



Galway Commuter Coalition

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Proposal for a Salmon Weir Bus Corridor

Proposal Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Note on Proposal

This proposal outlines the core case for immediate action on a Salmon Weir Bus Corridor, including:

- The legal and cost feasibility of the proposal.
- The underestimation of benefits in current modelling.

The supporting evidence focuses on:

- Current network statistics
 - Thorough NTA route timing performance data
 - Customer reporting data
- The likely impacts of the scheme

1.2 Who Are We?

The Galway Commuter Coalition is a community-led transport advocacy group focused on delivering credible mobility solutions for Galway. We campaign for reliable public transport, safe active travel, and practical, funded solutions to the congestion holding our city back.

1.3 The Current Situation in Galway

Galway City is at a standstill. Extreme car dependency is damaging the city economically alongside its damage to public health and the environment. Galway's congestion crisis is costing the city €35.3 million a year in lost productivity and economic damage, with this to rise to €107 million by 2040 [1]. The proven solution to a crisis such as this is to increase the provision and usage of public transport. This must be the model Galway follows. Currently Galway has a large and well-used bus network. According to the Galway Cordon Survey Report 2024 from the NTA, 28% of inbound people movements are via bus. This represents a 25% increase on 2023 figures [2]. However, commuters' experience, FOI cancellation data, and GTFS-Realtime route timing analysis all show that bus reliability and frequency are key hindrances to the necessary modal shift [13, 15]. Buses become stuck in the same traffic as cars, making them unreliable and unattractive for commuters. From recent FOI data, for CityDirect routes 410, 411, and 412, traffic accounted for 82.6% of coded non-operated kilometres between January 2024 and March 2026 [13]. In other words, **more than four-fifths of recorded lost service kilometres on these routes were attributed to traffic.**

1.4 Our Proposal

This report outlines a scheme which can be easily rolled out by Galway City Council: to install the planned bus corridor on the Salmon Weir Bridge without delay. This scheme can be progressed unhindered by planning delays, legal challenges or funding constraints. It would enable the already progressing modal shift towards buses to happen at an even faster pace. Similar schemes recently implemented in Dublin have had a far larger impact than the modelling predicted, and we believe a similar outcome could happen in Galway. This bus corridor is already planned under the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link scheme, but this report aims to demonstrate why Galway cannot afford to, and does not need to, wait for any lengthy legal battles to conclude before transforming how people get around our city, particularly as any Galway BusConnects scheme has a construction **lead time of 1-2 years if it is allocated funding.**

Galway Network Map

- How BusConnects gets you where you want to go.

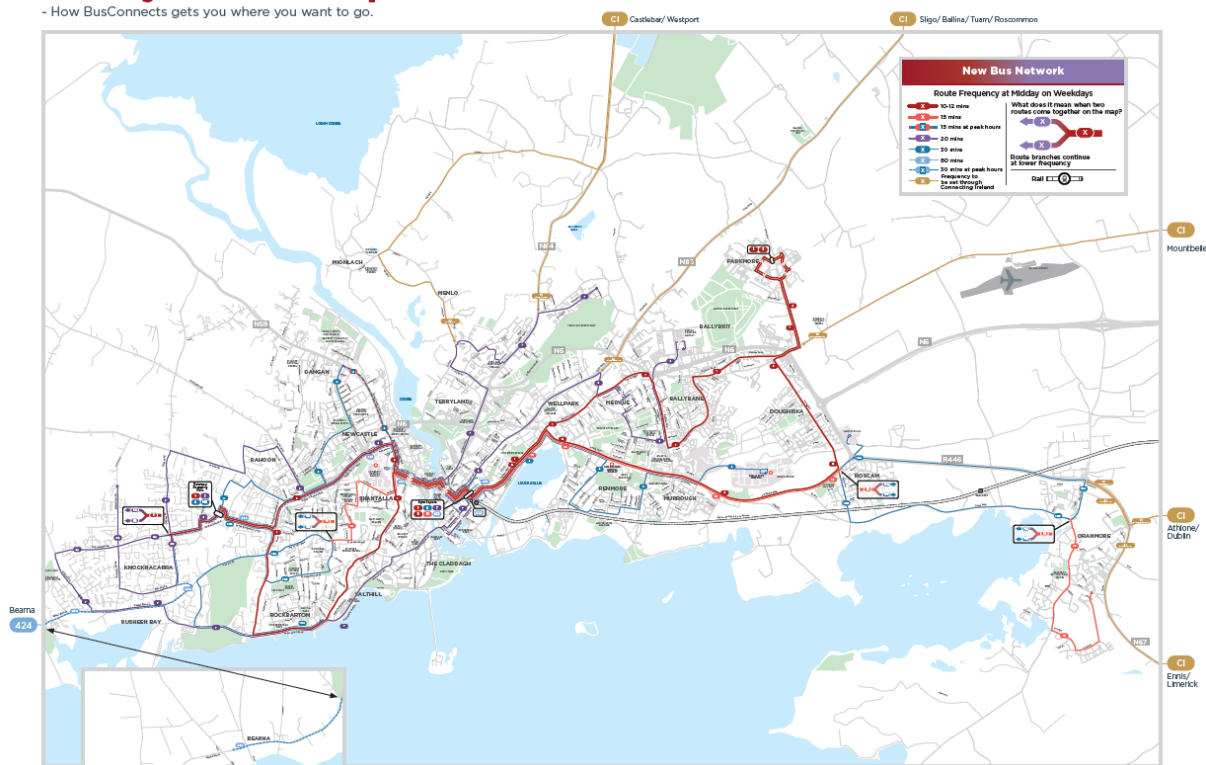


Figure 2: Proposed BusConnects routes

“Note that journey times in the DM are representative of an average journey time per the AVL data; however, these data also show significant variability in journey time, with **buses often taking far longer than the average due to congestion**. It is expected, and has been shown using the micro-simulation modelling, **the variability of journey time in the DS would be far lower**, as a result of the protection offered by the scheme to buses traversing the relevant corridor.”

Service	Name	Route	AM				PM			
			2023	2023	2038	2038	2023	2023	2038	2038
			DS-DM	DS-DM	DS-DM	DS-DM	DS-DM	DS-DM	DS-DM	DS-DM
8001	Brown	Bearna-Oranmore: Eastbound	-7.8	-10.4%	-5.8	-10.8%	-10.8	-13.5%	-7.3	-13.0%
8002	Brown	Bearna-Oranmore: Westbound	-6.7	-8.9%	-4.8	-8.7%	-10.3	-13.5%	-7.6	-14.2%
8003	Red	Saltil - Parkmore: Eastbound	-6.2	-12.5%	-6.3	-11.6%	-8.6	-17.6%	-13.9	-22.8%
8004	Red	Saltil - Parkmore: Westbound	-4.4	-10.0%	-5.9	-10.8%	-7.4	-15.7%	-16.6	-25.7%
8005	Blue	Knocknacarra - Tirellan: Eastbound	-1.4	-3.5%	-1.3	-3.0%	-2.8	-6.5%	-2.5	-5.7%
8006	Blue	Knocknacarra - Tirellan: Westbound	-0.3	-0.8%	0.4	1.0%	-1.7	-3.8%	-0.8	-1.8%
8007	Green	Knocknacarra - Parkmore: Eastbound	-7.6	-14.0%	-7.2	-14.2%	-11.7	-19.9%	-10.9	-20.2%
8008	Green	Knocknacarra - Parkmore: Westbound	-6.3	-11.2%	-6.6	-12.1%	-10.4	-18.1%	-10.6	-19.0%
8009	Yellow	Dangan - Parkmore: Eastbound	-5.7	-11.6%	-5.9	-12.1%	-8.5	-16.7%	-8.4	-16.8%
8010	Yellow	Dangan - Parkmore: Westbound	-4.7	-9.0%	-4.9	-9.0%	-7.4	-14.0%	-7.5	-14.4%

Figure 3: Bus journey time differences in the proposed scheme

3 Modelling Mismatches

BusConnects Galway modelling uses the West Regional Model (WRM). While this is the official transport model for the region, there are important limitations which means it is likely to underestimate the current and future benefits of bus priority measures in Galway City [7]. These limitations arise from the structure of the model, the scale at which it operates, and how congestion and public transport demand are represented.

3.1 Current Bus Usage in Galway City

According to the Galway Cordon Survey 2024, 28% of trips crossing the inner city cordon are by bus. This is a significant share of commuters already using the bus network, demonstrating a strong demand for better public transport options. The survey also shows car usage is 60% highlighting the need to reduce car dependency in line with the council's environmental goals [6].

3.2 How the Galway BusConnects Modelling Underestimates Benefits

The Galway BusConnects modelling uses the **West Regional Model (WRM)**, which covers six counties (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal). While a Local Area Model was generated for Galway City, the underlying model structure still reflects a very large regional area where bus usage is significantly lower than in the city itself. This results in the dilution of Galway's much higher urban bus usage, leading to conservative projections of future bus demand. For example:

Table 1: Observed and modelled mode-share comparison

Metric	Galway Cordon Survey 2024	WRM Model Estimate (for 2023)	Difference
Public Transport Usage	30% (25,926 people)	7.2% (~5,700 people)	Actual is 4.2x WRM
Bus Share	28% (23,906)	N/A	
Car Mode Share	60% (52,249)	67.7% (~55,700)	+7.7 pp

Source: Cross-City Link EIAR Traffic & Transport appendices, page 39 [5]. The WRM assumes **approximately four times fewer public transport users** than are currently observed entering the city. As a result, the model significantly **underestimates the scale of demand for bus travel in Galway City**, while simultaneously **overestimating car dependency**.

3.3 WRM smooths congestion, so it underestimates the impact of removing traffic bottlenecks

The West Regional Model (WRM) traffic and trip modelling is significantly flawed for Galway City because it averages dense urban traffic with quieter regional routes. The model smooths out traffic across all routes evenly, as if traffic will self-balance perfectly, rather than reflecting bottlenecks. Alongside this, it struggles with peak traffic flow modelling, as the WRM documentation notes [7]:

“The model may tend to underestimate congestion related delay in peak periods.”

Peak commuting periods are precisely when bus priority measures deliver the greatest benefits. If congestion delays are underestimated, the model also underestimates:

- the current delays experienced by buses
- the potential travel time improvements from bus priority

- the reliability improvements that make bus travel more attractive

This leads to **conservative projections of ridership growth and modal shift**.

3.4 Conservative Ridership Forecasts

The BusConnects modelling predicts only a **modest increase in bus ridership**, with public transport mode share increasing from approximately **5.9% to 7.8%** under the scheme. This represents a projected increase of roughly **25–30% in bus ridership**. However, if similar growth were applied to the **actual bus usage observed in the Galway Cordon Survey**, the results would be substantially larger.

Table 2: Projected public transport users under growth scenarios

Public Transport Users	2024 (Share % and no. users)	25% Growth (Share % and no. users)	30% Growth (Share % and no. users)
WRM Prediction	5.9% - 5,099	7.4% - 6,374	7.7% - 6,629
Actual (Cordon Survey)	30% - 25,926	37.5% - 32,408	39% - 33,704

Even if only **50% of this increase represents modal shift from private cars**, this would still remove 3,250-3,900 car trips from Galway's road network each day, or a 6%-7.4% reduction in car traffic.

3.5 Evidence from Dublin Bus Priority Schemes

Dublin's BusConnects programme demonstrates that **bus priority measures often exceed initial projections**. For example:

- **Projected bus ridership growth:** 20–25% (Preliminary Business Case, 2018).
- **Actual ridership growth (2025): 30%+ on redesigned routes [8].**
 - **Punctuality improvement: 12%** (vs. 9.6% on non-redesigned routes).
 - **Modal shift: 10–15% from cars to buses** in key corridors (higher than predicted).

Applying this to predicted figures for Galway BusConnects

- Dublin's **actual results were 50%+ better than predicted** due to **faster, more reliable buses**.
- Galway's **current bus usage (28%) is already higher than Dublin's pre-BusConnects level (15%)**, indicating Galway already has a stronger foundation for bus-based travel than Dublin, and therefore may offer an even greater opportunity to achieve modal shift.

3.6 Summary

Taken together, several factors suggest that the West Regional Model is likely to **underestimate the benefits of bus priority measures in Galway City**:

- The model dilutes Galway's high urban bus usage within a large regional model area.
- It smooths congestion across the road network, reducing the apparent impact of removing local bottlenecks.
- It may underestimate peak congestion delays.
 - It therefore produces conservative forecasts of bus ridership growth and modal shift.

For these reasons, the real-world impact of a **Salmon Weir Bus Corridor** is likely to be **significantly greater than the modelling currently suggests**.

4 Proposed Scheme

The Galway Commuter Coalition believes that Galway City Council has the opportunity to implement a bus corridor on the Salmon Weir Bridge immediately, without planning permission and at a low cost. The proposal is outlined in principle below. As identified in the cross-city link, the Salmon Weir Bridge is the most conducive bridge to implement this scheme on. This would lower through-traffic throughout the city centre. We propose that the below scheme is introduced on a trial basis for 4 to 6 months initially.

4.1 Scheme Description

The primary goal of Galway Commuter Coalition's proposal is to create the bus corridor over the Salmon Weir Bridge. As this is not a detailed design report additional secondary measures may be deemed necessary. The main flow of vehicular traffic on the western side of the bridge will change, effectively joining University Road and Gaol Road. On the eastern side of the bridge, the bridge will be closed to car traffic. The existing two-way traffic flow on Newtownsmith will remain unchanged apart from a no-left-turn sign at the junction of Newtownsmith and Saint Vincent's Avenue. The existing one-way system on Waterside will remain unchanged to allow local access. All local access will be maintained for residents and visitors. The through route is stopped on the bridge, where cars can access from other directions. An optional extension of the scheme to the junction of Saint Vincent's Avenue, Courthouse Square and Saint Francis Street may be considered. This would consist of traffic being prevented from turning down Saint Vincent's Avenue. This part of the scheme may be deemed unnecessary as Saint Vincent's Avenue will effectively be limited to local access by the implementation of the main scheme. Figure 4 gives a suggested layout of the proposed scheme. The changes to existing traffic management are outlined below:

- The Salmon Weir Bridge is no longer the major route for eastbound traffic on University Road
- Instead, Salmon Weir Bridge effectively becomes a left turn for buses only
- Vehicular eastbound traffic on University Road will be directed to continue onto Gaol Road.
- No right turn permitted onto Salmon Weir Bridge for northbound traffic on Gaol Road
- Existing local traffic layout remains in place for traffic on the east side of the Salmon Weir Bridge
- Northbound traffic on Newtownsmith has no left turn at the junction with Saint Vincent's Avenue

4.2 Cost of the Proposed Scheme

An itemised list has been produced so cost estimates can be gathered for the scheme. Our overall estimate is approximately €30,000. Galway City Council has received an allocation for 2026 of €11.6m in funding from the NTA for active travel and public transport projects. The cost of the proposed scheme could easily be covered by the yearly NTA funding [9]. A full itemised table is available in the appendix, section 7.1. The estimated total cost is €28,820.

4.3 Legal and Planning

The implementation of bus lanes in Ireland is governed by the Road Traffic Act 1961 and the Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997 [10, 11]. Galway City Council can implement the bus lane through



Figure 4: Suggested layout of the proposed Salmon Weir traffic-management scheme

public consultation and council approval. **Precedent set by Dublin City Council:** [12] *Note: Heritage consultation may technically be required as Salmon Weir Bridge is a protected structure, but the direction signs would not be on the bridge itself.*

5 Impacts of the Scheme

5.1 Reliability

Our proposal removes through traffic from University Road, effectively making it local access only. This would retain access via Quincentennial Bridge to Nun's Island and University of Galway. This would also reduce through traffic from the city centre, in line with Galway and national policies. University Hospital Galway would benefit from a dedicated corridor, improving ambulance response times. This would also benefit An Garda Síochána and Galway Fire & Rescue Service. The University is better served from Quincentennial Bridge for car traffic, as it allows easy onward access to all destinations east of the city via the N6. This would significantly reduce the use of Salmon Weir Bridge by traffic; 4 buses every 10 minutes can carry as many people as 300 cars as seen in figure 5. This would enhance the amenity and tourist attraction of Nun's Island by making the area more pedestrian friendly.

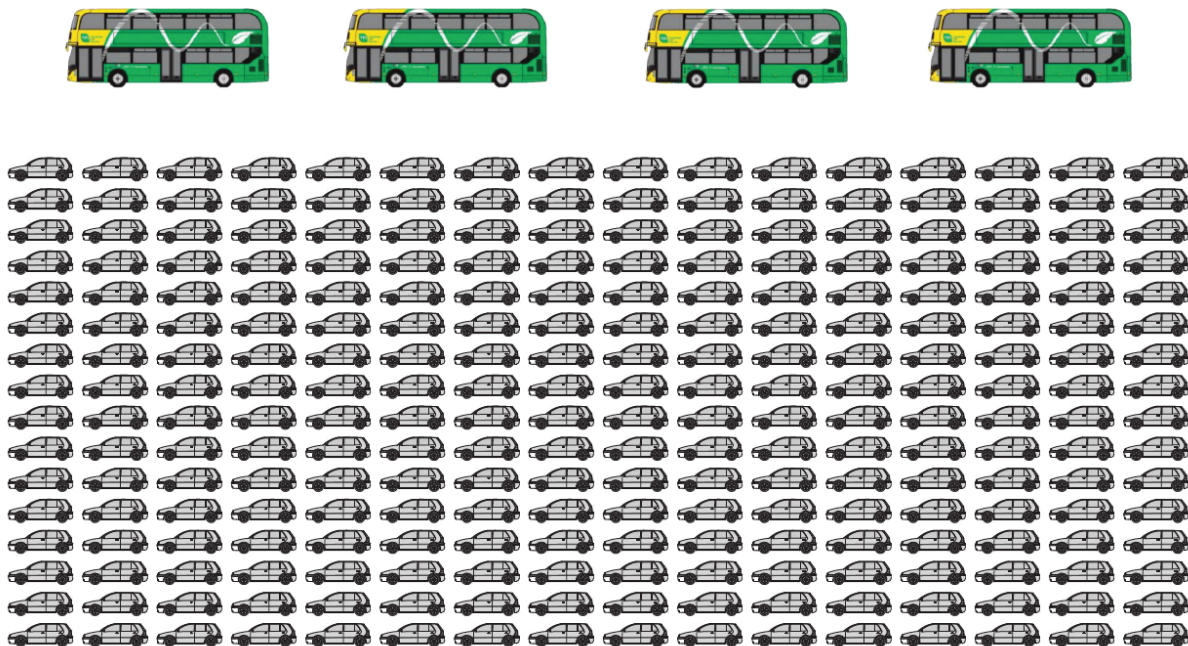


Figure 5: Bus and car passenger capacity comparison

5.2 City Centre Commerce

The National Transport Authority commissioned Ipsos to conduct the Galway City Centre Shopper Survey 2025, examining how people travel to and spend money in Galway City Centre.

The survey demonstrates the importance of public transport to the economic activity of the city centre. Bus was the most commonly used mode of transport, with **40% of respondents travelling to the city centre by bus**, compared with 30% by car and 22% walking. Overall, 67% travelled by sustainable modes and 46% by public transport.

Bus passengers also make a substantial contribution to city-centre spending. The survey estimates that bus users account for 30% of total daily spend in the city centre, with public transport users collectively account for approximately 40% of estimated daily spend.

These findings demonstrate that maintaining reliable and efficient bus access to the city centre is important not only for transport policy, but also for the commercial vitality of Galway City Centre. A bus corridor across Salmon Weir Bridge would improve the reliability and attractiveness of a mode already used by a large proportion of city-centre visitors and responsible for a substantial share of city-centre spending.

5.3 Observed Bottleneck Evidence

The proposed Salmon Weir bus corridor would be both a journey-time improvement and a reliability intervention. The available evidence shows two related problems:

- traffic is causing scheduled bus service not to operate; and
- the Eyre Square to University of Galway movement is materially slower during the afternoon peak.

Both timeliness and reliability are key determinants in people choosing to use a bus. The bus corridor would significantly improve both, which in turn would encourage a large number of people to switch transport mode. This would mean fewer car journeys and less traffic overall for all road users.

Traffic is the dominant recorded cause of lost CityDirect service

FOI data for CityDirect routes 410, 411 and 412 covers coded cancellation and non-operation records between 20 January 2024 and 20 March 2026. Traffic is the dominant recorded cause of lost service [13].

Table 3: CityDirect traffic-related cancellation and lost-kilometre records [13]

Measure	Result
Coded cancellation / non-operated records	1,115
Traffic-coded records	911
Share caused by traffic	81.7%
Total coded non-operated kilometres	10,575.4 km
Traffic-caused non-operated kilometres	8,735.0 km
Share of non-operated kilometres caused by traffic	82.6%

Table 4: Traffic-related lost kilometres by CityDirect route [13]

Route	Traffic records	All coded records	Traffic lost km	Traffic share
410	546	602	5,227.7 km	91.4%
411	280	388	2,705.5 km	73.0%
412	80	120	754.4 km	68.4%

The timing of these records is also significant. The period from 15:00 to 17:59 accounts for 587 traffic-related cancellation or non-operation records and 5,604.9 lost kilometres, about 64% of all traffic-caused lost kilometres in the coded CityDirect records [13].

The CityDirect records are concentrated on the Eyre Square to west-city axis, with the 411 and 412 both running along the Salmon Weir Corridor. Operator comments repeatedly refer to chronic congestion

Table 5: Afternoon peak CityDirect traffic-related cancellations [13]

Hour	Traffic records	Share of traffic records	Lost km	Share of traffic lost km
15:00	170	18.7%	1,647.8 km	18.9%
16:00	210	23.1%	1,978.7 km	22.7%
17:00	207	22.7%	1,978.4 km	22.6%

around Newcastle Road, University Road, St Mary's Road, the Cathedral area and Eyre Square [13]. This is the same city-centre and west-city traffic pattern that the Salmon Weir corridor is intended to relieve.

CityDirect's own management describe the problem in exactly these terms:

*"It can take **an extra 30 minutes alone to just travel from Eyre Square to the Hospital due to traffic** from 4pm until 7pm which bus lanes would eliminate completely."*

Gerard Bartley, General Manager, Galway City Direct Limited [20]

From speaking to drivers and bus operator management, buses are losing substantial time on the short section between Eyre Square and the hospital during the exact afternoon period when the FOI data shows traffic-related cancellations are most concentrated.

GTFS-Realtime data shows the peak-hour runtime penalty

Collected GTFS-Realtime TripUpdates for routes 402, 404 and 405 were analysed between Eyre Square and the University of Galway stops. The analysis matched route direction and stop IDs, kept observations only where the same trip had both origin and destination stop updates, and deduplicated repeated snapshots by trip [15].

This is a **small sample**: 9 trips during the hour of 17:00-17:59 and 30 off-peak trips. In that sample, across routes 402, 404 and 405 combined, buses from Eyre Square to the University of Galway took an average of 14.27 minutes during the 17:00 hour, compared with an off-peak baseline of just 6.03 minutes. In practical terms, the same short corridor took **more than twice as long** during the 17:00 peak hour, adding **8.24 minutes per bus** before the vehicle has even reached the University. The sample's 90th percentile reached 22.14 minutes, meaning the slowest observed peak trips were **more than three and a half times the off-peak average**. Because the sample is small, these figures indicate the scale of the worst peak-hour delays rather than the typical 17:00 trip. Implementing a bus corridor here would address this significant bottleneck instantly [16].

Table 6: GTFS-Realtime TripUpdates runtime (small sample): Eyre Square to University of Galway [16]

Hour block	Samples	Mean	Median	p75	p90
Weekdays, 17:00-17:59, routes 402/404/405 combined	9	14.27 min	14.18 min	16.13 min	22.14 min
Off-peak, 10:00-15:59	30	6.03 min	5.78 min	6.60 min	9.09 min

Bus Éireann identified walking-speed bus movements on the same corridor

This finding is consistent with Bus Éireann's own 2019 presentation to the Galway City Transport SPC, which identified increased journey times due to congestion on Galway city bus routes [19]. The most

relevant example is the purple route movement between Francis Street and NUIG West Gate, which is the same city-centre / University corridor that the Salmon Weir scheme would protect. The newer FOI and GTFS-Realtime evidence above indicates that congestion has **become even more operationally significant** on this corridor [13, 15].

Table 7: Bus Éireann 2019 congestion examples on the University / city-centre corridor [19]

Time	From	To	Distance	Time	Speed
17:00-18:00	Francis St	NUIG West Gate	1.1 km	14 min	4.7 kph
16:30-17:30	NUIG West Gate	Francis St	1.1 km	18 min	3.7 kph
16:30-17:30	Corrib Village	NUIG West Gate	1.1 km	39 min	1.7 kph
Average walking speed	n/a	n/a	1.1 km	14 min	4.6 kph

Focusing on the Francis Street to NUIG West Gate example, a 1.1 km city bus movement took 14 minutes between 17:00 and 18:00, an average speed of only 4.7 kph, **which is roughly walking speed**. The reverse / nearby movements were even worse, with average speeds of 3.7 kph and 1.7 kph. Bus Éireann had already identified walking-speed bus movements on the same city-centre and University corridor in 2019 [19].

The same Bus Éireann presentation also stated that only 10.4% of the Galway city network had bus priority at the time, while the two routes with the highest level of priority, routes 405 and 409, made up 19% and 31% of total city revenue respectively. Bus Éireann's own conclusion was that **modal shift to public transport could only grow further with increased priority and faster journey times** with interventions like BusConnects [19]. This directly supports the case that the Salmon Weir corridor is a crucial targeted intervention on a known reliability failure.

Together, the FOI cancellation data and GTFS-Realtime timing data show congestion is not only making bus trips slower. It is making the service less reliable, causing lost kilometres, and **pushing people away from it as a viable transport option**. A bus-only Salmon Weir corridor directly targets this failure mode.

As previously stated, the predicted bus network numbers in previous transport strategies have massively underestimated the demand in 2026, for reliable bus services. Current bus services are at capacity and not fit for purpose. Buses get caught in Galway's notorious traffic, without dedicated corridors, reducing their effectiveness. Our proposal is an interim measure, which can be delivered as a good 'first step' of the planned BusConnects Cross-City Link corridors in Galway. It would deliver many of the benefits of the proposed scheme, in reducing the city centre through traffic, with minimal infrastructural changes or costs.

5.4 Comparison with NTA Running-Time Data

Under Freedom of Information, the National Transport Authority released its own running-time analysis for the city bus routes that cross the Salmon Weir corridor [17]. For routes 402, 404 and 405 it covers the short stretch between **Eyre Square and the University of Galway** (about 1 km), in both directions. For every half-hour of the service day, the NTA reports the average scheduled and actual time buses took on that stretch, how much those times varied, and how many of the planned buses were picked up by its tracking system.

The release covers 16 four-week reporting periods, from 1 January 2025 to 22 March 2026: 305 weekdays and more than 64,000 tracked bus trips on routes 402, 404 and 405 alone. This is **the NTA's own record of the corridor across more than a year**; the same data they use in their modelling. [17, 18].

Every rush hour, on every route, buses take **twice as long** on this one corridor.

Table 8: Extra running time at rush hour (departures 16:00–17:59) compared with early morning, Eyre Square to University of Galway [17, 18]

Route	Eyre Square to University	University to Eyre Square
402	+3.8 min	+3.2 min
404	+4.6 min	+2.9 min
405	+3.6 min	+3.1 min

Note: Average over 16 four-week periods, weekdays only, January 2025 to March 2026.

The rush-hour slowdown is a consistent issue. This proposal provides a solution which will result in a consistent traffic reduction.

Peak congestion months: 10+ minutes

Every route and direction had a worst period of between **5.2 and 7.0 extra minutes**, all between July and December 2025.

In the busiest parts of the year, the slowdown becomes even more apparent.

Between 11 August and 7 September 2025, route 404 buses from Eyre Square to the University took **3.7 minutes in the early morning and 10.7 minutes at rush hour, nearly three times as long**. This 1.1km journey can be completed in 14 minutes at an average walking speed.

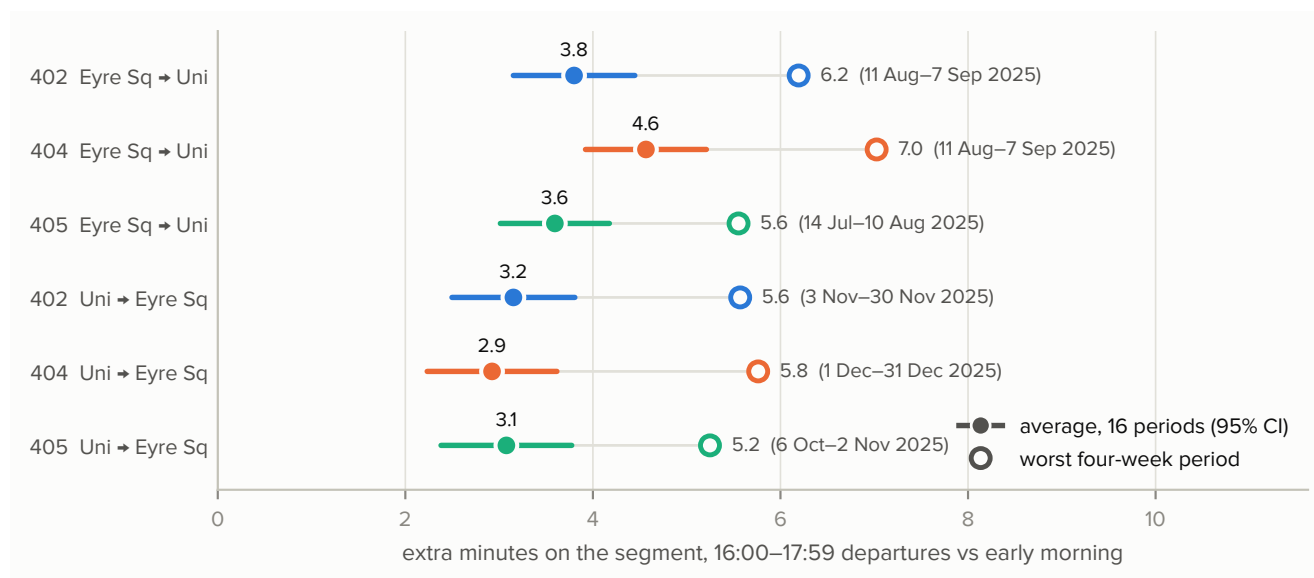


Figure 6: Extra running time at rush hour compared with early morning: average over 16 periods and the worst four-week period, by route and direction [17, 18]

14% of buses become ghost buses during rush hour

The FOI also reports how many planned buses were detected on the corridor. Outside rush hour, almost all are detected: about 2% of planned buses between 07:00 and 14:00 leave no record (ghost buses). At rush hour that changes sharply. Across routes 402, 404 and 405:

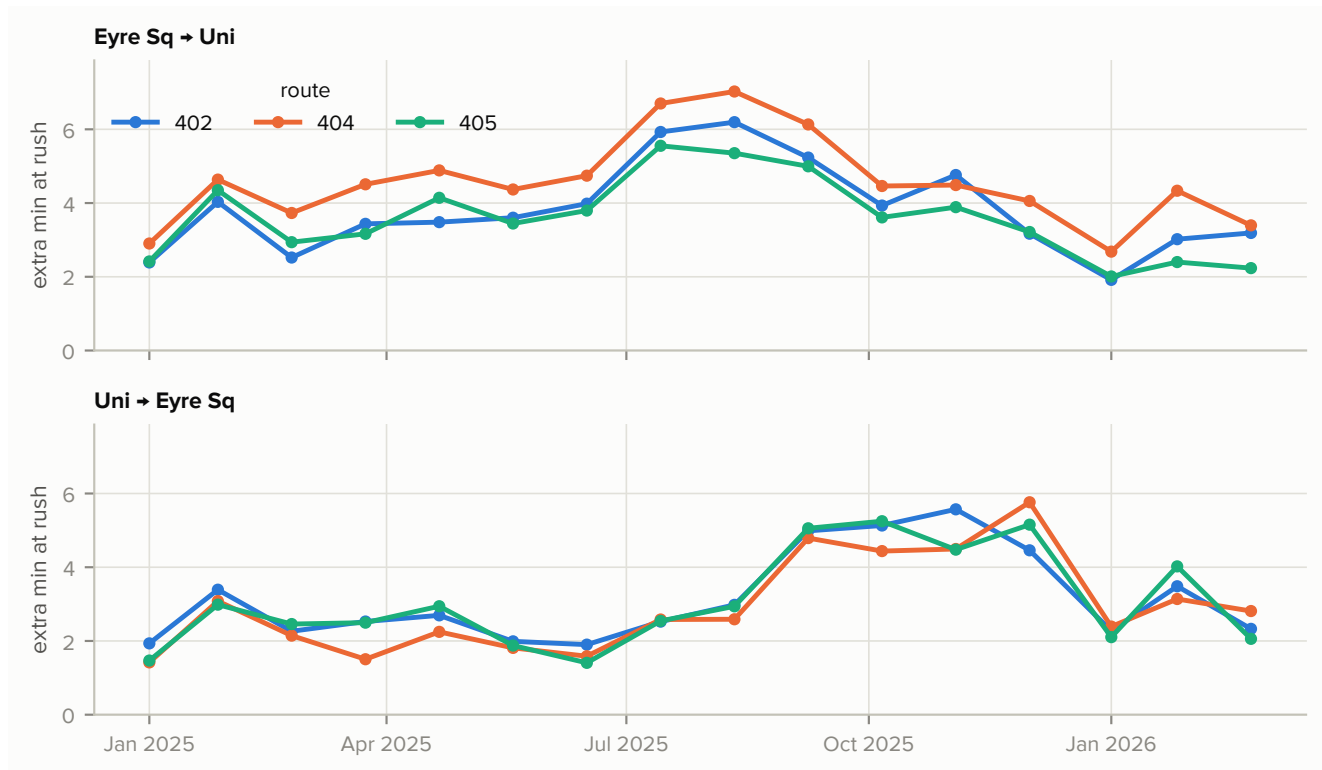


Figure 7: Extra running time at rush hour for each four-week period, January 2025 to March 2026 [17, 18]

- **1 in 10** buses planned for 17:00 left no record on the corridor;
- **1 in 7** buses planned for 18:00 left no record;
- **1,368 planned trips** were missing across the 16:00–18:59 peak over the whole period,
- Between 8 September and 5 October 2025, when the colleges returned, **almost 30% of peak-time buses** left no record.

During rush hour, 10% of planned 402 buses, 15% of 404 buses and 17% of 405 buses are missing.

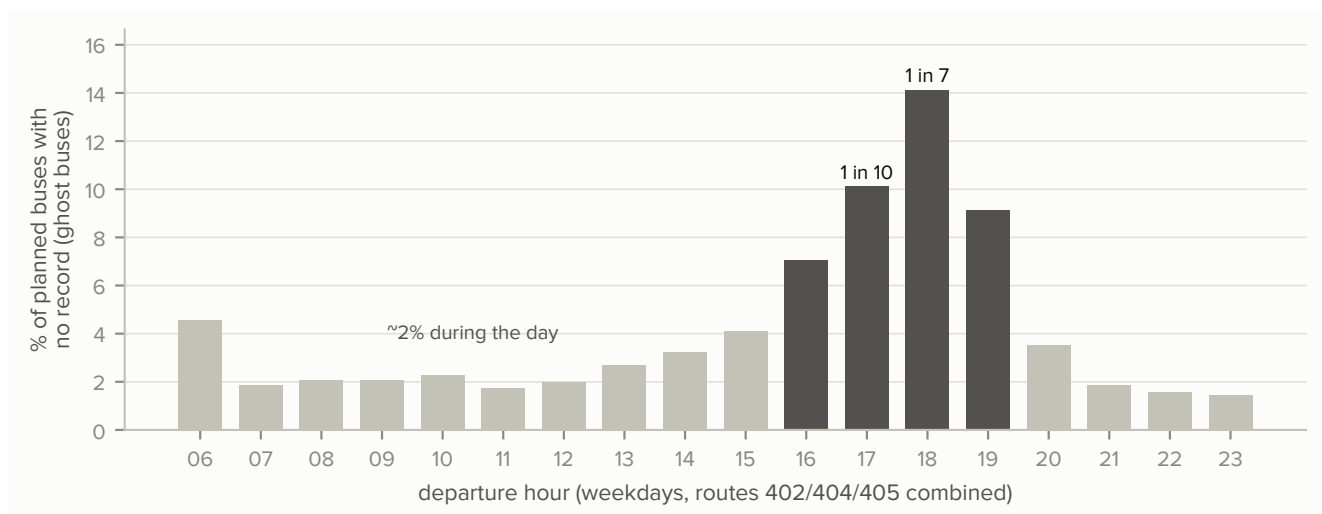


Figure 8: Share of ghost buses on the corridor, by departure hour, routes 402, 404 and 405 [17, 18]

This aligns with the NTA's separate reliability figures [14] for the first half of 2025, where missing peak buses correlate with scheduled kilometres not operated.

The pattern of ghost buses is not reflected by the NTA's headline lost-kilometre figure, which only counts losses blamed on the operator. Service lost to “*abnormal traffic congestion*” is classed as non-deductible and left out.

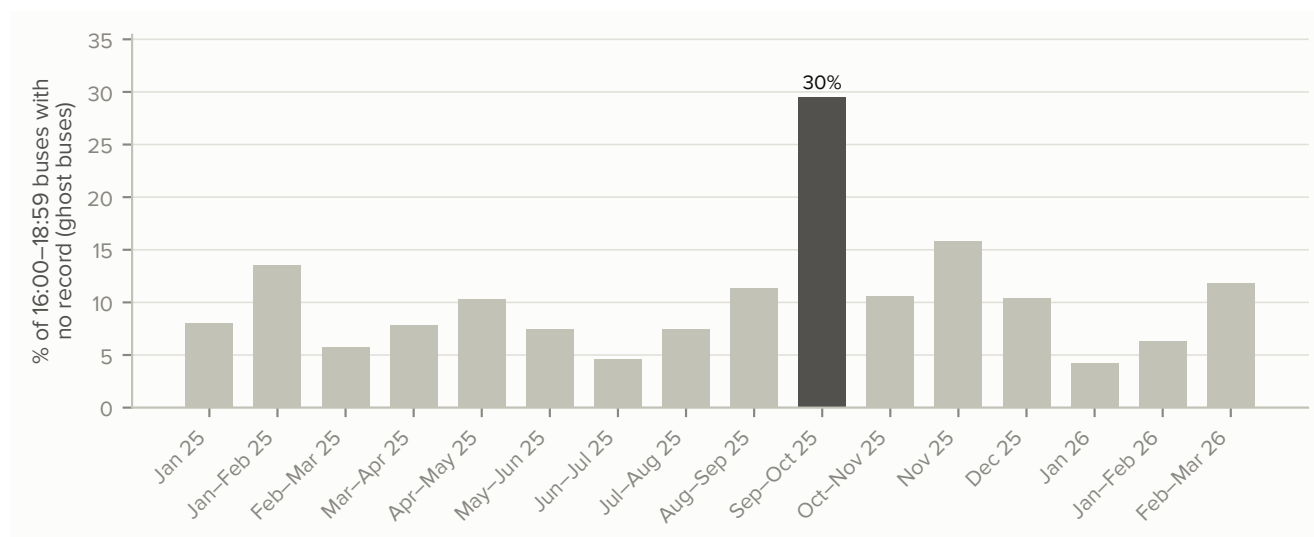


Figure 9: Share of ghost buses on the corridor during 16:00–18:59, by four-week period, routes 402, 404 and 405 [17, 18]

The real delay is probably worse than these figures

The running times in the FOI only include buses that were tracked on the corridor. On average across the three routes, the periods with the most missing peak buses were also the periods with the biggest rush-hour delays. Routes 402 and 405 show this individually; route 404 does not. If the buses that go missing are the ones worst affected by traffic, these averages understate what passengers waiting at the stop actually experience.

Impact of a Salmon Weir bus corridor

- **Time:** the corridor targets exactly the stretch and the hours where buses lose the most time. At the upper end, returning rush-hour buses to early-morning running times would **save 3 to 4.5 minutes per bus on average, and up to 7 minutes in the worst months**. Even against a midday baseline, rush-hour buses from Eyre Square to the University are about 2.3 minutes slower, and the 17:00 hour alone averages 8.6–8.8 minutes against about 6 minutes at midday.
- **Scale:** counting only buses leaving between 16:00 and 18:59 and weighting by the number running, buses on these three routes lose up to about **108 bus-minutes every weekday** on this 1km stretch alone. At the illustrative peak load of 42 passengers per bus used in this proposal, that is roughly **76 passenger-hours every weekday**. This is an upper bound, measured against the fastest time of day; against midday it is about 56 bus-minutes, or 39 passenger-hours.
- **Reliability:** at 18:00, one in seven scheduled buses becomes a ghost bus. A bus that isn't delayed in traffic is a bus that is more likely to run at all.

Method and limitations

- **Consistent with the GTFS-Realtime analysis:** GTFS-Realtime analysis found Eyre Square to University buses 3.1 minutes slower at 16:00–18:59 than at midday [15]. The FOI data covers far more trips and agrees closely. The separate 17:00-hour GTFS-Realtime figure (14.27 minutes) comes from a small sample of 9 trips and is well above the FOI's 17:00 average of 8.6–8.8 minutes; this indicates the worst peak trips rather than a typical one [16].
- **Actual times, not the timetable:** Every figure here compares actual running times with actual running times. Timetables already add extra minutes at rush hour to allow for traffic, so “on time” at rush hour still means slow.
- **One short stretch:** delay picked up elsewhere on the routes is not included. Start and end stops also differ slightly between routes.
- **Early morning is the best case:** comparing with the first buses of the day shows the most a corridor could recover. The midday comparison (about 2.3 minutes towards the University) is the more conservative figure.
- **Data quality issues:** Rows showing clear recording errors, such as trips implying a negative running time, were removed (3,239 of 3,314 rows kept). Multiple half-hour rows on routes 402, 404 and 405, five of them for 17:00–18:00 departures, are entirely blank in the FOI release. The headline results change by at most 0.16 minutes depending on data cleaning rules. Blank rows in the NTA's sheets were excluded as bad data, so the missing-bus figures may slightly understate the problem [17].
- **Weekdays only:** planned trip counts match the number of Monday–Friday, non-holiday dates in every period.
- **Correlation is not proof:** the link between missing buses and delay could partly reflect busy seasons driving both.

5.5 Time savings

The direct time saving from the Salmon Weir bus corridor would come from removing buses from the most unreliable section of the city-centre / University Road traffic pattern. The available GTFS-Realtime evidence gives an indicative way to quantify this: if peak buses could run at the observed off-peak corridor speed, the westbound Eyre Square to University of Galway movement would save about **8 minutes per bus** during the hour 17:00-17:59. This figure comes from a small GTFS-Realtime sample (9 peak-hour trips), so it is indicative rather than a typical saving. This does not model the additional improvements from diverting traffic away from the bridge access roads, or the modal shift this would bring about. The sample's 90th percentile in that hour is 22.14 minutes, which is **16.11 minutes slower** than the 6.03 minute off-peak baseline [15, 16].

This is only the measured short section between Eyre Square and University of Galway. It does not include the further knock-on savings from preventing late buses from bunching, missing layover time, or being cancelled later in the duty cycle. That operational effect is exactly what appears in the CityDirect FOI data: traffic is not merely slowing buses, it is causing lost kilometres and non-operated service [13]. CityDirect's own estimate is even sharper for the wider west-city corridor: from 4pm to 7pm, traffic can add **an extra 30 minutes** just between Eyre Square and the hospital, which bus lanes would eliminate [20].

For passengers, these minutes are multiplied by the number of people on each bus. Using an illustrative load of 42 passengers, the 17:00 hour penalty in the GTFS-Realtime sample is equivalent to about **346 passenger-minutes saved for every bus**, or **58 passenger-hours for every 10 buses**. On a corridor carrying repeated city routes, that is the difference between a bus service that feels turn-up-and-go and

Table 9: Indicative time saving if peak corridor runtime returns to observed off-peak runtime, small GTFS-Realtime sample [15, 16]

Period / scenario	Observed runtime	Baseline	Saving per bus	Saving per 10 buses	Saving at 60% capacity
Rush hour, 17:00-17:59	14.27 min	6.03 min	8.24 min	82.4 bus-min	57.6 passenger-hours
Rush hour, 90th percentile	22.14 min	6.03 min	16.11 min	161.1 bus-min	112.8 passenger-hours

Note: Passenger-minute estimates assume 10 buses and 42 passengers per bus, equivalent to 60% of a 70-passenger ADL Enviro400ER capacity. Source for vehicle capacity: [Alexander Dennis Enviro400ER](#). Runtimes are from a small GTFS-Realtime sample: 9 trips at 17:00–17:59 and 30 off-peak trips.

one that feels random.

The mode-share effect should be understood in the same way: the scheme does not need to transform the whole city network by itself to be worthwhile. Galway already has unusually high bus use, with bus accounting for 28% of inbound cordon movements in the 2024 Galway Cordon Survey [2]. The modelling section above shows that if bus priority produced a 25-30% increase on the actual observed public transport base, and even if only half of that increase came from former car users, it would remove approximately **3,250-3,900 daily car trips** from Galway's road network. The Salmon Weir corridor is the kind of high-delay, high-visibility intervention most likely to unlock that shift, because it improves the trips people already make by bus and makes the bus visibly faster than sitting in the same traffic.

In practical terms, the time-saving case is therefore threefold:

- **Passenger time:** peak buses on the measured Eyre Square to University of Galway movement could save about 8 minutes each in the small GTFS-Realtime sample, with the worst delayed trips in that sample saving over 16 minutes.
- **Service reliability:** removing recurring peak delay protects layover time, reduces bunching, and reduces the traffic-related lost-kilometre pattern shown in the FOI records.
- **Mode shift:** a reliable bus-only crossing gives existing and potential passengers a clear advantage over car traffic, supporting the 25-30% public transport growth scenario already discussed in the modelling section.

6 Conclusion

This proposal outlines a simple and effective solution to Galway's congestion crisis, which **is to prioritise buses**. With nearly 30% of trips already by bus, and growing rapidly, the Salmon Weir Bus Corridor offers a **practical, immediate and low-cost** first step towards a more efficient and reliable bus network. The current modelling **severely** underestimates Galway City's bus demand by relying on regional data that dilutes the city's real bus demand. In contrast, measures in Dublin's BusConnects programme have far exceeded all predictions, proving that bus priority measures deliver even greater benefits than modelled. By dedicating the Salmon Weir Bridge to buses during peak hours, Galway would unlock **faster, more reliable services, reduce congestion for all road users, and better serve key destinations** like University Hospital Galway. This proposal is a **low-risk, high-reward opportunity, and ready to implement**. For under €30,000, already covered by existing NTA funding, the council can take a first step towards a more sustainable, working, and efficient transport network. We urge Galway City Council to implement a 4-6 month trial of the Salmon Weir Bus Corridor to deliver a transport system that works for everyone.

We would like to thank you for reading and considering this proposal, and we ask for your support in introducing the bus corridor on a trial basis.

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7 Appendix

7.1 Cost Breakdown Table

Table 10: Cost breakdown

Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Rate	Total
01	Preliminary costs: detailed design (if required), public relations, etc.	1	item	€5,000	5,000
02	Supply of traffic signs incl. poles and brackets	4	item	€100	€400
03	Labour for excavations, demolition, installation of traffic signs and poles, including concrete base	1	item	€4,000	€4,000
04	Plant & Equipment for above	1	item	€1,200	€1,200
05	Supply of concrete for bases	4	m3	€150	€600
06	Disposal of waste material	1	item	€500	€500
07	Making good of existing surfaces including materials	1	item	€1,000	€1,000
08	Removal of existing line markings 100mm wide approx.	700	m	€5	€3,500
09	Application of new line markings 100mm wide approx.	700	m	€10/m	€7,000
10	Temporary traffic management during the works	1	item	€3,000	€3,000
	Subtotal				€26,200
11	Addition for waste & any omissions	10	%		2,620
	Total Cost				€28,820