



Submission to the National Transport Authority re BusConnects Phase 3 Corridors May 2019

Dublin Chamber, on behalf of our 1,300 member companies, welcomes the opportunity to offer feedback regarding BusConnects and the redesign of the Dublin Area Bus Network.

Dublin Chamber commends the National Transport Authority (NTA) on its decision to consider a new and improved bus network for the Dublin region. We also recognise the substantial amount of work that has been carried out by the NTA to examine the suitability and functioning of the current network and to utilise both the feedback of users and evidence of international best practice.

Dublin Chamber recognises the importance of public transport, with the bus network at its heart, to the success of Dublin. We share the NTA's ambition to have more people using public transport and for Dublin to have a public transport network that rivals those in the best cities in the world.

The delivery of a much-improved public transport system will require a significant increase in the level of investment in public transport services by Government. Higher levels of investment will be required over a concerted period of time in order to address the shortfall of the past decade. This is particularly true in the case of the bus network, where the amount of money available is limiting the ability of the NTA and transport providers to deliver a reliable, consistent, efficient and – importantly – sustainable service.

Overview of Dublin Chamber Position

Dublin Chamber is broadly supportive of the BusConnects proposal. The proposed redesign comes at a crucial time for the Dublin region, given the current growth and economic prosperity being experienced, and in light of the growth and opportunities that are forecast over the coming years and decades.

In particular, we welcome the ambition put forward in the BusConnects plan to:

- Increase bus priority throughout the city, particularly in the core city centre
- Improve and simplify the fare structure and ticketing options
- Reduce the quantity of routes and buses travelling through the city centre while increasing the frequency of city centre services.
- Improve walking and cycling infrastructure alongside (and in coordination with) the bus network changes.

We would like to see each of these aims remain at the forefront of any future iterations of the BusConnects plan. Dublin Chamber accepts that a considerable amount of revision and changes will be required to ensure that any final plan is workable. We also accept that a certain amount of refinement is required to the local routes which will feed the core spines of BusConnects.

A more detailed outline of the Chamber's views is included in the remainder of this document. We look forward to working further with the NTA on the BusConnects proposal over the coming months.

The Need for a Network Rethink

Dublin Chamber believes that the current bus network in Dublin is no longer fit for purpose and we support the decision to revise the network.

Dublin Chamber supports the aim of encouraging more people to use public transport. However, there are a number of flaws with the current network which are acting as a barrier to achieving this aim.

An efficient and reliable public transport system is a requirement for a successful Dublin – and will be central to achieving a high quality of life in the city. In that regard, Dublin is currently significantly behind where it needs to be. It is a fact that too many people in the city still do not have the standard of bus service that they require and deserve. This is due to poor forward planning and a 'disconnect' between land use and transport planning over many years.

In particular, the failure to deliver underground mass transit solutions over the past several decades has left Dublin's transport system in a far from desirable state. Dublin Chamber has recently welcomed the publication of the emerging preferred route for the MetroLink and is anxious that after many years of discussion that the urgently needed infrastructure project gets approval. Contrastingly, it is disappointing to see the Dart Underground is once again

not on the list of priorities for Irish Rail as they focus on increasing their fleet. For Dublin to effectively manage its transport system and reduce its congestion it needs all of these large infrastructure projects to be implemented, including BusConnects.

The continued prosperity of Dublin is dependent on an improvement in the city's public transport network. Dublin Chamber's Vision for Dublin 2050, recognises the importance of a world-class public transport to a high quality of life being available in the city. The people of Dublin desire a city that is easy to move around, where public transport is reliable, sustainable and efficient. Dublin Chamber believes that a desired commute time of no more than 30 minutes should be achievable from anywhere within the M50 to the city centre by the year 2050.

There is an urgent need for better integration of the various public transport modes in Dublin. Currently, there is an inadequate level of synchronisation across the various modes. This situation has unfortunately not improved as frequencies were increased on the DART and commuter rail lines over the last few months. Particularly during peak commuter times, trains become increasingly crowded as you move closer to the core of the city and there are significant capacity issues making transferring from one service to another undesirable, and in some cases, impossible.

Radial Spines

Dublin Chamber supports the idea of creating spines along the main arterial roads in Dublin. This is reminiscent of the hugely successful 'Finger Plan' in Copenhagen, albeit the Dublin version will run over-ground as opposed to underground.

The creation of these spines will require more dedicated road space for buses. Increased bus priority will be essential to achieving a frequent and reliable service. Dublin Chamber notes the NTA's intention to run buses on these routes at a frequency of between 4 and 8 minutes.

Increasing the amount of dedicated space for buses will ultimately mean less room for cars. While this may have the effect of slowing car journeys through the city, it is hoped that this will have the desired effect of encouraging more people towards taking public transport. According to the Canal Cordon Report since 2010, there has been a trend of increasing modal share for sustainable transport modes, walking, cycling and public transport, with consistent levels of increase each year. In 2018 this figure peaked at 70%, its highest level since 2006.¹ Correspondingly, there has been a year on year decline in car usage. Dublin Chamber welcomes this change but cautions that it will only continue if bus services are made as

¹ https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Canal_Cordon_Report_2018.pdf

attractive as possible. This will require frequent services (no greater than 5 minutes) at peak times. It will also require a high standard of facilities at bus stops, including shelters and reliable real-time information at all stops. Smart technologies should allow for considerable advances in these areas in the coming years. Dublin should look to become an early adopter and innovator of such technologies.

We would also encourage the NTA to consider piloting certain bus routes using more environmentally sustainable vehicles such as bio-methane, hydrogen and electric hybrid busses. The use of electric, hybrid and hydrogen-powered buses in London is expected to reduce emissions by 84%.² This ambition should be replicated in Dublin.

Feeder Services

The ultimate success of the radial spines will depend on how well they are fed by other services. Dublin Chamber recognises that considerable work needs to be done in terms of refining local services. We note considerable resistance to the proposed changes during the consultation phase. Dublin Chamber believes that local communities and users are best placed to offer feedback on how these local routes can be improved. We encourage the NTA to continue with the extensive levels of engagement that have already been carried out around the city.

In future iterations of the BusConnects plan, Dublin Chamber would like to see more attention given to other feeder possibilities, including cycling facilities (cycle lanes and parking facilities) and park and rides along the spines, particularly around the edge of the M50 and the canals. Dublin Chamber believes that improvements to the cycling network in Dublin, in line with the NTA's cycling strategy, which was published in 2013, can significantly complement the public transport network in Dublin.

Orbital Routes

The lack of good orbital routes is a major gap in Dublin's bus network. Too often, bus users are forced to come into the city centre in order to travel back out to another part of the city. For example, someone living in Lucan, who is looking to get to Dublin Airport by public transport, is currently required to take a bus into the centre of Dublin in order to catch another bus northwards. This type of journey is not compelling and leads to people opting to use a private vehicle to make the journey instead. Dublin Chamber welcomes the ambition to change this in BusConnects. There is also an opportunity to further exploit the potential of Dublin Airport as a public transport hub, particularly given plans for the emerging route for the MetroLink line.

² <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/pollution-and-air-quality/cleaner-buses>

Dublin Chamber is disappointed by the lack of attention that has been given in the BusConnects plan to improve the current public transport deficit around the M50. There is very little proposed in the BusConnects plan that will help address the high level of congestion that are currently seen on the M50. We would like to see this addressed in the next iteration of the plan.

Changes to Ticketing

The current ticketing regime is a major barrier to people interchanging in Dublin. Dublin Chamber has long advocated for a fare system that allows the user to pay for where they are going as opposed to how they get there. Dublin Chamber would also welcome a flat fare structure.

Interchanging should be made as simple as possible for users, with short walks and clear and consistent signage and mapping between stops.

Dublin Chamber would like to see the use of cash on public transport phased out over the coming years. The increased use of Leap Cards and the acceptance of other payment options, including debit cards and via phone, will help reduce the frustratingly long dwell times that currently blight bus services in Dublin.

24-hour Bus Routes

Dublin Chamber welcomes the recent announcement by the NTA of the first 24-hour service for Dublin Bus. The 42 route, which runs from Swords serving Dublin Airport, is badly needed and will facilitate Dublin Airport workers who are in need of late night transport. Dublin Chamber would like to see an enhanced roll-out of 24-hour services across the city where appropriate. Late night workers such as those in the hospitality sector or healthcare sector need to have access to these services to commute to and from work. We would like to see more attention given to the possibility of more routes with 24 hour service and how they would be facilitated in the BusConnects plan.

Beyond BusConnects

Dublin Chamber ultimately views the BusConnects project as part of a larger plan to alleviate congestion and enhancing public transport infrastructure in the City. On its own, BusConnects presents only a short-term measure that will enable the existing transport network to function for as long as possible. In the medium-to-long term, much more ambitious investment is required in Dublin's transport infrastructure. The lack of a modern, reliable public transport system is already acting as a barrier to the city's ability to take up the investment and jobs opportunities that are coming its way. While we welcome the aims of BusConnects in providing a more efficient bus service, the reality is that projects such as MetroLink and Dart Underground must be progressed alongside it, without delay.