

Transport Ministers Roll out Approval, *in Principle*, Enabling Blood Bikes to Use Bus Lanes

The Department of Transport granted approval, in principle, in October 2025 permitting Blood Bikes Medical Transport to use the bus lane network, enabling blood bikes to bypass traffic congestion and reduce collection and delivery times for vital medical and blood supplies. However, the full legislative changes and stakeholder consultation are now needed to formally roll out new traffic regulations.

Ireland's Blood Bike groups use vehicles to rapidly transport medical and clinical items to and from hospitals and other healthcare facilities around the country. This voluntary service reduces the demand on HSE ambulances or private operators.

Road traffic regulations in this country do not currently permit the use of bus lanes by blood bikes, or provide an exemption from road tolls, with the possibility of blood bikers being stopped or fined if found to be doing so.

However, the first step to changing the situation was made with approval granted last October by the Department of Transport to enable them to bypass traffic congestion and reduce transit times for collections and deliveries.

In granting the approval, in principle, the Minister for Transport, Darragh O'Brien TD, said: "Blood Bikes Medical Transport volunteers provide a crucial health service, and this decision acknowledges the importance of their work to our society. Every day, Blood Bike volunteers transport vital medical supplies between hospitals and patients across the country quickly and efficiently."

The Minister had met with volunteers Michael Noonan and Fergus Lennon in July 2025 to hear about the transport services they provide. "They are among the 140 dedicated volunteers who give their time, free of charge, to ensure the service is both efficient and dependable," he noted.

INDISPENSABLE SUPPORT SERVICE

Minister of State with responsibility for International and Road Transport, Logistics, Rail and Ports, Seán



Blood Bikes Medical Transport, a registered charity, transports clinical items to and between healthcare facilities in Ireland. There are now up to 140 Blood Bike volunteers, handling over 6,000 calls annually.

BLOOD BIKE LEGISLATION

Canney TD, welcomed the decision to grant, in principle, permission for blood bikes to use the bus lane network.

“They provide an indispensable support service to our health service; volunteers respond to almost 6,000 calls each year and their work contributes to the health and wellbeing of countless patients and their families. They also bring huge benefit to staff in our hospitals, medical centres, nursing homes and other healthcare settings.”

The Department of Transport is currently seeking the views of key stakeholders, including the Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, National Transport Authority and Dublin Bus, prior to the extension of bus lane access to Blood Bikes Medical Transport.

On 11 December last, in a parliamentary question to Minister Canney, Jennifer Whitmore Social Democrats TD for Wicklow, had asked the Minister to “advise on the stakeholder process, further to

AS OF EARLY 2026, THE STATUS OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

- **Ministerial Decision:** The approval acknowledges the critical role of approximately 140 volunteers who handle roughly 6,000 emergency calls annually, transporting vital medical supplies between hospitals and laboratories.
- **Legislative Requirements:** While approval has been granted in principle, a formal legislative amendment to the Road Traffic (Traffic and Parking) Regulations 1997 is required to officially permit these vehicles in bus lanes without the risk of fines.
- **Current Progress (2026):** In December 2025, officials confirmed they had begun a review of the relevant legislation. The Department of Transport continues to engage with stakeholders –including the Road Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the National Transport Authority – to finalize the implementation framework.
- **Scope of the Change:** The proposed changes, highlighted in the Road Traffic and Roads (Blood Bikes Exemption) (Amendment) Bill 2025, aim to grant blood bike operators the same exemptions as ambulances, which include access to bus lanes and exemptions from road tolls.

NOTE: Until the legislative changes are officially enacted and road signs are updated, Blood Bike volunteers may still technically be subject to existing traffic laws and should verify their insurance coverage regarding the use of bus lanes.

“IT’S STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS” – Fergus Lennon, Blood Bikes Leinster

According to Fergus Lennon, Founder and Director of Blood Bike Leinster, there has been some positive news regarding the bus lanes. “We met in December last year with the admin team to try and get this over the line. It’s still a work in progress”.

Speaking recently to ‘Emergency Services Ireland’, Lennon said he remains confident that Blood Bikes Medical Transport will “get this over the line within the coming months”, pointing out that “the legal team is making sure this is watertight and will not lead to a courtroom battle by other medical services saying they are doing what we do”.

However, he described the issue with the road toll payments on the motorways as “a different kettle of fish” and added they have had no meetings with the Department of Transport up to now.

“With the Christmas upon us it was impossible to get an answer, but we are at the start of the year so we can now push forward to pin them down on this. I was in talks with them many years ago and at that time, it was then a straightforward ‘NO’. But since then, as our vehicles are now resembling HSE ambulance type vehicles we don’t have that problem.

“Well, while our group does not, other groups still must display the required tags on their windscreens, so hopefully we can get it through for all groups. One main issue that I did take from our last meeting, is that they want the vehicles to be yellow and green, with drivers to have green and yellow jackets. No unmarked vehicles will be allowed to use the bus lanes.”



approval in principle for a service to use the bus lane network while carrying out their services”. She also queried the proposed timelines for such activity.

In response, the Minister pointed out that his department officials had been in contact with members of Blood Bikes Medical Transport regarding access to the bus lane network. “My officials have started a review of the relevant legislation, and over the coming months, my department intends to continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the best legislative outcome for all parties.

“Considering the ongoing stakeholder engagement and potential legislative complexities, it is not possible at present to provide a definitive timeline for the introduction of the required legislative amendment.”

Blood Bikes Medical Transport is a registered charity which assists Ireland’s health service by transporting clinical items to and between healthcare facilities. There are almost 140 Blood Bike volunteers, handling 6,000 calls annually. Blood Bike volunteers provide their service free of charge.