
Review of withdrawal of Bus Éireann licensed commercial services on Expressway Route 21 between Westport and Athlone



June 2017

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1. Introduction

1.1 Service Overview

Expressway is the brand name for Bus Éireann's commercial network of bus services. These services are licensed by the National Transport Authority under the provisions of the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009 and the Authority's published 'Guidelines for the Licensing of Public Bus Passenger Services'¹. Similar to other commercial bus operators under license to the Authority, Bus Éireann receives no Public Service Obligation (PSO)² compensation for the provision of *Expressway* services.

1.2 Current Status of services between Westport and Athlone

Bus Éireann Expressway Route 21 service

Bus Éireann currently operates Expressway Route 21 from Athlone (Bus Station) to Westport serving Knockcroghery, Roscommon, Castlereaugh, Ballinlough, Ballyhaunis, Knock, Ireland West Airport, Claremorris, Castlebar, Westport, and other smaller settlements along the route (See Figure 1).

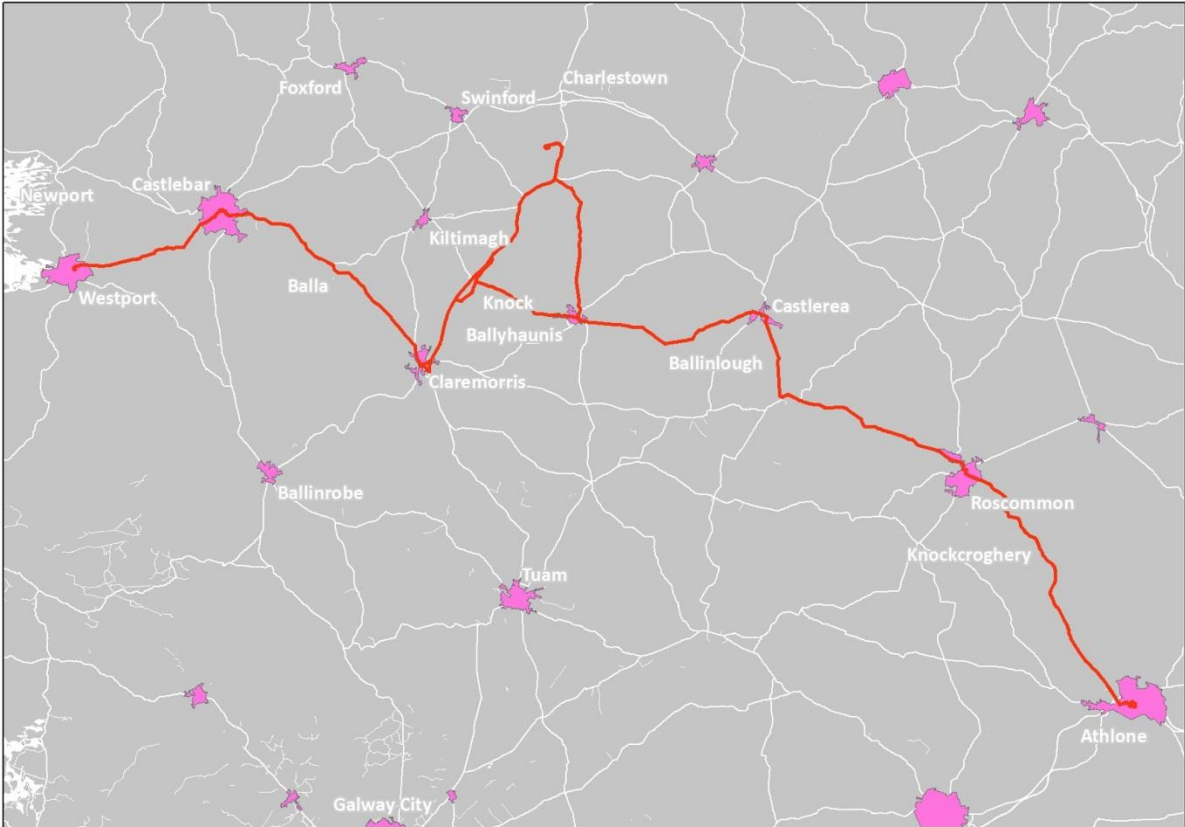
There are two services operating in each direction on Monday to Sunday with a further service in each direction on Sunday between Swinford and Westport.

The Company has announced its intention to cancel the service in its entirety.

¹ Available here: http://www.nationaltransport.ie/downloads/guidelines_for_licensing_public_buses.pdf

² 'Public Service Obligation' means a requirement defined or determined by a competent authority in order to ensure public passenger transport services in the general interest that an operator, if it were considering its own commercial interests, would not assume or would not assume to the same extent or under the same conditions without reward.(REG. 1370/2007)

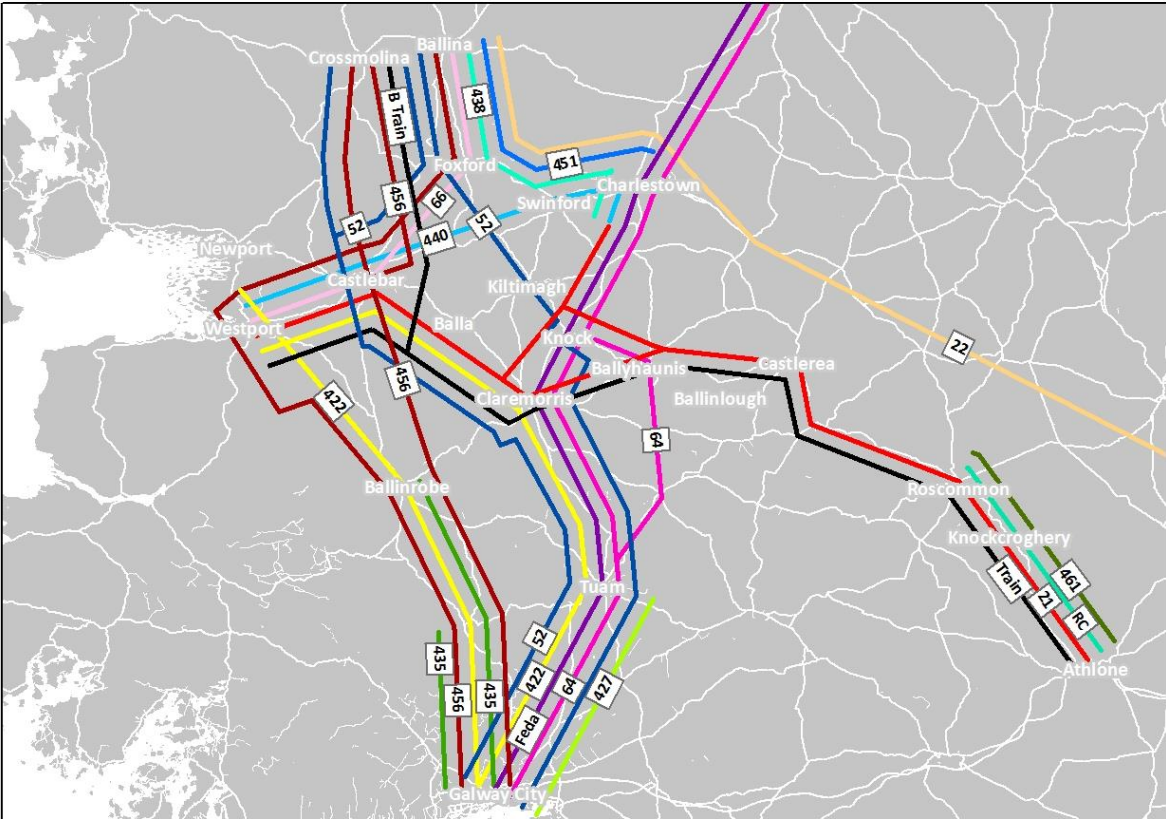
Figure 1 – Map of Expressway Route 21



1.3 Mayo/ Roscommon Network

Figure 2 illustrates the bus network operating within central Mayo and Roscommon. This map demonstrates the current bus network in the area. There are a number of services that operate along the same corridor as Bus Éireann’s Expressway Route 21.

Figure 2 – Weekday Bus Services



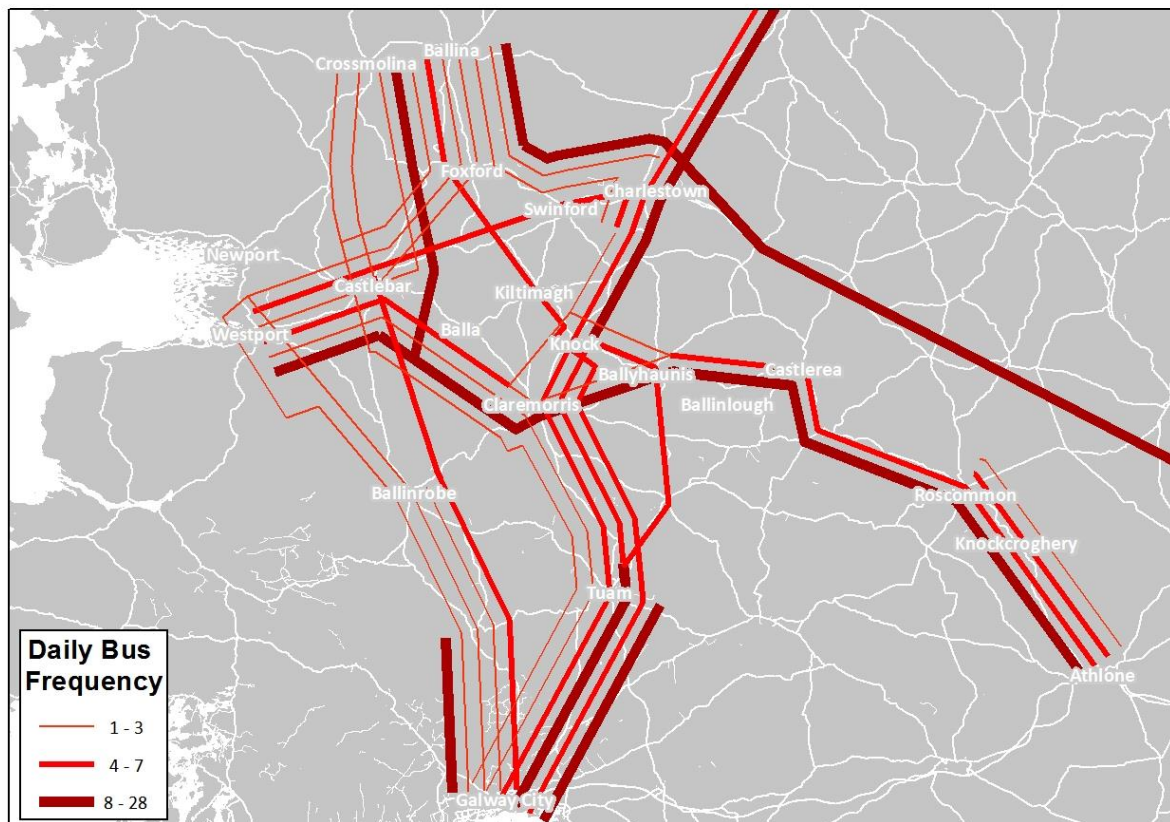
Iarnród Éireann operates rail services between Athlone and Westport, serving Roscommon, Castlerea, Ballyhaunis, Claremorris, Manulla Junction, and Castlebar. Four services operate between Athlone and Westport on Monday to Friday and Sunday, with one additional train on Friday; three services operate on Saturday. In the opposite direction between Westport and Athlone there are five services on Monday to Friday, and four on Saturday and Sunday.

Between Claremorris and Castlebar, Bus Éireann also provides three services a day in each direction on Expressway Route 52 and two services per day in each direction on PSO Route 422.

Between Roscommon and Athlone, Bus Éireann provides one service in each direction on Monday to Friday on PSO Route 461, and Roscommon Coaches provides one service on Monday to Sunday between Roscommon and Athlone, and an additional service on Monday to Friday during college terms. In the opposite direction between Athlone and Roscommon, there are two services Monday to Sunday with one additional service on Monday to Friday. These are commercial services operated by Roscommon Coaches and are licensed by the Authority as Route AIT02.

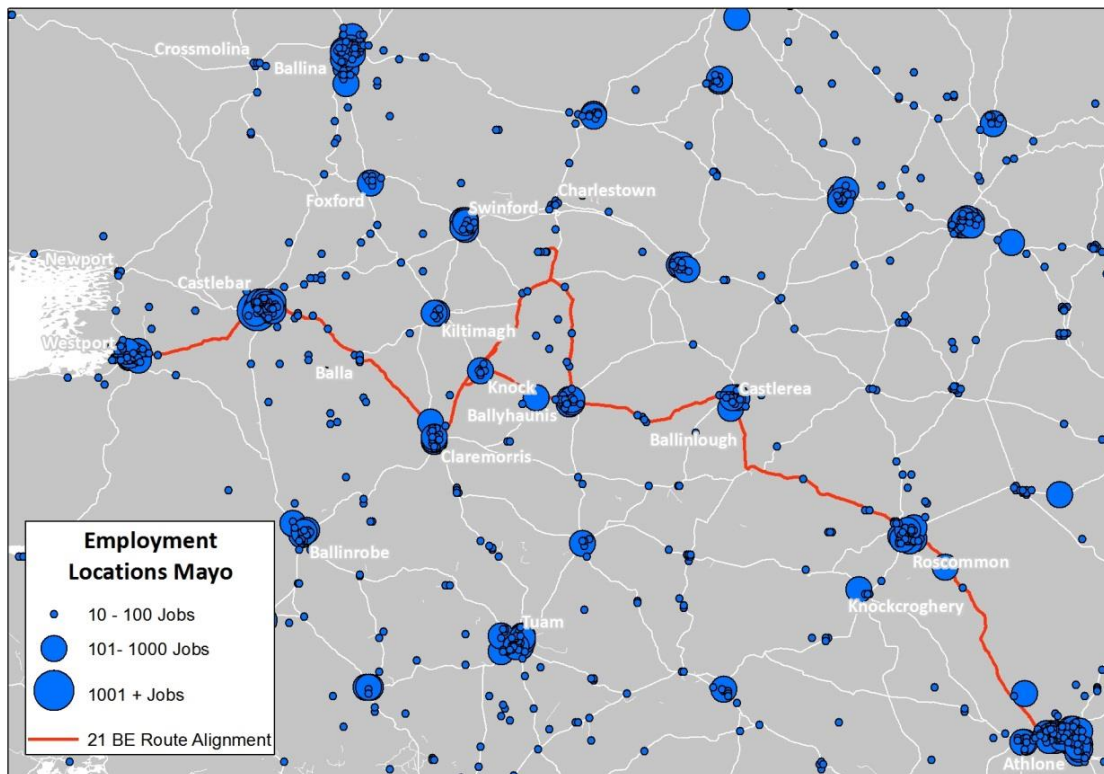
Figure 3 illustrates the public transport service frequency within central Mayo/ Roscommon. This highlights that there is a mixture of a strong core of public transport corridors within central Mayo, and also significant numbers of low frequency services operating on similar corridors.

Figure 3 – Weekday Bus Services – All day two way frequency



There are several significant destinations along the Expressway Route 21 alignment including Athlone Institute of Technology, Athlone Rail Station, Roscommon Hospital, Castlerea Prison, Knock Shrine, Ireland West Airport Knock, Mayo General Hospital Hospital, Allergen Manufacturing, GMIT Castlebar, and Athlone industrial estates. Figure 4 illustrates the largest employment locations along the Expressway Route 21 alignment. The largest concentrations of employment are in the larger urban centres, with smaller pockets of employment dispersed along the route.

Figure 4 – Employment Locations along Expressway Route 21 alignment – Mayo/ Roscommon



There are six large settlements located along the Expressway Route 21 alignment. These are listed as follows in order of size:

Settlement	Population
Athlone	19,400
Castlebar	12,000
Westport	5,700
Roscommon	5,500
Claremorris	3,300
Ballyhaunis	2,200

There are four minor settlements located along the Expressway Route 21 alignment. These are listed as follows in order of size:

Settlement	Population
Knock	800
Balla	670
Knockcroghery	300
Ballinlough	300

In addition to these settlements, the regional airport of Ireland West Airport Knock is situated around 6 kilometres south west of Charlestown. Passenger numbers through the airport grew by 7% in 2016 to 734,031. Expressway Route 21 serves the airport on journeys from Athlone once on Monday to Saturday and twice on Sunday. No journeys operate via the airport from the Westport direction. The airport is additionally served by Bus Éireann Expressway Route 64 which operates regularly between Galway and Derry via Sligo, by Bus Éireann PSO Route 438 which operates infrequently from Ballina, and by Bus Éireann PSO Route 440 which operates three times per day on Monday to Saturday between Westport and the airport via Castlebar, Swinford and Charlestown.

2. Network Analysis

2.1 Long Term Network Plan

The National Transport Authority published its *Review of Public Transport Services in Mayo* in 2014. The objectives of the review were to increase public transport usage in the region by:

- Providing a more effective and efficient public transport network;
- Developing more opportunities for onward travel by improving connections between transport services and co-ordinating timetables at interchange points;
- Providing more direct access to significant workplaces, tourist & visitor destinations, health service centres, shops and educational establishments;
- Improving the quality and reliability of services and the clarity of information describing them.

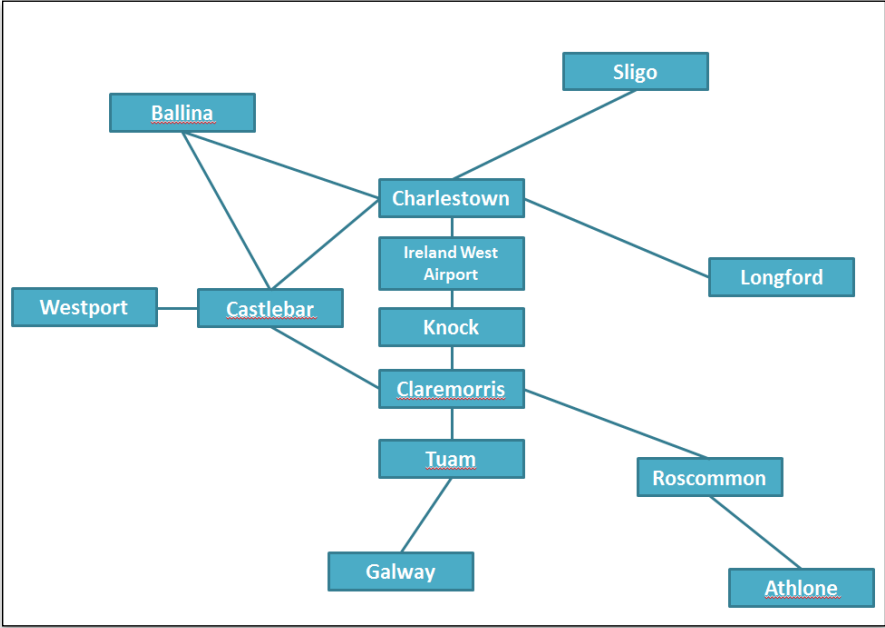
To ensure a strong, easy to understand, and efficient core bus network operates within Mayo, whereby all major destinations are served directly or with one interchange from the larger settlements at higher frequency, the following public transport network changes are necessary in the medium to long term:

- Frequent services between Ballina, Castlebar, Tuam and Galway;
- Frequent services between Sligo, Ireland West Airport, Knock and Galway;
- Frequent routes operating between Westport and Castlebar;
- Interchange facilities at Claremorris, Castlebar and Charlestown;
- Frequent public transport services between Athlone and Westport; and
- Other local or rural services feeding into Castlebar/ Ballina/ Westport or Claremorris.

The role of rural transport in this network is to serve demand outside the core bus network and act as a feeder service to the main network.

Figure 5 is a graphical representation of the long term public transport network in Mayo/ Roscommon.

Figure 5 – Long term public transport network



2.2 Route Analysis

While the Authority will continue its work to improve the network to bring about the benefits described above, it is necessary in the context of the withdrawal of Expressway Route 21 to understand the role provided by the service.

The current function of the Expressway Route 21 is as follows:

- Serve demand along the corridor between Athlone and Westport, providing an alternative service to rail and operate at times not served by the rail service;
- Serve areas not serviced by rail between Athlone and Westport; and
- Provide a direct bus link from Athlone to Knock and Ireland West Airport.

The withdrawal of Expressway Route 21 will reduce the public transport offer between Athlone and Westport by decreasing the amount of services operating between these two areas and lowering the frequency of the public transport network. There would also be no direct morning link from Athlone to Ireland West Airport Knock. As a result, there would be a significant impact on areas that are not served by other public transport services.

In relation to the larger settlements, the rail service provided by Iarnród Éireann meets the demand for travel between settlements throughout the day. However, the overall frequency and availability of public transport services will reduce and there would be no direct bus link from Athlone to Ireland West Airport Knock.

The largest impact will be in those areas that do not have alternative public transport services. The following analysis examines the Expressway Route 21 alignment corridor in five separate segments, and focuses on access to the neighbouring larger settlements.

Roscommon – Athlone

The largest settlement between Roscommon and Athlone is Knockcroghery. There are also bus stops at Ballymurray, Lecarrow and Kiltoom and Ballymore. The commercial service on Route AIT02 licensed to and provided by Roscommon Coaches between Roscommon and Athlone IT calls at Ballymurray, Knockcroghery, Lecarrow and Kiltoom. PSO Route 461 provides a morning peak service on Monday to Friday between Roscommon and Athlone via Knockcroghery, Lecarrow and Kiltoom, which operates in the morning peak between Roscommon and Athlone. Bus Éireann PSO Route 70 provides the link between Ballymore and Athlone.

Castlerea – Roscommon

There are four bus stops between Castlerea and Roscommon. The largest settlement between these two towns is Ballymoe. The rest of the stops are located in rural areas. There are limited alternative bus services operating along this corridor. Bus Éireann PSO Route 429 links Ballymoe with Tuam and Galway once in each direction on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, with the services operating from Castlerea. Bus Éireann PSO Route 457 links Ballymoe with Roscommon once in each direction on Fridays. There will therefore be an impact on residents in this corridor.

Ballyhaunis – Castlerea

The only bus stop between Ballyhaunis and Castlerea is in Ballinlough. There are limited alternative bus services operating along this corridor. Bus Éireann PSO Route 429 links Ballinlough with Tuam and Galway once in each direction on Tuesday to Saturday with the services operating from Castlerea. There will therefore be an impact on residents in this location.

Claremorris – Knock – Ballyhaunis

Although Claremorris is directly linked to Ballyhaunis by rail, Expressway Route 21 is the only service to provide the link between the two towns via Knock. Between Ballyhaunis, Knock and Claremorris, Knock is the only settlement that is served on this segment. The population of Knock is c.800. A significant number of visitors are attracted to the National Marian Shrine annually. Knock has numerous public transport services operating through it, including Expressway Routes 52 and 64 and commercial Route 964 licensed to and provided by Bus Feda Teoranta. These services operate

between Sligo, Galway and Ballina. Following the withdrawal of Expressway Route 21, there will be no direct link to Castlebar/Westport or Athlone/ Roscommon from Knock. Intending passengers will be required to interchange between bus and rail at Claremorris.

Claremorris – Castlebar- Westport

There are two bus stops between Claremorris and Castlebar on Expressway Route 21 at Balla and Breaffy. Bus Éireann Expressway Route 52 provides three services on Monday to Sunday between Claremorris and Castlebar, three services between Castlebar and Claremorris on Monday to Saturday and two on Sunday. Bus Éireann PSO Route 422 provides one service on Monday to Saturday in each direction. Following the withdrawal of Expressway Route 21 there will be a reduction in the frequency of services on the route between Claremorris and Castlebar.

Between Westport and Castlebar, there are regular bus and rail services that operate between these two large settlements. The withdrawal of the Expressway Route 21 will have a lower effect on this area than other areas along the corridor.

2.3 Conclusion

The Authority is primarily concerned that transport links which allow the public to access ordinary every-day services are available. These socially necessary needs would include being able to reach the local market town or urban centre to be able to access local services, healthcare, education, and shopping.

Where possible, it is desirable to be able to link passengers into bigger transport hubs where they may be able to interchange and continue their journey onto bigger urban centres. Given the regional significance of Ireland West Airport and Knock Shrine (as a major destination), it would be an objective of the Authority to improve connections from the major towns in Roscommon and Mayo to these destinations.

The range and availability of bus and rail services between Westport and Castlebar is considered to be adequate to meet demand following the withdrawal of Expressway Route 21.

For the bus stops at Balla and Breaffy between Castlebar and Claremorris, the reduction in frequency of services on the route will result in the social needs of the affected locations not being adequately met.

Between Claremorris, Knock and Ballyhaunis, there are no bus stops on the links between these towns. Knock would lose its direct connection to Athlone and have a reduced direct bus service offer from Westport/ Castlebar.

There is a relatively small amount of demand in the areas that are currently served by Expressway Route 21 only. Between Ballyhaunis and Roscommon, there would be c.1,050 people within one kilometre of a bus stop that is currently served by Expressway Route 21 that would not have a direct public transport to a local large adjacent settlement. Those people who do not have access to a car would be particularly impacted by the withdrawal of services. The Authority, therefore, identifies a strong social need for the maintenance of bus services in parts of locations served by Expressway Route 21.

There is a low frequency local bus service between Roscommon and Athlone IT. However, at the weekend there is no public transport alternative.

The Authority has determined that there is a public service obligation to continue to provide services to the locations affected by the withdrawal of Expressway Route 21. The Authority is planning to provide four services per day on Mondays to Saturdays in each direction from Westport to Athlone supplemented by two services per day in each direction from Westport to Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK). On Sundays and Public Holidays, the Authority is planning to provide two services per day in each direction from Westport to Athlone supplemented by two services per day in each direction from Westport to Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK). A morning connection is also available at Claremorris for onward travel to Athlone on Sundays and Public Holidays.

The proposed services will:

- Offer an improvement to accessibility from the corridor to Knock and Ireland West Airport;
- Will service rural communities along the route that are not served by rail;
- Will provide connections at Claremorris and Charlestown for settlements along the route and other public transport services operating to Galway, Tuam, Ballina and Sligo; and
- Will be consistent with the long term plan for the bus network in Mayo and Roscommon.

The alignments of the proposed services are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7 – Proposed Bus Route 440

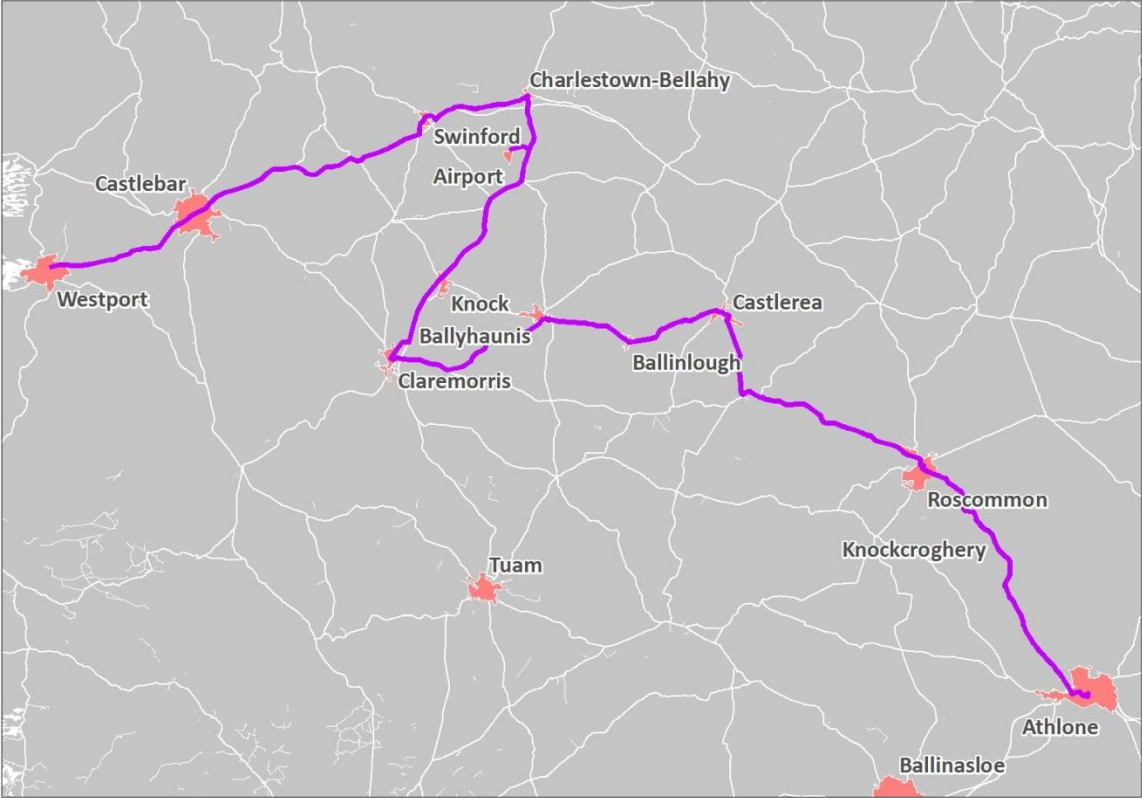
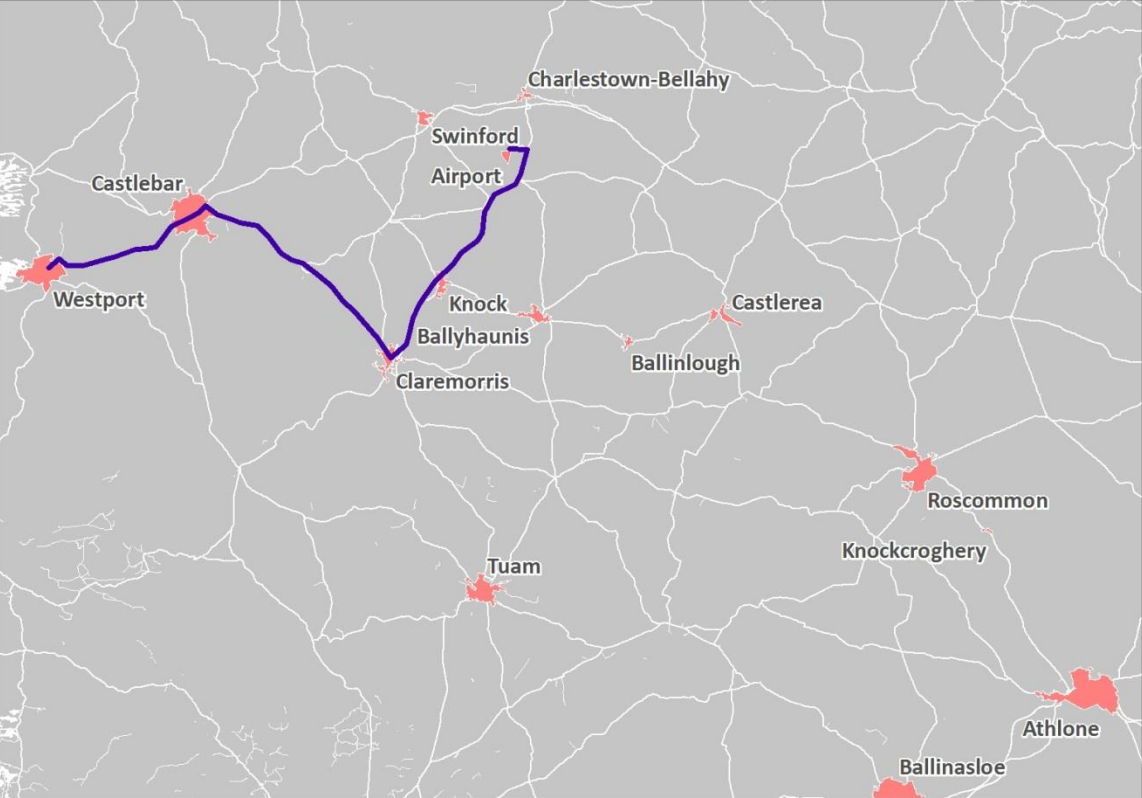


Figure 8 – Proposed Bus Route 440 to Ireland West Airport Knock



2.4 Next Steps

The Authority has approved the timetable for extending the existing 440 contracted services with Bus Éireann and implementation will coincide with the withdrawal of the Expressway Route 21 licensed service.

The approved timetable is shown in Appendix 2 and includes the current morning peak journeys on Route 440 between Westport and Castlebar and also the morning peak journeys on Route 461 between Roscommon and Athlone. These journeys will be renumbered as Route 440.

Appendix 1 – Expressway Route 21 Timetable



Table No.

DUBLIN – ATHLONE – IRELAND WEST AIRPORT KNOCK – WESTPORT **21**

SERVICE NUMBER	MONDAY TO SATURDAY						SUNDAY		
	020	022	X20				020	020	022
Dublin Airport (Atrium Road, Zone 12)	dep.	1230	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Dublin (Busáras)	0830	1300P	....	1530	....	0730	1030	2100	....
Dublin Airport (Atrium Road, Zone 10)	↓ 0850P	....	....	1550P	....	....	1050P	....	....
Athlone (Bus Station)	arr. 1100	....	....	1715	....	0945	1300	....	....
SERVICE NUMBER	021		440	021		021	021		021
Athlone (Bus Station)	dep. 1105	....	1745	....	1010	1305	....	....	....
Athlone IT (Garrycastle Road)	1110	via	1750	....	....	....	via	....	....
Kiltoom (Opp Kiltoom Stores)	1123	....	1803	....	1016	1311	Mullin-	....	....
Knockcroghery (Opp JS Murray)	1135	Mullin-	1815	....	1030	1325	gar	....	....
Ballymurray (Northbound stop)	1140	gar	1820	....	1035	1330	....	....	....
Roscommon Hospital	1144	....	1824	....	1038	1333	....	....	....
Roscommon Mart Rd (Opp Dunnes)	1147	and	1827	....	1040	1335	&	....	....
Ballymoe (McConns Xpress Shop)	1205	....	1845	....	1057	1352	....	....	....
Castlerea (The Square School)	1213	Long-	1853	....	1105	1400	....	....	....
Ballinlough (Opp The Whitehouse Hotel)	1222	ford	1902	....	1117	1412	Long-	....	....
Ballyhaunis (SuperMacs Main St)	1230	....	1910	....	1125	1420	ford	....	....
Knock (Ballyhaunis Road Northbound)	1245	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Ireland West Airport Knock	1305	....	....	....	1145	1440	....	....	....
Swinford (Gifts & Card Shop)	....	1616	1710	....	....	....	0011	0020	....
Knock (Main St Colemans)	1320	....	1920	....	1202	1457	....	....	....
Knock Caravan and Camping Park	1322	....	1922	....	1204	1459	....	....	....
Claremorris (Dalton St Leisure Centre)	1330	....	1930	....	1215	1510	....	....	....
Balla (Community Centre)	1342	....	1942	....	1230	1525	....	....	....
Breaffy Church (Opp St Aloysius Church)	1350	....	1950	....	1240	1535	....	....	....
Castlebar (Garvey Way Opp Elverys)	1358	....	1740	1958	1245	1540	....	0040	....
Westport (Mill St Westbound Stop)	arr. 1420	....	1800	2020	1305	1600	....	0100	....

P : – Pick-up stop only.

No services on Christmas Day. Enquire about St. Stephen's Day services.
Sunday services will operate on other Public Holidays.

Expressway
www.buseireann.ie

Appendix 1 – Expressway Route 21 Timetable - Continued

										Table No.			
WESTPORT – ATHLONE – DUBLIN										21			
MONDAY TO SATURDAY										SUNDAY			
SERVICE NUMBER		021	456	440	022	021	456	456		021	021	022	021
Westport (Mill St Eastbound Stop)	dep.	0705	0850	1205	....	1415	1445	1640		1415	1500	....	1700
Castlebar (Garvey Way Op Elverys)		0725	0915	1230	....	1435	1510	1705		1435	1520	....	1720
Ballyvary (Balla Cross Eastbound)			0934	1240	....		1529	1719			1528	....
Bohola (Eastbound)					....						1534	....
Foxford (Post Office)	arr.		0945		....		1540	1730				....
SERVICE NUMBER			022				022	022					
Foxford (Opp Browns Monument)	dep.		0945		....		1545	1730				....
Swinford (O Connors Hotel)			0957	1252	1257		1557	1742			1545	1557	
Breaffy Church (St Aloysius Church)		0730		....		1440				1440	....		1725
Balla (Opp Community Centre)		0740		....		1450				1450	....		1735
Claremorris (Dalton St Hair Salon)		0755		....		1505				1505	....		1750
Knock (Opp Caravan Camping Park)		0806		....		1516				1516	....		1801
Knock (Main St Opp Colemans)		0808	via	....	via	1518	via	via		1518	....		1803
Ballyhaunis (The Bus Stop Shop)		0818		....		1528				1528	....		1815
Ballinlough (Whitehouse Hotel)		0828		....		1538				1538	....		1825
Castlerea (Square Opp School)		0840		....		1550				1550	....		1838
Ballymoe (Opp McConn's Xpress)		0848	Long-	....	Long-	1558	Long-	Long-		1558	....		1848
Roscommon Mart Rd (Opp Dunnes)		0910	ford	....	ford	1620	ford	ford		1620	....		1910
Roscommon (Opp Hospital)		0912		....		1622				1622	....		1912
Ballymurray (Southbound stop)		0915		....		1625				1625	....		1915
Knockcroghery (JS Murray)		0920		....		1630				1630	....		1920
Kiltoom (Kiltoom Stores)		0933		....		1643				1643	....		1930
Athlone IT (Garrycastle Road)		0945		....							....
Athlone (Bus Station)	arr.	0950		....		1650				1650	....		1945
SERVICE NUMBER		020				X20				X20			020
Athlone (Bus Station)	dep.	1010		....		1705				1705	....		2010
Dublin (Eden Quay)	arr.		1317D	....	1615D						....	
Dublin Airport (Atrium Rd, Zone 10)	arr.	1220D		....		1830D				1830D	....		2220D
Dublin Airport (Atrium Rd, Zone 12)	arr.		1337	....	1635		1915D	2100D			....	1855D	
Dublin (Busaras)	arr.	1240	....	....	....	1850	1935	2120		1850	....	1915	2240

D : - Drop-off stop only.

No services on Christmas Day. Enquire about St. Stephen's Day services.

Sunday services will operate on other Public Holidays.

WE ADVISE PASSENGERS TRAVELLING TO DUBLIN AIRPORT TO ALLOW AMPLE TIME FOR CHECK-IN.

Appendix 2 –Route 440 Timetable

Monday to Friday

Westport		06:55	08:05	09:00	11:00	13:00	16:00	19:00
Castlebar		07:15	08:30	09:20	11:20	13:20	16:20	19:20
Balla		|		09:35	|	|	16:35	|
Ballyvary		07:25		|	11:30	13:30	|	19:30
Swinford		07:38		|	11:43	13:43	|	19:43
Charlestown		07:48		|	11:53	13:53	|	19:53
IWAK		07:58		|	12:03	14:03	|	20:03
Knock		08:15		|	12:20	14:20	|	20:20
Claremorris		08:25		09:50	12:30	14:30	16:50	20:30
Knock		|		10:00	|	|	17:00	|
Ireland West Airport Knock		|		10:17	|	|	17:17	|
Ballyhaunis		08:45			12:50	14:50		20:50
Castlerea		09:05			13:10	15:10		21:10
Roscommon	08:00	09:32			13:37	15:37		21:37
Athlone	08:45	10:05			14:10	16:10		22:10

Athlone		06:45	07:25		11:45	14:45		17:45
Roscommon		07:18	07:55		12:18	15:18		18:18
Castlerea		07:45			12:45	15:45		18:45
Ballyhaunis		08:05			13:05	16:05		19:05
IWAK		|		10:58	|	|	17:58	|
Knock		|		11:15	|	|	18:15	|
Claremorris		08:25		11:25	13:25	16:25	18:25	19:25
Knock		08:35		|	13:35	16:35	|	19:35
IWAK		08:52		|	13:52	16:52	|	19:52
Charlestown		09:02		|	14:02	17:02	|	20:02
Swinford		09:12		|	14:12	17:12	|	20:12
Ballyvary		09:25		|	14:25	17:25	|	20:25
Balla		|		11:40	|	|	18:40	|
Castlebar	08:30	09:35		11:55	14:35	17:35	18:55	20:35
Westport	08:55	09:55		12:15	14:55	17:55	19:15	20:55

Appendix 2 –Route 440 Timetable - Continued

Saturday

Westport	06:55	08:05	09:00	11:00	13:00	16:00	19:00
Castlebar	07:15	08:30	09:20	11:20	13:20	16:20	19:20
Balla	|		09:35	|	|	16:35	|
Ballyvary	07:25		|	11:30	13:30	|	19:30
Swinford	07:38		|	11:43	13:43	|	19:43
Charlestown	07:48		|	11:53	13:53	|	19:53
IWAK	07:58		|	12:03	14:03	|	20:03
Knock	08:15		|	12:20	14:20	|	20:20
Claremorris	08:25		09:50	12:30	14:30	16:50	20:30
Knock	|		10:00	|	|	17:00	|
Ireland West Airport Knock	|		10:17	|	|	17:17	|
Ballyhaunis	08:45			12:50	14:50		20:50
Castlerea	09:05			13:10	15:10		21:10
Roscommon	09:32			13:37	15:37		21:37
Athlone	10:05			14:10	16:10		22:10

Athlone		06:45		11:45	14:45		17:45
Roscommon		07:18		12:18	15:18		18:18
Castlerea		07:45		12:45	15:45		18:45
Ballyhaunis		08:05		13:05	16:05		19:05
IWAK		|	10:58	|	|	17:58	|
Knock		|	11:15	|	|	18:15	|
Claremorris		08:25	11:25	13:25	16:25	18:25	19:25
Knock		08:35	|	13:35	16:35	|	19:35
IWAK		08:52	|	13:52	16:52	|	19:52
Charlestown		09:02	|	14:02	17:02	|	20:02
Swinford		09:12	|	14:12	17:12	|	20:12
Ballyvary		09:25	|	14:25	17:25	|	20:25
Balla		|	11:40	|	|	18:40	|
Castlebar	08:30	09:35	11:55	14:35	17:35	18:55	20:35
Westport	08:55	09:55	12:15	14:55	17:55	19:15	20:55

Appendix 2 –Route 440 Timetable - Continued

Sunday & Public Holidays

Westport	09:30		13:00	16:00	19:00
Castlebar	09:50		13:20	16:20	19:20
Balla	10:05		|	16:35	|
Ballyvary	|		13:30	|	19:30
Swinford	|		13:43	|	19:43
Charlestown	|		13:53	|	19:53
IWAK	|		14:03	|	20:03
Knock	|		14:20	|	20:20
Claremorris	10:25	10:30	14:30	16:50	20:30
Knock	10:35	|	|	17:00	|
Ireland West Airport Knock	10:52	|	|	17:17	|
Ballyhaunis		10:50	14:50		20:50
Castlerea		11:10	15:10		21:10
Roscommon		11:37	15:37		21:37
Athlone		12:10	16:10		22:10

Athlone	08:45		14:45		17:45
Roscommon	09:18		15:18		18:18
Castlerea	09:45		15:45		18:45
Ballyhaunis	10:05		16:05		19:05
IWAK	|	10:58	|	17:58	|
Knock	|	11:15	|	18:15	|
Claremorris	10:25	11:25	16:25	18:25	19:25
Knock		|	16:35	|	19:35
IWAK		|	16:52	|	19:52
Charlestown		|	17:02	|	20:02
Swinford		|	17:12	|	20:12
Ballyvary		|	17:25	|	20:25
Balla		11:40	|	18:40	|
Castlebar		11:55	17:35	18:55	20:35
Westport		12:15	17:55	19:15	20:55