



Dublin City Council/NTA College Green Proposals

Dublin Chamber of Commerce Submission to Public Consultation

- May 2016 -

Introduction

Dublin Chamber welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed College Green Traffic Management Measures. The Chamber wishes to ensure that the best transport plan for College Green and Dublin emerges from this consultation process.

The following recommendations are based on consultation with and feedback from our 1,300 member companies, which account for more 300,000 staff. The Chamber is uniquely positioned as representing business of various sectors that are located in the heart of the city as well across the county.

Overview

The efficient movement of people through *and around* the city centre is of critical importance to Dublin's future. From our consultation with members, it is clear that an increase in congestion is being felt and of real concern for their businesses. In this context, Dublin Chamber has championed a number of urgent actions which would address the issue of congestion. These are: the need for significant investment to address long-term issues; and more efficient traffic planning in the short-term to reduce congestion until long-term proposals come on stream.

Dublin Chamber and its members acknowledge that change is required to the way in which College Green currently operates in order to facilitate Luas Cross City - a much-needed new addition to the public transport offering in Dublin.

At a broad level, Dublin Chamber is supportive of the College Green proposals and of the overarching aims of the plan, provided that the changes do not negatively impact on congestion in the wider city. Dublin Chamber believes that the addition of Luas Cross City presents an opportunity to make positive changes to the way in which city functions.

The proposed traffic management measures potentially present a number of major benefits to the city, including:

- An improvement in safety for cyclists and pedestrians in the College Green area; and

- The creation of a new civic space, which will showcase some of the city's most unique buildings, i.e. Bank of Ireland and Trinity College, and provide a world-class location in which to hold large civic events.

Dublin Chamber members accept that compromise is required to enable a plan to be produced that best meets the needs of the city’s business, commuters, shoppers and visitors. Potentially, the proposed changes offer a chance to increase the attractiveness of public transport and to ensure more fluid traffic movements across the city.

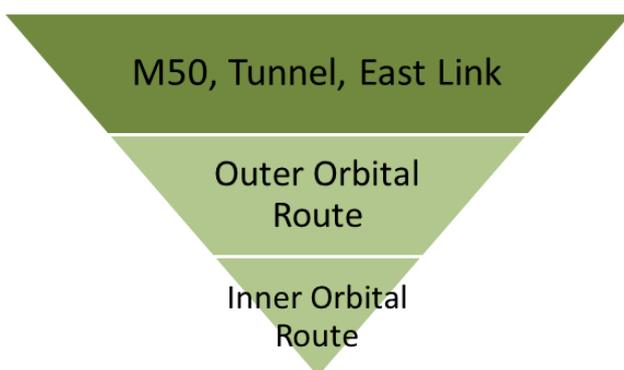
However, that being said, it is important to state from the outset that any changes to the way in which traffic moves around the College Green area will have consequences for the whole of the city, extending out to the M50. **Dublin Chamber is particularly concerned about the impact on the Quays, which are already heavily congested at peak times.** Notably, we are concerned about the potential impact on bus journey times. Dublin Chamber believes that extensive modelling is required to ensure that the proposals put forward are viable and to ascertain the best/worst/median case scenarios for all areas of the city within the M50.

Dublin Chamber puts forward a number of pre-requisites for any College Green plan:

- The plan must be aligned with Dublin City Council’s existing private car strategy.
- Access to all existing hotels and car parks must be maintained.
- Any changes must be cognisant of the importance of a reliable and speedy bus network to the city.
- The fee structures for Dublin Port Tunnel and East Link Bridge must be made more attractive, to encourage increased use.
- Extensive modelling is required to identify whether the proposed changes are viable.

Alignment With DCC’s Private Car Strategy

Dublin Chamber contends that the plan for College Green should be aligned with the Dublin City



Council strategy for private car movement as outlined on its website (and as indicated in the graphic left). The site states - “If you need to drive through Dublin City, we recommend that you use the following routes: Avoid the core of the city centre - Use the ‘Inner Orbital Route’; Avoid most of the city centre - Use the ‘Outer Orbital Route’; and Avoid the city completely - Use the M50 bypass, Port Tunnel or East Link Bridge.”

However, if private car users are to be enticed to follow this strategy and to use non-core city centre routes, a number of changes are required in order to incentivise them. A number of suggestions to encourage a change in behaviour are laid out in the latter part of this submission.

College Green Plan Must be Cognisant of Other Transport Plans

The College Green plan cannot be considered in isolation. Indeed, the success of the College Green plan will depend considerably on how well it is *integrated* with other plans such as the City Centre Transport Strategy, the GDA Transport Strategy and the Dublin City Development Plan. All of these plans work together to meet short, medium and long-term transport goals, which centre on accommodating future growth and on increasing the attractiveness of public transport usage.

Ultimately, the successful integration and execution of these various plans, if they are ambitious and well-resourced, will lead to a Dublin which is vibrant and dynamic from the core outwards. However, poor execution or weak funding of all or any of the plans will result in the creation of a donut city or, in the worst case scenario, a city that seizes up entirely in both a social and economic sense.

Population Growth

The next 20 years will see significant population growth in the Dublin region. This will place increased strain on the city centre's infrastructure and present significant challenges for the city.

Three out of every 5 people travelling into Dublin city centre on public transport, do so via bus. The City Centre Transport Strategy, published in 2015, shows that bus is the mode of choice for people who live in the core city centre. Indeed, 82 million currently travel through College Green on Dublin Bus each year. Therefore, it is vital that the experience of bus users is not negatively impacted by any changes.

As the city grows, Dublin Chamber believes that an achievable aim is for the level of private car usage to be constrained to current levels. **It should be the aim of Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority going forward to ensure that the additional numbers coming into the city can be accommodated/catered for by public transport.**

The Ripple Effect

If the College Green plan, as proposed, is to be viable, Dublin Chamber believes that a number of changes will be required to ease the pressure of displacement within the Canal cordon. In particular, we contend that consideration should be given to the fee structure on the East Link bridge and the Port Tunnel.

The proposed changes to College Green, which have the aim of displacing private cars from the immediate city centre to alternate routes, further the business case hugely for Dart Underground and Metro North. **The College Green plan also increases the need for other projects**, including: An Eastern Bypass, linking the Port Tunnel with the M50 in the Sandymount area; a Leinster Orbital Route, linking Drogheda (M1), Navan (M3) and Naas (M7/M9). Strong consideration must also be given to the long-term benefit of tunnelled roads under congested parts of the city, notably the north and south quays, which would allow for vehicles to travel easily between either side of the Liffey.

Other measures must also be taken to help encourage more people to opt for public transport when coming into the city centre, including: improved (preferably free or at least low cost) park and ride facilities on the outskirts of the city and close to good public transport links; incentives to

encourage increased car-pooling activity; improved, innovative and simplified ticketing options; and the introduction of new, and refinements of existing, smart technologies for public transport users, including apps, real-time arrival/departure information. In turn, **businesses in the city must look at initiatives such as increased remote working, staggered/more flexible working hours etc.**

Impact Modelling Required

In the absence of extensive modelling regarding the potential impact of the College Green proposals on the wider city, Dublin Chamber raises a number of concerns regarding the workability of the plan. Notably, the scope for key streets areas to accommodate an increase in traffic, predominantly buses. These specifically include: Parliament Street, Capel Street and the Quays. The current bus network must be protected. Any weakening of the bus network will push existing users away from public transport and make alternative modes much less attractive to car users. **It is vital that extensive modelling is carried out and made publicly available to prove the viability of the proposed changes.**

Pedestrian Plaza

College Green is an area of great strategic importance for public transport. In principal, Dublin Chamber is supportive of the idea of creating a large pedestrianised plaza. However, the success of creating such a space will be incumbent upon whether College Green continues to work as a transport artery.

Re-imagining College Green represents an exciting opportunity for Dublin - but only if we get it right. Get it wrong and the consequence will be that people won't want to come in to the city centre - neither by bus nor by car. The plan needs to be supported by hard evidence that it will work.

If the best transport plan for College Green ends up creating a large pedestrian plaza in the heart of the city that rivals that of any city in Europe, that would be a win-win. But it is vital that we don't lose sight of the fact that College Green is a key artery for public transport and must continue to work as such. The changes to College Green will have a significant impact on all modes of transport which operate in the city centre. Over 150m public transport journeys are made annually into and out of Dublin city centre from across Dublin and the surrounding counties. **The creation of a pedestrian plaza in College Green is a nice to have but is ultimately it is a by-product of what must be a workable transport solution.**

Private Car Alternatives

Decreasing the modal share of private cars for daily commuters requires the provision of viable and compelling alternatives. To succeed in being viable and compelling, public transport must be reliable, comfortable and quicker than the private car.

A survey of around 300 Chamber members, carried out earlier this year, gauged what will encourage increased use of public transport given the increasing for commuters issue of traffic congestion. Almost half (49%) of respondents said reliability was most important. One-in-four (25%) respondents

cited frequency as their number one requirement, while the third most important variable was journey time (13%), followed by cost at point of use (9%). Just under 3% said comfort was most important.

User expectations/wants are important when considering the potential impact of diverting bus routes away from the College Green area. The proposed plan would involve the displacement of 40 bus routes in the city centre. This re-routing will cause significant disruption to bus users. Dublin Chamber is concerned whether the two main areas ear-marked for increased bus pick up/drop off activity - Parliament Street and the Quays - will have the capacity to deal with the increased number of passengers, buses and dwell times at stops. Dublin Bus has intimated that increased journey times are likely for a number of routes, while bus speeds are also likely to be impacted. This would be unwelcome and detrimental to the NTA and Dublin City Council's long-term objective to increase the proportion of people using public transport modes. Again, **extensive modelling will be required to ensure that bus services will not be negatively impacted.**

Cycling Infrastructure

The College Green plan must be cognisant of the increased popularity of cycling. The latest figures from the NTA show that an average of almost 11,000 people cycle into the city each day, compared to around 5,000 in 2006. With the number of cyclists in Dublin predicted to grow further in the short-term, and with the planned expansion of the Dublin Bikes Scheme, there is an opportunity to make College Green a world-class cycling thoroughfare.

One downside of the proliferation of cycling in recent years has been the increase in rogue cyclist behaviour. A tightening of the laws around cycling (i.e. fixed penalty notices for cyclists found breaking red lights) is a welcome step to addressing this problem. However, Dublin Chamber believes that a lack of proper cycling infrastructure in certain areas of the city remains a major contributing factor to poor cyclist behaviour. Experience tells us that where good cycling infrastructure is put in place (i.e. along Grand Canal), the behaviour of cyclists improves. This is an important consideration when it comes to the design of any pedestrian area on College Green.

Dublin Chamber would like to see dedicated/segregated two-way cycle lanes introduced in the College Green 'plaza' area to ensure proper segregation of pedestrians and cyclists.