Minister for Transport consults public on relieving traffic congestion

By RITA O'CONNOR **Epoch Times Staff**

Minister for Transport Noel Dempsey TD's new sustainable transport and travel consulting document was brought into the public arena on Tuesday. The document poses a number of questions such as how can existing commuting problems be tackled, how can public transport be improved, how can we reduce the environmental impact of road freight and what key steps can be taken to encourage people to walk or cy-

Speaking in the Dail last week the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said we cannot continue the way we have been where everybody drives from A to b

regardless, with no restrictions, we cannot continue with no entry zones especially in Dublin

When asked about the possibility of congestion charges by labour party leader Eamon Gilmore, Mr Ahern said no, we should consider some of the imaginative proposals that other European cities have put

According to a world wide survey by Mercer Human resource consulting on the quality of living in cities, Dublin was pushed down to 24th place because of city traffic congestion and Zurich ranked as top city.

Zurich has the same population size as Dublin and 32% of commuters use their public transport and this figure is continually rising, and 54% use traffic lights. The public transport system there is so good

Public transport there operates on a give way system, provides frequent services at regular intervals and short waiting times. It's a user friendly system with one ticket for everything. All areas where there are at least 300 people have to be well connected to public transport. Public transport in Zurich is speedy economical and comfortable, so much so that people use it for pleasure

But private motor travel is restricted and speed limits in some areas just nineteen miles per hour. Parking in residential area is limited to just one hour except for residents and private traffic is controlled by longer displays of the red phase at

that there is a trend now where commuters are disposing of cars altogether.

Researchers from Rutgers University US have shown that journey times, fuel consumption and emissions could all be improved if traffic lights were to transmit information to vehicles. Presently there is a vehicle platform being tested called Cartel that uses wi-fi hot spots to send and receive information during journeys.

Another vehicle communication network called Torrent lets drivers within 300 metres of each other exchange data from a range of vehicle sensors. In theory these systems could be used to relay information to a computer that controls traffic lights and hence ease traffic



Titanic memories sought

People across Ireland are being called to tell their tales and memories of the Titanic.

The Belfast Titanic Convention wants historians and maritime fans to become part of the centenary celebrations to mark the launch of the vessel in 1911.

Although the Titanic story has been told many times across the world, the Convention wants to compile an Irish angle on the ship which was

A fifth of all domestic summer

holidays are booked on-line, it

The Central Statistics Of-

built in Belfast and sailed from The anniversary of the sink-

ing of the stricken vessel will be marked in April 2012. Dick Mackenzie, Chairman

of the Titanic Convention, said: "Obviously the Titanic has a life blood connection to Northern Ireland, but the story is much bigger and covers every part of the island of Ireland," he said.

Fifth of domestic holidays booked on line

with a story to tell about this great vessel so that we can prepare for 2012 and ensure the story continues beyond.

"If you have any interesting stories about the Titanic, the people on board or its history ease contact us.'

Preparation is well under way for the centenary celebrations, with the second annual Belfast Titanic Convention planned for the end the site. (PA)

of March.

Titanic expert Michael Har-ris, who led the largest expedition to the Titanic wreck site to date in August 2000 salvaging over 1,800 new artefacts, will be at the event.

Mr Harris has spent the last twenty five years cultivating his research, knowledge and exploration of Titanic and has made more than eight dives to

Fifty women show interest in all female cab firm

Around 50 women have expressed interest in becoming drivers with the country's first all female cab service which takes to Dublin's streets this

Spearheaded by business-man Gerard McCarthy, Angel Cabs is being marketed at women who feel more com-fortable in taxis with female

While there will be no central office, customers will be able to contact one of six numbers depending on what part of the city they are in and will be put directly through to

"It was my girl friend's idea," said Mr McCarthy.

"I was looking for an idea to set up a business and she suggested that a service for both female drivers and passengers for safety and comfort reasons was a great idea.

"There are quite a few female drivers around Dublin, on their own at ranks or are attached to companies where you might have 400 drivers in a company, with 399 men.

"I've had between 40 and 50 drivers who have approached me already and I want to link all these individual female drivers together so it will make it easier for the public to access

The Cork native said he surveyed around 120 women working in businesses throughout the Dublin area and one out of every four claimed they would prefer to be driven by a

He added men are not being prohibited from joining the service, but as it is aimed at women who prefer female drivers they may not find the venture very lucrative.

Angel Cabs will begin operating on Saturday, March 1st, for a trial month after which interested drivers will then be asked to officially sign up and commit to the service. (PA)

Further information on

Half of calls to Childline go unanswered

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seeking

support

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support can access such

More than half of all calls to Childline last year went unanswered because of a lack of resources, it was revealed this week.

While there was a 9% jump in the number of calls taken by the 24 hour service the majority of troubled kids could not get through to an opera-

The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) has launched a major fund raising campaign to dramatically improve the support line and ensure every child in need can get help.

ISPCC'S Communication's Manager Mary Nicholson said: "While Childline and the ISPCC are proud of the fact that more children have been able to access the service, a gap remains in that we are unable to provide a service to all the children who try to access Childline.

"These calls simply cannot go unanswered and to address this the ISPCC recently launched a strategy to dramatically improve and expand our services to children.

"Specifically, we aim to reach 100% call capacity on Childline by 2011, ensuring every child

has a chance to be heard.

"In order to achieve this ambitious goal, the ISPCC are launching a national fund raising appeal today, calling on the Irish public to help us answer every call," she said.

More than 630,000 calls were made to the service last year with 294,908 answered by the service's 250 volunteers.

According to the ISPCC's statistics, 20,592 of these related to cases of abuse and violence and 6,295 to issues of mental health. The support line's automated

text service received 75,175 messages and Teentext 32,051. Ms Nicholson said it was essen-

tial that all kids are able to get access to the service. "ISPCC/Childline believes the most effective way of supporting children and young people is by listening to

"Childline will continue to adapt its service to reflect new methods of communication. "It is vital that children seeking support can

access such support through the medium that

best suits their needs," she said. (PA) 6% on the previous year, generating 594 million Euro.

fice said some 496,000 Irish holidaymakers who stayed in Ireland last summer arranged their break through the Internet, up from 393,000 the

emerged recently.

previous year. The latest figures showed 2.5 million people took their vacation on the island during the third quarter of 2007, up

Trips to the southern and eastern regions rose 9% to 1.7 million, with the border, midland and western counties

recording a very marginal increase with 748,000 trips.

Meanwhile, more than 1.8 million international trips were made by Irish holidaymakers last summer, spending more than 2,392m Euro. Sun seekers who headed to

Spain accounted a quarter of all international trips, with the UK attracting 21% is holidaymakers, followed by France (13%) and North America The figures were released

as a 3m Euro overseas marketing plan for the Shannon Airport Catchment Area was

challenges to the region post Open Skies, the initiative features a new campaign which

will highlight the many attractions of the Western regions from Kerry to Donegal. Discover Ireland's Wonderful West boasts the ease of direct access from many

gateway cities, the good value fares and inclusive packages available, as well as showcasing a range of compelling offers from local industry. The new campaign will fo-

cus mainly on the US market which is the most lucrative in terms of spend and length of stay, where 2.4m Euro of the Designed to address the budget will be spent on adver-

The other main focus of the

marketing programme will be Great Britain, with a spend of 600,000 Euro. Paul O'Toole, Chief Execu-

tive of Tourism Ireland, said 2008 will be a challenging "Global economic uncer-

tainty, the weak dollar and a softening in consumer confidence, generally, all make for a more difficult business environment," he added.

"Every year brings new challenges and I am confident that working in close partnership with the industry we can overcome these hurdles." (PA)

Twenty per cent of deaths down to respiratory disease

Ireland has the second high- munity and primary care. We has fallen. est number of deaths in Europe from respiratory disease, a report revealed this week.

Illnesses and conditions such as lung cancer, tuberculosis, cystic fibrosis and asthma are responsible for one in five deaths.

Treating the diseases costs the health service more than 437 million Euro a

According to the Irish Thoracic Society's Inhale report the poor record is second only to the former Soviet state of Kyrgyzstan. Dr J.J. Gil-

martin, President said decisive action is needed to tackle the diseases.

"The Irish Thoracic Society is calling for an integrated and adequately resourced respiratory strategy," he said.

"We believe that this should be underpinned by strong link-

believe this to be the best way forward for our patients.

"Without it it is likely that when we report again in five years time the picture will be no better, if not worse. For the sake of our patients, we must ensure this is not the case. The society's report found

death rates from respirato-Asthma is ry disease are now the most almost twice the European

common chronic Union average. childhood deaths from disease respiratory disease have over those from coronary heart disease

while lung canof the Irish Thoracic Society cer deaths in women are nearing breast cancer levels and the gap between these two diseases has narrowed by two thirds.

Rather than see an improvement since the first Inhale report five years ago the society found survival rates for lung cancer are very low and the ages between hospital, com- record in tackling lung disease

Asthma is now the most common chronic childhood disease. Jan O'Sullivan, Labour Party health spokeswoman, backed calls for a national strategy to deal with the level of respiratory illnesses.

"It is clear that social inequality is a more significant factor in respiratory deaths than in any other disease," she said. "According to previous research almost 300 respiratory deaths a year are caused by poor housing conditions and that is something that can and should be addressed by central government and by housing auorities around the country."

the report, said death rates and prevalence are rising or are higher than they should be.

'Respiratory disease is a mayear," Dr Brennan said. "The resources to effective-

matt exactly four centuries ago this St Patrick's Day.

Dr Neil Brennan, author of

jor cause of death and diminished quality of life is responsible for the suffering of tens of thousands of Irish citizens each

prevent, diagnose and treat

these diseases are inadequate.

in the Swiss Alps to Ireland's last Gaelic chieftains, it was revealed. A ceremony will also mark the momentous Flight of the Earls through the small town of Ander-

> Irish Ambassador to Switzerland James Sharkey said weeks of celebrations will lead up to the inauguration of the memorial.
>
> "This will be one of the great

Nobel Peace Prize winner John

Hume is to unveil a memorial high

highlights of St Patrick's Day celebrations in Europe this year," he The last Gaelic earls fled English

rule on a small ship from Co Don-egal in 1607 in a defining moment that would forever alter the course of Irish history. On their way towards Spain,

where they intended to gather an

army to reclaim Ulster, they passed

through Switzerland. On their epic journey over the Alps, the chieftains lost a fortune of gold down a ravine by the infamous Devil's Bridge, near Andermatt, on

St Patrick's Day in 1608.

It has never been recovered and is known as the Lost Treasure of the St Gotthard Pass.

will be inaugurated outside the old Church in Andermatt which, coincidentally, is dedicated to the Irish Saint Columbanus. "Andermatt is a small town in the Alps, about the size of Buncrana or Carndonagh in Co Donegal

and they already have two monu-ments there," said Ambassador Sharkey "One is to the Russians who reached the Alps in 1814 and the other is to the French who resisted them during the Napoleonic Wars.

'Now, there will be a third monument to the Irish who reached the Alps 200 years earlier."

Celebrations marking relations between Ireland and Switzerland will start on February 27th with an exhibition about the Flight of the Earls in the Swiss frontier city of

Events will also be held in Berne, Zurich, Geneva and Lugano. (PA)



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