

Smarter Travel at UL Briefing Note



March 2023

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Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
B&E	Buildings and Estates
GA	Governing Authority
ISCycle	Inclusive e-bike uptake and Sustainable Use
LCCC	Limerick City and County Council
LNDR	Limerick Northern Distributor Road
LSMATS	Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Areas Transport Strategy
NTA	National Transport Authority
RSA	Road Safety Authority
TFI	Transport for Ireland
UL	University of Limerick

Executive Summary

Arising from a collaborative bid between the University of Limerick (UL), Limerick City Council, and Limerick County Council to a national competition, Limerick City was designated a Smarter Travel Demonstration City in 2012. The following year UL signed a Smarter Travel Charter committing it to implementing and promoting a range of Smarter travel initiatives.

Prior to rolling out the Smarter Travel initiatives baseline data was collected on the commuting origins and modal split of both staff and students. The most recently published data (2019) shows that 52% of staff and 77% of students commute to UL from within the UL environs and Limerick City. Trends show more staff are walking, cycling or taking the bus compared with 2011. Fewer staff are commuting to work by car with a negligible decrease in the number of people car sharing. Similar trends can be observed for students with the exception that fewer students are commuting to and from UL by bus and far more students are car sharing. For its efforts in promoting Smarter Travel, UL has won multiple national awards and has also been recognized internationally.

The Smarter Travel initiatives deployed by Buildings and Estates (B&E) at UL fall into three categories namely infrastructural, challenges/incentives/giveaways and, communication. Infrastructural initiatives implemented to date include the installation of secured covered bicycle parking, additional pedestrian/cycling shared paths and showers. Challenges such as Marchathon and Walktober, incentives e.g. cycle training and giveaways such as the free bicycle mechanic and free lights/high viz. gear have all helped to promote the Smarter Travel message and help drive modal shift. Multiple formats are used to publicise Smarter Travel infrastructure and challenges/incentives/giveaways including in-person events such as term start stalls and a First Seven Weeks presence, in print using journey planners and posters and online by maintaining a high quality website.

Multiple additional Smarter travel initiatives are also either in planning or in progress. The roll-out of both a docked bicycle scheme and a dockless bicycle scheme in addition to the installation of an e-bikes charging facility and the deployment of additional bicycle parking are in progress and are due to be completed in the coming months. The provision of multiple electric vehicle charge-points will proceed subject to funding. Several shared mobility initiatives are also being trialled by B&E at present namely hire e-Scooters and a hire e-Car. Through the fabrication and installation of a compound B&E are supporting the ISCycle research project aimed at inclusive e-bike uptake and their sustainable use.

In April 2020 the Governing Authority considered a report outlining sustainable and active travel connectivity options to UL. Almost three years on, progress has been on all recommendations made within the report under the control of B&E whilst other recommendations not under their control e.g. the building of the Limerick Northern Distributor Road have unfortunately stalled.

List of accolades/commendations since 2015

Year	Award		
2022	WINNER - RSA Leading Lights Awards 2022 – Education [Third Level] (Smarter Travel Project - Buildings and Estates, UL)		
2019	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards - Health and Event Management Category (Luke O'Driscoll, William Horan, Christopher Asmus & Kate McMahon)		
2018	WINNER – Smarter Travel Curriculum Development Awards 2018 – Research and Practical (Yvonne Ryan, Chemical and Environmental Sciences Department, UL and Seán Collins, Buildings and Estates, UL)		
2018	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Student Multimedia Awards 2018 - Video and Animation Category (Students Chelsea Joyce, Aine Proudfoot, Cathy Ring, Ciara Farrell and Becky Van Rhee)		
2018	FINALIST - Facilities Management Awards 2018 - "Excellence in Sustainability" Category (Smarter Travel - University of Limerick)		
2017	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2017 - Best Walking Campus (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates)		
2017	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2017 - Best Cycling Campus (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)		
2017	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2017 - Best Working Group/Implementers (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)		
2017	FINALIST - National Smarter Travel Awards 2017 - Curriculum Development (Louise Kiernan & Niall Deloughry)		
2017	FINALIST - National Smarter Travel Awards 2017 - Best Student Project (UL Students Jenny Joyce, Reina Leyva, Stephen Johnson, Rafal Zakrzewski)		
2017	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Student Multimedia Awards 2017 - Video and Animation Category (Students Carmel Vitour, Donal Kearns and Patryk Lewandowski)		
2017	RUNNER-UP - National Smarter Travel Student Multimedia Awards 2017 - Video and Animation Category (Students Louise Berg & Robert O' Connor)		
2016	HIGHLY COMMENDED – EAUC Green Gown Awards 2016 – Best Newcomer Category (Smarter Travel Initiative - Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)		
2016	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Student Multimedia Awards 2016 – Audio/song Category (Students)		
2016	WINNER – RSA Leading Lights Awards 2016 – Education [Third Level] (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins)		
2015	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2015 – Campus of the Year (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)		

List of accolades/commendations since 2015 (continued)

Year	Award			
2015	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2015 – Student Union of the Yea (University of Limerick Students' Union)			
2015	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2015 - Best Cycling Campus (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)			
2015	WINNER - National Smarter Travel Awards 2015 – Sustainable Champions of the Year (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)			
2015	WINNER – RSA Leading Lights Awards 2015 – Education [Third Level] (Seán Collins and Ross Higgins, Buildings and Estates, UL)			

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Limerick City was designated Ireland's First Smarter Travel Demonstration City following a national competition in 2012. The Limerick Smarter Travel bid was a joint initiative by Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council in partnership with the University of Limerick. Arising from this, UL has been a particularly active Smarter Travel Campus since 2013 when the University signed a charter committing it to implementing a range of Smarter Travel initiatives on campus. Figure 1.1 shows Robert Reidy, Director, Buildings and Estates (B&E) accepting the charter from Minister of State for Public and Commuter Transport, Alan Kelly.



Figure 1.1 Robert Reidy receiving the Smarter Travel Charger from Minister Alan Kelly

The success of B&E's roll-out of the Smarter Travel initiative is evidenced by the large number of awards and commendations it has received at both a national and international level. Throughout the COVID period, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Road Safety Authority (RSA) postponed the issuing of awards. In the interim the NTA has decided to scrap the issuing of awards in favour or rolling out the *Smarter Travel Mark*. This is an evidence-based accreditation awarded to organisations (including third level institutions) who meet strict requirements in terms of their Smarter Travel policy, communications and on-campus facilities and infrastructure (available to both staff and students). In advance of its roll-out, UL participated in an NTA-run pilot for the *Smarter Travel Mark*. This indicated UL would be successful in achieving this demanding award when it is rolled out in 2023.

1.2 Staff and student commuting patterns

For a number of years prior to COVID, B&E surveyed the travel patterns of both staff and students on an annual basis. Some interesting insights provided by this data is provided in Figure 1.2 to Figure 1.5 below. Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 shows the results of UL's year on year travel surveys since 2014 for staff and students respectively compared with the baseline year of 2011. A positive number indicates an increase in people commuting to/from UL via the mode indicated whilst a negative number represents a decrease in the number of people using that mode to commute to/from UL. With regards to staff almost all of the measured trends are moving in the right direction with more staff walking, cycling or taking the bus compared with 2011 (see Figure 1.2). Fewer staff are commuting to work by car with a negligible decrease in the number of people car sharing (see Figure 1.2). Similar trends can be observed for students with the exception that fewer students are commuting to and from UL by bus and far more students are car sharing (see Figure 1.3).

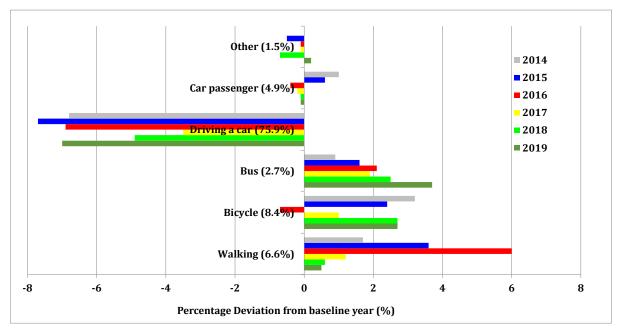


Figure 1.2 Modal shift of UL staff compared to 2011 (baseline year)*

^{*}Numbers shown in parenthesis are baseline figures

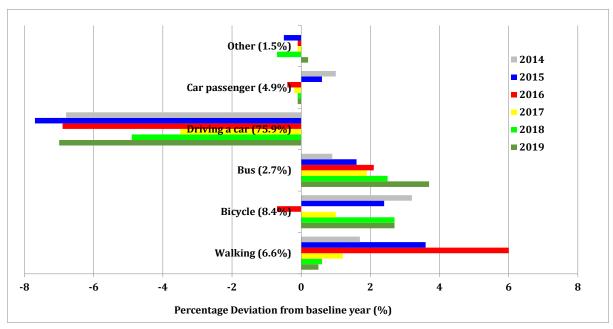


Figure 1.3 Modal shift of UL students compared to 2011 (baseline year)*

Figure 1.4 and Figure 1.5 show the regional level commuting origins of UL staff and students respectively. Figure 1.4 indicates over 52% of staff commute to UL from within Limerick City and its suburbs with 4.3%, 2.9% and 2.8% commuting from Ballina/Killaloe, Newport and Nenagh respectively. Figure 1.5 illustrates that nearly 77% of all students commute to UL from within the UL Environs and Limerick City and its suburbs.

B&E recommenced travel surveys in 2023 however the results are not available at the time of writing.

^{*}Numbers shown in parenthesis are baseline figures

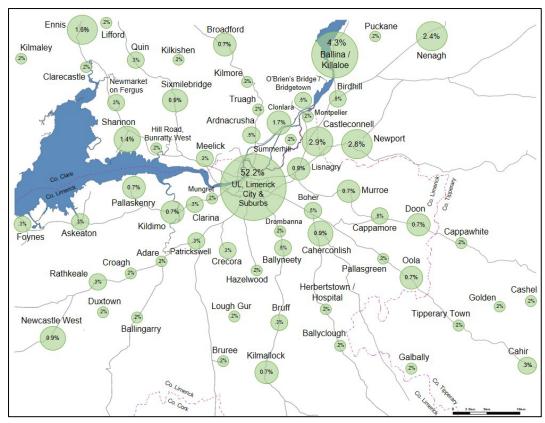


Figure 1.4 Commuting origins of UL staff members (regional scale)

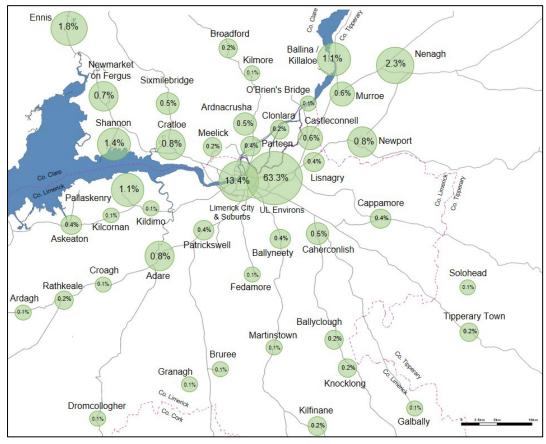


Figure 1.5 Commuting origins of UL students members (regional scale)

2.0 Smarter Travel at UL

2.1 Recent initiatives

Arising from its participation in Limerick Smarter Travel the University has and continues to proactively carry out a range of ongoing measures aimed at improving mobility around campus. The initiatives have fallen into three categories namely infrastructural, challenges/incentives/giveaways and, communication.

2.1.1 Infrastructural initiatives

B&E have deployed a range of infrastructure initiatives to promote active and sustainable forms of commuting to UL (see Figure 2.1). These include pedestrian / cycling shared paths (complemented by the UL to City Centre Riverbank walkway/cycleway), secured covered bicycle parking, free showers, the deployment of electric vehicle charge-points for visitors and the designation of car pooling spaces in staff car parks at prime locations close by to buildings.

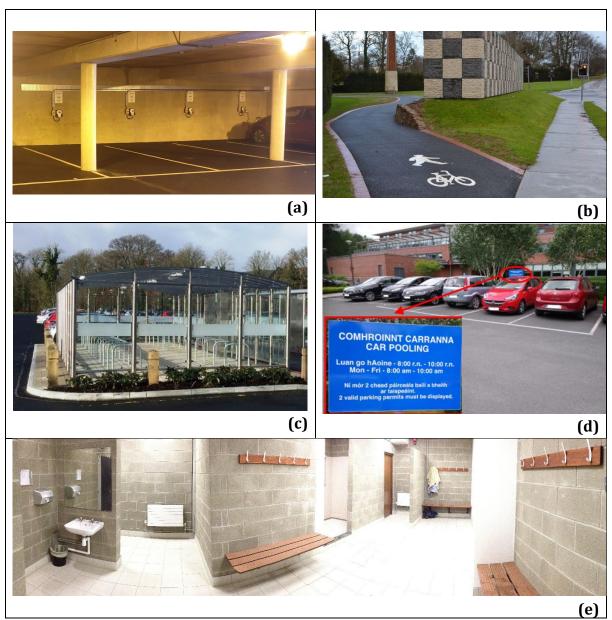


Figure 2.1 (a) Visitor parking electric vehicle charging points, (b) shared cycleway/walkway improvements, (c) secured covered bicycle parking, (d) carpooling parking spaces and (e) free showers.

2.1.2 Challenges/incentives/giveaways

Challenges, incentives and giveaways form a key part of B&E's approach in driving sustainable commuting behaviour. B&E actively promotes National Transport Authority initiatives such as the Marchathon Step Challenge/Pedometer Step Challenge, Walktober, Light Up Your Life etc. (see Figure 2.2). Other initiatives that have helped drive sustainable commuting behaviours include cycle training, free bike mechanic and cycle tours (to the city centre and further afield).

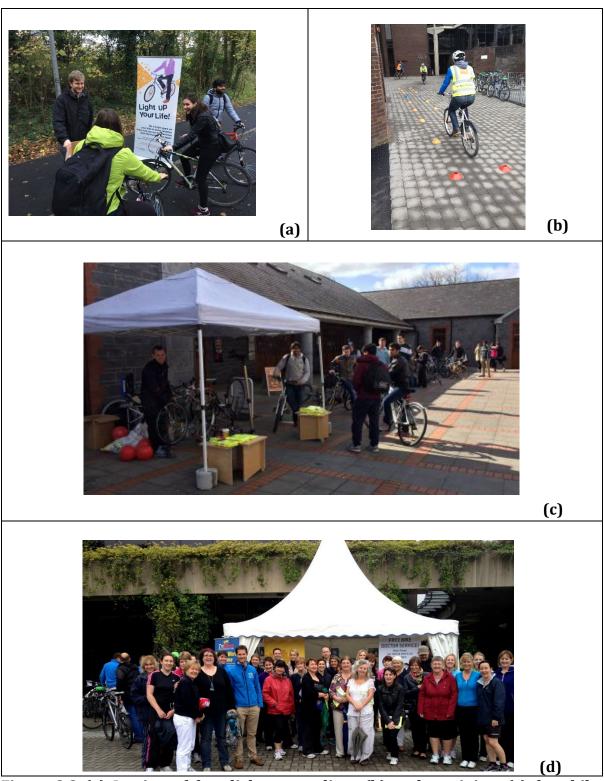


Figure 2.2 (a) Issuing of free lights to cyclists, (b) cycle training, (c) free bike mechanic and (d) pedometer challenge

2.1.3 Communication

Communication of the sustainable commuting options, the infrastructure that supports this and the various challenges incentives and giveaways on campus is achieved through a variety of means (Figure 2.3). These include term start stalls, a First Seven Weeks presence, inclusion of content in Admissions Orientation Guidebook/ Student Academic Affairs Handbook/ Student Life Diary/noticeboards in on-campus accommodation etc., distribution of journey planners, maintenance of a high quality Travel and Transport Webpage and publication of articles in the student newspaper (An Focal).

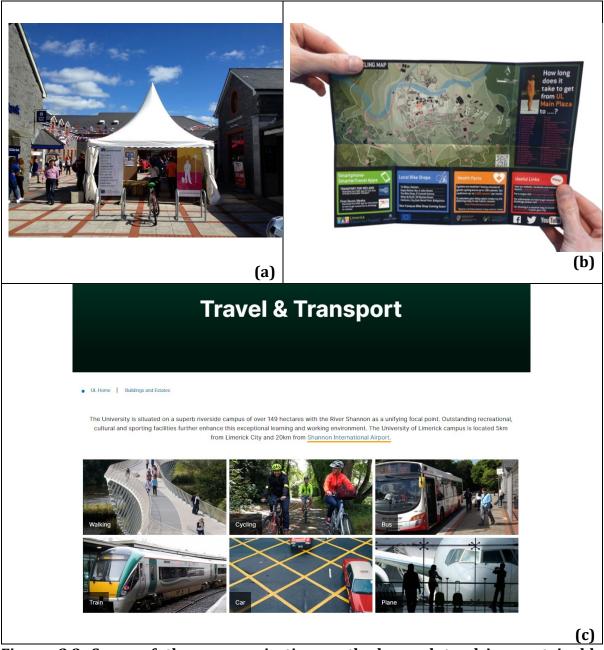


Figure 2.3 Some of the communication methods used to drive sustainable commuting behaviours including (a) term start stalls, (b) journey planner and (c) B&E Travel and Transport webpage

2.2 Upcoming initiatives

2.2.1 Transport for Ireland docked bike scheme (shared mobility)

B&E have remained in active contact with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to explore ways of improving active connectivity to the campus. Whilst the NTA's position in 2020 was that their docked bicycle scheme could not be extended to UL, their position has since changed and the NTA are now committed to installing up to 90 docked bikes in UL at no cost to the university. The bikes will be installed across two different locations under their Transport for Ireland (TFI) initiative. B&E together with the NTA are finalising the design for the installation of the first 60 bikes in P18, the Foundation Pay Car Park, adjacent to the secured covered bicycle parking (see Figure 2.4). Both sites have been carefully chosen to ensure high visibility and excellent connectivity to transport infrastructure and other transport options.



Figure 2.4 (a) Image of the TFI docked bicycle scheme and locations identified for its deployment at UL at (b) P18 Foundation Pay Car Park and (c) P2 Pay Car Park opposite the Stables

2.2.2 Dockless bike scheme (shared mobility)

Over a lengthy period, B&E have persistently encouraged Limerick City and County Council to execute their plan of rolling out a dockless bike scheme in the Castletroy area (Figure 2.5). This has paid dividends and LCCC, in early 2023, confirmed the appointment of a mobility partner, TIER, to deliver this service. B&E have met with TIER to advise of commuting hotspots from UL suburbs to UL main campus with a view to locating dockless bikes at these locations. TIER will be putting a dockless bike scheme in operation in the suburbs from April/May 2023. In support of the dockless bike scheme, LCCC have also committed to installing additional bike parking on UL's campus, particularly in close proximity to student villages.



Figure 2.5 TIER's dockless bike scheme

2.2.3 Provision of e-bike charging facilities

B&E has received approval to install a <u>Powerbox One</u> e-bike charging facility at the secured covered bicycle parking hub at the Foundation Building (see Figure 2.6). Up to eight cyclists will be able to charge their e-bikes simultaneously (and securely). Use of the facility will be free of charge and accessible to staff and students only. The aim is to encourage more people to make active travel journeys and if these units are successful B&E will seek to roll out more across the campus.



Figure 2.6 The PowerBox One e-bike charging solution

2.2.4 Deployment of additional covered bicycle parking

In the most recent round of the devolved grant, Healthly UL were successful in securing funding to promote active travel in the form of cycling at UL. Under their plans, Healthy UL are planning to procure seven bike pods which B&E will locate outside buildings once they arrive on site (Figure 2.7).



Figure 2.7 Velo-Boxx bike pod with storage for up to five bikes

2.2.5 Roll out of electric vehicle charge-points

B&E has completed a technical review of car parks with the capacity to accommodate electric vehicle charge-points. As per Figure 2.8 below, nine locations have been identified as follows:

- Foundation
- Underground Car Park
- Pavilion
- Schuman
- KBS
- Science and Education Building
- Thomond
- Cappavilla
- Kilmurry

The enabling works to allow the installation of electric vehicle charge-points in all locations amounts to €218,000. Funding has yet to be secured. Once the enabling works have been completed multiple options exist to deploy the electric vehicle charge-points namely 'as a purchase', 'as a service' or a 'revenue share' option.

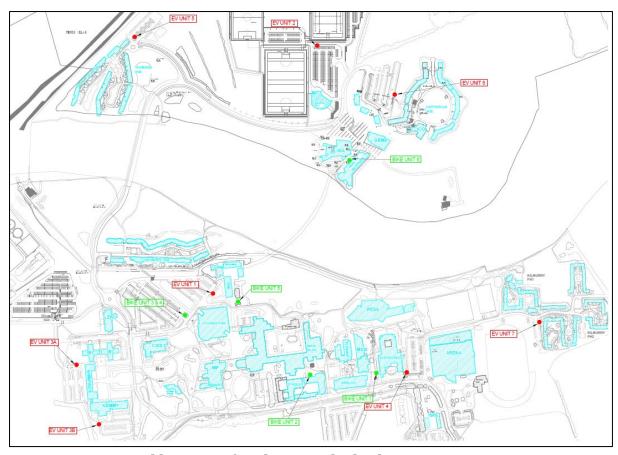


Figure 2.8 Proposed locations for electric vehicle charge-points

3.0 Research and research supported initiatives

3.1 Recent initiatives/trials

3.1.1 e-scooters (*shared mobility service*)

Under current legislation e-scooters need to be taxed, insured and require a driving license to operate in a public place. However, the Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021, which will legislate for their use, is currently before the Oireachtas (at Stage 9 of 11) and is expected to become law this year. In anticipation of this at the behest of the President B&E teamed up with shared mobility provider Moby to trial a fleet of 30 e-scooters on campus over a six-month period from September 2022 (see Figure 3.1). To comply with the law, the e-scooters were 'geofenced' to ensure they could not be used in public places outside of the University grounds. Over the 25 weeks that the e-scooters have been in service, 931 users made 1,977 trips with each user taking an average of 2 trips. The most popular time to use the e-scooter was observed as being from 5-6pm and the most popular routes were as follows:

- Thomond Village to Kemmy Business School
- Thomond Village to Medical School Building
- · Kemmy Business School to University Arena
- Tierney Building to Physical Education & Sports Science Building

Once the trial ends, B&E's findings will be collated with a view to informing the future use of e-scooters on campus.



Figure 3.1 Moby e-scooters deployed on campus

3.1.2 e-Car (shared mobility)

UL together with Limerick City and County Council, Limerick Clare Energy Agency, GoCar and ESB are project partners on the Horizon 2020 funded <code>+CityxChange</code> project (which aims to deploy Positive Energy Blocks and Districts and pave the way for Europe-wide deployment of Positive Energy Districts by 2050 and ultimately fully Positive Energy Cities). Arising from its participation in this project, UL are providing a hub for fully electric e-Car on campus i.e. the first fully electric vehicle available to rent and drop off at a University campus in Ireland (Figure 3.2). The shared mobility service is centrally located on campus adjacent to secured covered bicycle parking and offers excellent onward connectivity to both residents and those arriving on campus by sustainable means. The e-car which went into service in mid-February 2023 will remain in place until the +CityxChange project concludes in October 2023. In the 4 weeks since being rolled out, the GoCar has been used by 8 unique users to cover over 650km. Usage of the service will continue to be monitored to establish its utility and determine whether UL should seek to permanently host such a service.

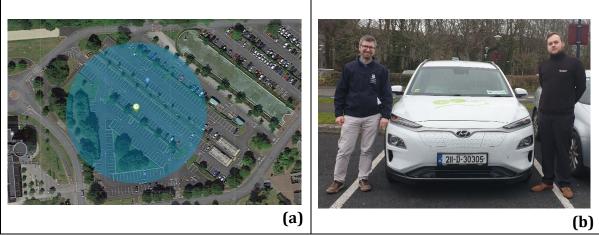


Figure 3.2 (a) Aerial view of Foundation Car Park showing GoCar base and (b) the GoCar being delivered to UL

3.2 Upcoming initiatives

3.2.1 ISCycle

The <u>ISCycle project</u> (i.e. Inclusive e-bike uptake and Sustainable use) examining how e-bikes can change transport behaviours to improve health and protect the environment was recently launched at UL. As part of the trial a range of bikes will be loaned to participants for a 4, 8 or 12 week period. B&E will contribute to this project by fabricating a compound in the underground car park from which the bikes can be loaned, returned and securely stored for the duration of the project.

4.0 The Governing Authority's position

In April 2020 a review of sustainable and active travel connectivity options at UL (including recommendations) was presented to the Governing Authority. The review which the Governing Authority (GA) welcomed, included a series of recommendations which were predicated on the wish to remove traffic from the campus and environs by promoting travel modes in the following order: on foot, cycling, micro mobility, public transport, park and ride and finally private car. Having considered the review and the recommendations made therein (see Table 4.1) the GA suggested that the current focus should be on two recommendations that can move ahead i.e. the Burlington site car park and bicycle parking. The former was predicated on Clare County Council delivering the greenway connecting the Gillogue Bridge to UL's main campus and the Black Bridge restoration proceeding. Unfortunately, this project has stalled. However progress is being made on bicycle parking (see Section 2.2.1 and 2.2.2).

Table 4.1 summarises the recommendations made to the Governing Authority in April 2020 and their current status.

Table 4.1 Recommendations made to Governing Authority in April 2020 together with their current status

No.	Recommendation description	Current status
1	UL should work with the relevant authorities to deliver a light rail link from	UL has made several submissions to the Draft Limerick
	UL to the city in favour of other large scale projects such as a cable car link/	Shannon Metropolitan Areas Transport Strategy on this,
	monorail or a canal barge/hovercraft link.	however it has not been included in the final version.
2	UL should trial its own private express bus service between the city centre	UL's City Campus being developed for interim use and so
	and the University. The service should be direct, with little or no	limited requirement for private bus until these works are
	intermediate stops. UL should work with LCCC and the necessary	completed.
	stakeholders to ensure that a permanent rapid link bus corridor from UL to	As part of the recently announced Bus Connects , B&E working
	Limerick City centre, and, a bus hub serving UL with direct access to Plassey	with NTA to agree a new bus depot with direct access to
	Park Road are constructed.	Plassey Park Road.
3	UL should continue to work with the Burlington site owners, Clare County	The utility of securing access to the Burlington Car Park is
	Council, the Office of Public works and LCCC to ensure access to the	contingent on Clare County Council delivering the greenway
	Burlington site car park is secured, a greenway connecting the Gillogue	connecting the Gillogue Bridge to UL's main campus and the
	Bridge to UL's main campus proceeds and the restoration of the Black	Black Bridge restoration proceeding. Unfortunately, this
	Bridge is undertaken.	project has stalled.
4	In addition to continuing the implementation of existing measures aimed at	Additional bike parking to be rolled out (see Section 2.2.4).
	ensuring bicycle safety on campus, it is recommended to spend €300,000	Also, B&E liaising with NTA to secure further bike parking at
	in the medium term on the provision of secured and covered bicycle	no cost to the University.
	parking.	
5	UL should continue to work with LCCC to deliver mobility improvements	Both docking station free and docked bicycle sharing schemes
	between UL's main campus and the City Centre. It is recommended to	to be deployed at UL in the coming months (see Section 2.2.1
	pursue a Docking Station-Free Bicycle Sharing Scheme whereby bicycles	and 2.2.2).
	are registered on an App and tracked via GPS, in favour of the Coca-Cola	
	Zero Bike Scheme which is more costly.	
6	UL should work with the NTA, LCCC, Clare County Council and the germane	The LDNR has been excluded from LSMATS at the Minister's
	stakeholders to ensure that the following are delivered: the LNDR (as a	behest. Mackey Roundabout improvements contingent on
	priority); agreed road junction improvements at University Road; proposed	LNDR.
	road junction improvements at the Groody and Kilmurry Roundabouts; and,	B&E continuing to work with LCCC and NTA re road junction,
	traffic alleviation measures at the Mackey Roundabout to include the	cycle lane and bus lane improvements at University Road.
	provision of Park and Ride facilities in the area.	

