



Oral Hearing 17th January 2007

**M3 Clonee to Kells Motorway
Draft Toll Scheme**

Response to Objections Received

Objections Received

The Authority received four objections to the Draft Toll Scheme for the M3 Clonee to Kells Motorway.

The objections were received from:

Mr. Ian Montgomery
Robinstown
Kilskyre
Kells
Co. Meath

Mrs. Joyce Montgomery
Robinstown
Kilskyre
Kells
Co. Meath

Meath County Council
County Hall
Navan
Co. Meath

Mr. John Bruton
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

on behalf of:

Mr. Brendan Leonard
47 Delacey Court
Trim
Co. Meath

INTRODUCTION

The NRA has examined the objections received. In some instances the objections received raise similar points of objection. In responding to the objections, where similar points of objection arise these have been grouped together and the NRA's response is provided.

The responses outlined below should be considered in conjunction with the brief of evidence of Gerry Murphy which, among other things, addresses the background to the announcement of the NRA's programme of PPP schemes, funding of the national roads programme and the traffic analysis work undertaken in relation to the M3 scheme which includes estimates of traffic diversion arising from the application of tolling.

CATEGORY 1

Point of Objection	Objector
Substantial annual road taxation costs borne by Irish motorists.	Mr. Ian Montgomery
Motorists already contribute through road tax premiums and should not be required to pay tolls as well.	Mrs. Joyce Montgomery
Applying tolls on the new motorway is a further tax on motorists and ultimately will not reduce traffic congestion as traffic diversion onto other roads will arise.	Mr. John Bruton
The imposition of tolls will place an unacceptable additional financial burden on people living in Co. Meath and commuting to Dublin to work every day. In this context reference is made to high house prices in Co. Meath and to the high level of repayments being experienced by homeowners. Toll costs added to existing motor and living costs is regarded as unacceptable.	Meath County Council

Response:

For the most part, car related taxation paid by the Irish motorists contributes to general Exchequer revenue. However, a certain element of motor related taxation is hypothecated directly to local authorities via a national local authority fund.

In relation to that element of general motor taxation that does not form part of the local authority fund, this money is re-distributed throughout the economy in many forms such as expenditure on capital projects, health, social welfare, education etc. This taxation raised from motorists contributes to general exchequer revenue and contributes to these programmes. Any attempt to ringfence all motor related taxation for investment exclusively in roads or public transport would have consequences for the State's ability to finance essential health and social services. It is normal in all developed countries that the proceeds of motor taxation, in all its forms, exceed direct expenditure on road networks. It is not the practice internationally to hypothecate such a large source of revenue, due to the scale and variety of State services.

Users of the toll road will save time and thereby gain economic benefit. If road users consider that the benefits are not sufficient for the toll charges involved they may choose to avail of the existing toll-free alternative routes. The matter of traffic diverting from the proposed tolled motorway to alternative toll free routes and the necessity for introducing private finance into the roads programme is addressed in more detail in Gerry Murphy's brief of evidence.

CATEGORY 2

Point of Objection	Objector
Availability of EU funding to cover road improvement costs.	Mr. Ian Montgomery
Scheme is already funded under the National Development Plan.	Mrs. Joyce Montgomery

Response:

Since the eastern region of Ireland has moved out of Objective One category in terms of EU support mechanisms, the amount of available funding to Ireland has decreased dramatically in comparison to previous national development programmes. The M3 scheme received €2.9m in EU funding towards the planning and design phase of the scheme over the period 2000 to 2003. No further EU funding is available for this scheme.

Similarly the need for private finance to supplement exchequer funding of infrastructure investment was recognised in the national development plan and also Transport 21 and is outlined in Mr. Gerry Murphy's evidence.

CATEGORY 3

Point of Objection	Objector
Average travel time will be greatly increased in order to accommodate toll collection	Mr. Ian Montgomery
The process of collecting toll charges will stop the flow of traffic. M50 standstill traffic conditions.	Mrs. Joyce Montgomery

Response:

Toll operators engaged under PPP Contracts have to satisfy national criteria for a high level of service at the toll plaza. Failure to achieve these performance standards will result in penalties being imposed on the operator. The toll plaza has been designed with sufficient lanes to cater for the forecast traffic growth and to meet the performance specifications. Furthermore, all toll lanes will have electronic toll collection capability including an express lane in each direction at both toll plazas. ETC / express lanes allow for a more efficient traffic throughput than manually operated toll lanes.

The contractual obligations within PPP contracts are extremely elaborate and onerous when compared to those in the West-Link Toll Bridge Agreement (executed in 1987 by Dublin County Council). The satisfactory operation of new plazas to date and the strong powers that the NRA has within its contracts should provide assurances of a high quality toll collection service.

Toll transactions including allowances for deceleration and acceleration would be anticipated to take in the range of 15 to 30 seconds.

CATEGORY 4

Point of Objection	Objector
Tolling of M3 discriminates against Meath residents compared to those commuting to Dublin from other counties.	Mr. Ian Montgomery
Other Motorways and By-Passes have been constructed in the country in recent years, which have not been the subject of tolls.	Meath County Council
<p>The imposition of tolls will act as a deterrent to businesses locating in the county, as they will increase the business costs and deter customers from entering the county. The Meath County Development Plan is seeking to develop areas of the county for industry and business and the imposition of tolls on the motorway will hinder the implementation of that aspect of Meath County Development Plan.</p> <p>The proposed motorway will be a strategic route serving a large proportion of the towns and villages in the county and the imposition of tolls will have a negative effect on these towns and villages.</p>	Meath County Council

Response:

The NRA's announcement of the programme of PPP schemes in June 2000 and the strategy underpinning the selection of tolling locations on the national road network is addressed in Mr. Gerry Murphy's brief of evidence.

The provision of the tolled motorway will lead to a reduction in traffic on the existing toll free route compared to the situation that would exist without the tolled motorway. This reduction in traffic will directly lead to improved environment conditions and amenity as well as improved traffic conditions.

In the absence of tolling and the corresponding shortfall in private finance, road schemes would be deferred for a longer period with the possibility that the M3 motorway would be one of those deferred schemes which would constrain economic development in County Meath.

CATEGORY 5

Point of Objection	Objector
Tolling will encourage motorists to divert onto back roads unsuitable for heavy traffic and through the very villages/towns the new road system is meant to bypass.	Mr. Ian Montgomery
The toll will add unnecessary tailbacks to an already congested route.	Mrs. Joyce Montgomery
Introduction of toll charges will encourage motorists to take back roads, which not being suitable for large numbers of vehicles will result in serious road accidents or deaths.	Mrs. Joyce Montgomery
The proposed tolls will act as a deterrent to vehicles using the motorways who will inevitably revert to using existing regional and county roads. Of particular concern is the serious damage caused to such roads by heavy goods vehicles which will get worse due to toll avoidance.	Meath County Council
Applying tolls on the new motorway is a further tax on motorists and ultimately will not reduce traffic congestion as traffic diversion onto other roads will arise. Resulting traffic diversion will mean increased danger for pedestrians and residents alike.	Mr. John Bruton

Response:

It is acknowledged that the application of tolls gives rise to traffic diversion from a road.

In this case, road users seeking to avoid the toll would be expected to remain on the existing N3 national primary route. However, traffic volumes on the existing N3 will be greatly reduced with the provision of the new motorway.

Users of the toll road will save time and thereby gain economic benefit. If road users consider that the benefits are not sufficient for the toll charges involved they can avail of a toll-free alternative route.

On the matter of traffic diverting from tolled motorway resulting in increased accident risks on the alternative route, the broader economic and safety benefits of the additional investment in the national road network facilitated by toll revenues

must also be considered in conjunction with the individual scheme micro analysis. The Exchequer monies freed through tolling on this scheme will be invested in other national road schemes with benefits at least equal to and possibly greater than this scheme.

CATEGORY 6

Point of Objection	Objector
Additional maintenance cost of alternative roads due to traffic diversion.	Mrs. Joyce Montgomery
Following the opening of the motorway, responsibility for the future maintenance of the existing roads will fall on Meath County Council.	Meath County Council

Response:

It is correct that the existing N3 national road will be re-designated as a non-national road on the opening of the M3 motorway. However, this re-designation would apply irrespective of whether or not the M3 motorway is to be tolled. As a non-national route Meath County Council will assume responsibility for the maintenance of the re-designated road.

If the M3 motorway is tolled, the local authority will receive commercial rates from the M3 based on the annual toll revenues collected.

