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Public transport first, congestion charge later - Kennedy

DEPUTY MICHAEL Kennedy, Fianna Fail's Dublin North TD, has rejected as premature discussions on the introduction of a congestion charge on the grounds that the Dublin transport network is currently not up the task of completely replacing cars as the primary commuter route into the city.

Deputy Kennedy said: "Whilst I feel that a congestion charge similar to that of London's is a long-term solution for Dublin's growing traffic problems, I feel it is not an appropriate measure for the city at this time."

"The proposal came out of a meeting of the Dail Transport Committee, of which I am a member and when the idea was floated, I stressed that the plan could not go ahead without more buses, DARTs, the introduction of the Metro or without further Park and Ride facilities. Charging people for driving into the city centre when public transport networks in some areas need further upgrading, is not feasible."

"In my own area of Dublin North, public transport is improving all the time. However, residents in the region could not rely on it in all cases, as an alternative to cars. There is a need to provide in the first instance the Metro to Swords and a DART extension to Balbriggan, both of which are included in Transport 21."

"I do believe that reducing congestion in the city is desirable, but in my opinion we need to have public support first. Once Transport 21 is completed, we can readdress the issue and assess the feasibility of a congestion charge," Deputy Kennedy concluded.