

Transport accounts for 30% of Ireland's primary energy consumption new report reveals

- Transport now the fastest growing emissions sector in Ireland**
- CO₂ emissions in transport 120% above 1990 levels in 2001**

Transport now accounts for 30% of Ireland's primary energy consumption, up from 22% in 1990. Private cars are responsible for 40% of this, with other road vehicles accounting for a similar proportion. That is according to David Taylor, Chief Executive, Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI), who was speaking in Dublin today at the launch of a new report on energy efficiency in transport. The report was compiled by Sustainable Energy Ireland's Energy Policy Statistical Support Unit.

According to the report, transport has been by far the fastest growing energy end-use sector in Ireland over the period 1990 - 2001, with average annual growth of 7.1%. By 2001, energy related CO₂ emissions from transport were 120% above 1990 levels and represented 26% of Ireland's energy related CO₂ emissions. This is markedly different from the situation in 1990 when transport was responsible for only 17% of such emissions.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Ireland's target is to limit annual greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels by the period 2008 - 2012. However, it is projected that transport energy related CO₂ emissions will rise to 180% above 1990 levels by 2010, unless action is taken.

Speaking at the launch of the report David Taylor said, "While we have seen substantial growth in Ireland's energy use over the last decade, trends in transport are giving the greatest cause for concern. The most significant single influence has been the activity level of the economy, with growth in transport energy demand closely coupled to GDP. In addition, road travel continues to be the dominant form of transport for passengers in Ireland. As a result we have seen an increase in the number of cars on the road, an increase in car usage and changes in the structure of the vehicle fleet in Ireland towards larger cars".

The number of private cars at the end of year 2000 stood at 1.3 million, compared with less than 0.8 million in 1990. Year 2000 was a bumper year for the motor trade, with 225,000 new cars being bought. The report shows a significant move during the 1990s towards larger cars that consume more energy. This change in the structure of the national fleet has considerably offset the improved energy efficiencies of new models achieved by car manufacturers.

The SEI report explores the impacts of changes in purchasing behaviour that might arise from the Vehicle Registration Tax and Annual Road Tax rebalancing measures proposed in the government's National Climate Change Strategy. The report indicates that annual transport related CO₂ emissions could be reduced by up to 53,000 tonnes if 10% of car buyers were to shift to the nearest more efficient engine capacity band.

In this regard, the report points out that an EU directive is already in force in Ireland requiring all new passenger cars for sale to be individually labelled with fuel economy and CO₂ emissions information. Posters must be displayed in showrooms giving the information for all models for sale. A free guide is produced and regularly updated by the Society of the Irish Motor Industry for all new car models offered for sale or lease within the State.

However, according to Mr. Taylor, "Securing significant emissions reductions in private cars depends more on usage than on purchasing patterns. For example, the report reveals that up to 441,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions could be avoided if the average annual mileage in private cars was reduced from 20,000 km to 18,000 km. The challenge is to make this happen, by some combination of economic signals, regulatory signals or other motivation to shift to public transport and other choices. Measures that could be introduced to achieve such a reduction could include incentives for teleworking, parking tax and congestion charges. Of course such measures would need to work hand in hand with improved public transport options".

Sustainable Energy Ireland is a statutory authority charged with promoting and assisting the development of sustainable energy. Sustainable Energy Ireland is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 with programmes part financed by the European Union.

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Editors Notes:

About SEI's Energy Policy Statistical Support Unit

SEI has a lead role in developing and maintaining comprehensive national and sectoral statistics for energy production, transformation and end use. This data is a vital input to meeting international reporting obligations, advising policy makers, and informing investment decisions. Based in Cork, the Energy Policy Statistical Support Unit is SEI's specialist statistics team. Its core functions are to:

- collect, process and publish energy statistics to support policy analysis and development in line with national needs and international obligations
- conduct analyses of energy services sectors and sustainable energy options;
- contribute to the development and promulgation of appropriate sustainability indicators