County Council (TCC), An Garda Síochána (AGS), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), Road Safety Authority (RSA), Tipperary Fire and Rescue Service and Health Service Executive (HSE), through the National Ambulance Service.

Vision of the Tipperary Road Safety Strategy 2022-2030

The objective of the Tipperary Road Safety Strategy is to create a greater awareness of road safety through our stakeholders to reduce the number, severity and life-changing impact of road collisions in Tipperary by advancing Vision Zero in adherence with the Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.

It is designed to ensure a coordinated, collaborative, and consistent approach to improving road safety for all road users in Tipperary and it targets actions to be delivered throughout Tipperary.

It reflects the National Road Safety Strategy in its aims and objectives which are:

- To improve cooperation between the agencies and groups represented on the Road Safety Working Together Group (RSWTG)
- To improve road user behaviour by coordinating public education and awareness.

Vision Zero and Safe System Approach

Underpinning the Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 is Ireland's long-term goal of achieving Vision Zero. Ireland has set a target to reduce road deaths and serious injuries by 50% by 2030 from 144 to 72 or lower and to reduce serious injuries on Ireland's roads by 50% from 1,259 to 630 or lower. An average of the

2017-2019 figures for fatalities and serious injuries are being used as target baselines.

In the 2021-2030 Government Road Safety Strategy, seven Safe System priority intervention areas were identified:

1. **Safe Roads and roadsides**
2. **Safe speeds**
3. **Safe vehicles**
4. **Safe road use**
5. **Post-crash response**
6. **Safe and healthy modes of travel**
7. **Safe work-related road use.**

These priority intervention areas form the basis for the Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024. This Action Plan has been extended into 2025 pending the publication of the Government Road Safety Strategy Action Plan 2025-2027 and the subsequent development of the Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan 2025-2027.

Role of the Tipperary Road Safety Working Group (RSWTG)

1. Oversee the development and implementation of the Tipperary Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030;
2. Agree actions to be progressed over the lifetime of the plan;
3. Secure funding for the implementation of actions;
4. Ensure that all agencies/representatives on the Group work together to achieve the objectives of the plan;
5. Recommend road safety policies to the Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee;
6. Input into the County Speed Limit Review Process.

With regard to securing funding for the implementation of Actions, this was undertaken by all Stakeholders in order to fund the Actions which they led or supported. The Tipperary Road Safety Working Together Group continued to co-ordinate the multi-agency road safety strategy and to implement it at a local level.

Collision Prevention Teams

A further example of the collaboration of the stakeholders in Tipperary could be seen in the Collision Prevention Team Meetings which were held regularly during the lifetime of the Phase 1 Action Plan. These meetings were facilitated by Tipperary County Council and were attended by the five District Engineers from Tipperary County Council and the Inspector and three Sergeants from the Garda Roads Policing Unit in the Clare Tipperary Division. They were frequently attended by the TII Road Safety Engineer for Tipperary. These meetings examined fatal and serious injury collisions in Tipperary to determine if there were any measures that could be implemented to prevent future fatalities or serious injuries at these locations.

Challenges for road safety in Tipperary

Although Tipperary has a relatively low population of 167,661 according to the most recent census which took place in 2022, it is the sixth largest county in Ireland based on size, covering an area of 4,305 square kilometres. The total length of roadway in Tipperary is almost 6,000 kilometres. There are 7 national roads going through it; N24, N52, N62, N65, N74, N75 and N76 and it also has two motorways crossing it; M7 and M8. Additionally, the relative lack of public transport in Tipperary means that there is a high volume of vehicle ownership in the county. All of this taken together means that there is a high volume of traffic in Tipperary vis-à-vis the population of the county.

There is considerable focus and effort nationally to encourage people to move away from petrol and diesel cars, to hybrid and fully electric models, in order to achieve national carbon emission reduction targets and also to remove harmful particles from the air, allowing us to breathe healthier air. However, electric vehicles pose particular hazards for the emergency services should such a vehicle be involved in a traffic collision due to the live electricity and also the risk of fire.

How we use our roads today has changed – there are new modes of transport such as e-Bikes and e-Scooters in use today which did not exist just a few short years ago. The Road Traffic and Roads Bill, 2021 legislates for their use. E-scooters, in particular, pose a risk to road safety especially at night as many users wear dark clothing and do not wear hi-vis materials or have lights on their scooters making it difficult for other drivers to see them.

Other Factors which contribute to collisions

The following factors are significant contributors to road collisions.

- Speed inappropriate for, or inconsistent with, the prevailing circumstances or driving conditions;
- Failure to use or properly use seatbelts and child safety restraints;
- Driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Unsafe behaviour towards vulnerable road users (pedestrians, motorcyclists, cyclists, young children and older people);
- Unsafe behaviour by vulnerable road users (pedestrians, motorcyclists, cyclists, young children and older people) e.g. not wearing high visibility clothing;
- Driver fatigue – driving while over-tired and/or unable to remain awake;
- Driver distraction e.g. mobile phone use;
- Medical fitness to drive.

The 75 actions in the Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024 were developed to address the above behaviours and to try to reduce their incidence.

Evaluation

Monitoring of the implementation of the Tipperary Road Safety Strategy and evaluation of the Action Plan took place at every meeting of the Road Safety Working Together Group (RSWTG). The group met three times per year. Areas where actions had not been met were identified and rectified where possible.

Learnings

Collaboration and partnership-working amongst the stakeholders was essential in achieving the targets set out in the Tipperary Road Safety Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024 and will be critical to ensuring the success of the Safe System approach in our new Plan for 2025-2027.

A strength of the Plan was the ownership and commitment that each stakeholder showed to their assigned actions. This must continue if we are to succeed in achieving the targets to be set out in the Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan 2025-2027.

Continuous monitoring of progress on the Action Plan by the Road Safety Working Together Group played a critical role in achieving the ambitious targets of the 2022-2024 Action Plan. This has been identified as the optimal best-practice approach and must continue in the new Action Plan.

Education alone cannot eliminate road safety collisions which lead to death and serious injury. High levels of targeted enforcement have been beneficial and will greatly influence our ability to achieve the targets set out in the new Plan. There is a continuous need to target dangerous driver behaviours such as drink or drug driving and fatigued and distracted driving (such as using mobile phones).

There has been investment in the development and implementation of forgiving roadsides (i.e. minimising the impact of a collision such as retro-fit fencing on national roads) and self-explaining (i.e. easy to understand and use) infrastructure. This was critical to improving road safety and must continue over the lifetime of the next Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan. Of importance also will be the provision of segregated infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians, and road and footpath maintenance.

Conclusion

Promoting the safe use of roads in Ireland in general, and in Tipperary in particular, is an integral policy measure that sustains communities – both rural and urban – and protects the lives and wellbeing of our families, neighbours, friends and work colleagues.

There has been extensive engagement and collaboration between the key stakeholders of An Garda Síochána, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the Road Safety Authority, Tipperary County Council and Tipperary Fire & Rescue Service throughout the lifetime of the Tipperary Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024. This engagement led to a planned, coordinated, and professional approach to increasing road safety through the extensive list of actions identified and delivered upon.

There have been many improvements throughout this period in the seven Safe System priority intervention areas with significant resources committed by all of the key stakeholders to actions in these areas. We must continue to deepen our collaboration and cooperation with all stakeholders with regards to sharing the knowledge and learnings we gain for improving road safety.

And so, while progress has been made in Road Safety in recent years, much more needs to be done to achieve the goal of Vision Zero by 2050, as envisaged in the Government Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.