



Submission on the Consolidated Rail Strategy to 2027

May 2019

Dublin Chamber welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to Iarnród Éireann to inform its consolidated strategy to 2027 and beyond. To ensure that rail services are well placed to meet future demands, the Chamber will highlight relevant issues that are of strategic importance to companies across the Greater Dublin Area. This is an appropriate time to develop a rail strategy to complement and support the delivery of the National Planning Framework, the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies and Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies for Ireland's cities.

Dublin was recently ranked among the most traffic-congested cities in the world, with an average of almost 250 hours lost per driver annually.¹ Traffic congestion in the Dublin region costs the Irish economy an estimated €350 million per annum, rising to €2 billion per annum by 2033.² However, the city is already experiencing a shift to more sustainable modes of transport with increasing numbers of people preferring to cycle or use Dublin Bus, Luas, DART and Rail services. In order to reduce rising congestion and meet the growing demand for alternative forms of transport Iarnród Éireann must be innovative in its future planning, aiming both to meet project future demand and to deliver high quality services that will encourage further modal shift from private car usage to public transport.

The Chamber has followed the format suggested by Iarnród Éireann, addressing three questions on the current strengths & limitations of rail services, the biggest opportunities and challenges, and prioritisation of future projects.

What are the main strengths, benefits and limitations of existing rail services?

Demand for public transport services has a strong correlation to economic activity. Increases in disposable income, consumer spend and employment caused by strong economic growth create a demand for more travel and increased journeys on all forms of transport, including Rail. Annual PSO public transport passenger journey figures from recent years show a steady increase in rail passenger numbers, with a record 47 million passenger journeys last year on Iarnród Éireann services. This figure is set to rise to 50 million in 2019.³

¹ INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard 2018, <http://inrix.com/scorecard/>

² Dáil Question No: 346, John Lahart TD. Ref No: 1857/17, Proof 348, Answered by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Shane Ross TD.

³ The Irish Times, March 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/tender-out-for-up-to-80-pre-owned-trains-to-meet-urgent-demand-1.3813067>

National transport planning should be based on strengthening Ireland's city regions by connecting core urban areas to their natural commuter zones and to each other. As well as supporting a more sustainable model of national development, this approach will gradually reduce the overall subvention requirements of the rail service and place Iarnród Éireann on a more sound financial footing.

Rail transport plays a vital role in providing efficient and sustainable transport solutions for large urban centres, as well as national and regional connections between large settlements throughout the country. The DART and Dublin Commuter services are vital to the functioning of Dublin businesses. Employees depend on these services, both to travel to the city from commuter towns and to move between hubs within Dublin.

In 2018 both DART and Commuter services increased by 4-5%,⁴ and demand is growing across the rail network. This was impacted in particular by the expansion of services through the Phoenix Park Tunnel and the introduction of the 10-minute DART schedule. The introduction of lower capacity trains on a higher frequency led to capacity issues being reported in some of the north side stations close to the city such as Killester and Clontarf Road.⁵ While the 10-minute service is welcome, it is vital that such changes are accompanied by continued investment in extra rolling stock.

Efforts to encourage a modal shift towards public transport must be coordinated across a number of areas of public policy, including spatial strategy, urban density guidelines, and wider transport plans. Convenience is a priority for commuters at peak traffic times. Complementary services such as Dublin Bike, cycle lanes, and bus stops should be located as close as possible to rail stations to improve connectivity and encourage greater use.

Integrated ticketing is now the norm in most European and Western cities and more needs to be done to deliver an integrated transport system. From a Dublin perspective passengers should be able to easily move between the DART, Luas and DublinBus with a single ticket that is valid for the complete journey. Similarly those using the Intercity services and arriving in Heuston or Connolly should be able to step onto a Bus or Luas service without needing an additional ticket.

The rollout and uptake of the Leap card across the public transport network has been highly effective and provides integration across all public transport in Dublin, with the exception of Intercity Rail services.⁶ The roll out of the Leap card to the Intercity services would be a final step in linking up all public transport services in Dublin including DublinBikes, Bus Éireann, DART and Luas. Following international trends, Irish people increasingly regard contactless card payments as standard, with Touch-Pay technology now used for even the smallest purchases. Rail users in Dublin should be able to 'tag on' using their bank cards as they can in London. Short of this, they should be able to pay from their Leap card account using their smartphone. A simplification of the fare structure should also be considered.

⁴ Transport for Ireland, Press Release, January 2019, <https://www.transportforireland.ie/further-growth-in-passenger-journey-numbers-on-transport-for-ireland-subsidised-services/>

⁵ The Irish Times, Press Release, September 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/irish-rail-acknowledges-dart-changes-have-led-to-problems-1.3625988>

⁶ Joint Committee on Climate Action debate, *Third Report of the Citizens' Assembly: Discussion*, October 2018, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_climate_action/2018-10-04/2/

Dublin Chamber also recommends investment to ensure that stations and trains are accessible and inclusive, particularly to commuters with mobility issues. Wheelchair ramps and accessibility assistance can be provided at most stations but Iarnród Éireann suggests that those with a mobility impairment contact them in advance of travelling to arrange assistance.⁷ This severely impacts on users' ability to rely on the service and use it the same way as a person with no mobility issues. More needs to be done in embracing innovative solutions and encouraging commuter inclusion. Trains should be installed with technology that allows those with mobility issues to be able to safely exit and enter the train and train station without assistance. Such changes would help to support business efforts towards greater workplace inclusion.

Where are the biggest opportunities and challenges to improving services and attracting additional demand?

Dublin Chamber surveyed over 300 companies in 2016 on the question of what would encourage increased use of public transport. Almost half (49%) of respondents said reliability was the most important factor, followed by one-in-four (25%) who cited frequency as their number one requirement. 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.

Dublin Chamber recommends increasing frequencies and maximising the potential of existing lines and services in the Greater Dublin Area. This includes opening up access to existing lines and prioritising new stations, including in expanding areas such as Phibsborough and Pelletstown. The recent calls for tender for a multidisciplinary consultancy team to support the proposed expansion of the Maynooth line is welcome, as is the news that similar tenders will follow this year for the Kildare and Drogheda lines.⁸

With the opening of the Luas expansion and the preferred route of the MetroLink taking shape, strategic planning and smart design is required to ensure that stations where the main transport lines meet, such as Tara and Glasnevin, become future transport hubs and are equipped to handle the increased passenger volume. The proposed relocation of the Docklands Station in Dublin, due to low passenger numbers, to a site significantly closer to the Luas stop at Spencer Dock illustrates the need for joined-up thinking to ensure closer integration of transport services.⁹

Dublin Chamber recommends that in order to facilitate the greater use of public transport, car and bike parking facilities need to be further enhanced at train stations to reduce congestion in the city. Enhanced parking facilities will enable people to switch to public transport services as they travel closer to the city centre.

⁷ Dublin Public Transport, Dublin Trains, <https://www.dublinpublictransport.ie/dublin-trains>

⁸ <https://www.independent.ie/business/irish/ergo-iarnrod-eireann-kicks-off-badly-needed-dart-plan-38033187.html>

⁹ Irish Independent, April 2019, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/irelands-newest-train-station-could-move-because-of-major-shortfall-in-passengers-36916197.html>

Commuter services are currently operating at maximum capacity during the morning and evening peaks¹⁰ and can only provide additional services in off-peak times and at weekends. This has led to an increase in complaints in relation to overcrowding on services and their reliability as a means of commuting to work. While steps have been taken to address the problem, improvements will not be in place before 2021. In the meantime overcrowding and capacity problems will continue to increase. This presents a significant short-term challenge in regards to the reputation of the rail service as being a reliable, comfortable and effective commuter service.

Management of Dublin commuter services which are already at full capacity will be a key challenge in the coming years. Currently these services cannot afford to attract additional demand, and will therefore not be in a position to support modal shift and reduced carbon emissions. Dublin Chamber notes that Iarnród Éireann is currently progressing an order for between 60 to 80 vehicles to go into service by February 2020.¹¹ These are urgently needed to meet commuter demand.

The backlog in train capacity which Dublin faces over the coming years demonstrates the need for longer term planning with regard to investment in rail infrastructure and new rolling stock in particular.

Are there potential changes that should be prioritised to improve:

- **Trains? – station location and access?**
- **Route frequencies and timetables?**
- **Route journey times? – freight transport services?**

Rail investment must be focussed on where it will have the greatest economic, social, and environmental impact. Economic activity in the Greater Dublin Area accounts for just under 50% of Ireland's GVA and represents over 51% of all taxes paid nationally.¹² As well as being the heart of the Irish economy, the Dublin region is home to 40% of the State's population.¹³ Some 696,200 people were employed in Dublin City in 2018¹⁴ and the average disposable income per person was highest in Dublin.¹⁵

¹⁰ Irish Independent, November 2018, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/irish-rail-to-operate-70-additional-dublin-commuter-services-a-day-37507223.html>

¹¹ The Irish Times, March 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/tender-out-for-up-to-80-pre-owned-trains-to-meet-urgent-demand-1.3813067>

¹² CSO Statistical Release 3 April 2019, *County Incomes and Regional GDP*, <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/cirgdp/countyincomesandregionalgdp2016/>

¹³ CSO Press Statement 14 July 2016, *Census 2016 Preliminary Results*, <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census2016/pr/COPprelim2016.pdf>

¹⁴ Dublin Economic Monitor, February 2019, https://issuu.com/256media/docs/dem_-_feb_2019?e=16581915/67588868

¹⁵ CSO Statistical Release 3 April 2019, *County Incomes and Regional GDP*, <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/cirgdp/countyincomesandregionalgdp2016/>

Compact growth is the number one strategic outcome in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and when we look at Dublin, the City and suburbs are set to grow 20-25% up to 1.41m people by 2040. This increase in population and move towards high density compact growth will drive increased demand for housing, urban infrastructure and most importantly transport links in the capital.

Dublin Chamber notes that research commissioned by Iarnród Éireann's reveals a very strong correlation between subvention requirements and population density. Whereas the Limerick-Ballybrophy route requires an extraordinary subvention of €552 per passenger journey, this requirement falls to a mere €10-€20 on intercity routes, less than €5 on suburban commuter routes, and under €1 on DART routes.¹⁶ This confirms the need for an urban focus in railway investment. The latter rates of subvention are clearly more feasible in the long run and represent a better return on investment for the public exchequer.

Transport infrastructure in Dublin has become increasingly strained over the last number of years with the focus being placed on the Luas expansion, proposals for Bus Connects and the new MetroLink. Meanwhile the Commuter Trains and the DART have maintained their current level of service. Dublin Chamber recommends that the DART and Dublin Commuter routes must be prioritised for maintenance and the development of network infrastructure. These are of critical importance to the national economy and have the greatest impact on congestion levels in the capital at peak traffic times.

Dublin Chamber recommends a focus should also be placed on maintaining and improving good rail links between Dublin and the other larger cities. Capacity issues are in danger of developing on these services due to significant increased demand and last year there was an 8.4% increase in passenger journeys on Intercity services.¹⁷ Timetables should be examined to ensure that they are commuter and business friendly services. Passengers should be able to board a train in any city in Ireland and arrive in Dublin before 9am to facilitate those doing business or attending meetings and conferences in Dublin, similarly, return services should operate after 6pm.

Investing in intercity rail will foster greater economic collaboration between our cities. Presently, however, direct rail connections between the major cities as identified by the National Planning Framework are either too slow or non-existent.¹⁸ As well as improving existing services, Iarnród Éireann should take an ambitious long-term view by planning ahead for high-speed and high-frequency rail connecting Ireland's major cities. Ireland should be actively working towards the long-term goal of being able to travel from Cork to Dublin in one hour and from Dublin to Belfast in one hour, connecting not just our cities, but the island.

The DART Expansion Programme cannot afford to experience any further delays and a definite timeline needs to be put in place to guide delivery. The National Development Plan prioritises investment in the non-tunnel elements of the Programme which will enable

¹⁶ NTA, *Public Consultation on the Role of Rail in Ireland and Funding its Delivery*, November 2016, p.6

¹⁷Transport for Ireland, Press Release, January 2019, <https://www.transportforireland.ie/further-growth-in-passenger-journey-numbers-on-transport-for-ireland-subsidised-services/>

¹⁸ City Regions Ireland, 2018, <http://www.dublinchamber.ie/DublinChamberofCommerce/media/banners/City-Regions-Ireland-28-11-18.pdf>

additional services to be put in place much quicker. Dublin Chamber welcomes this move to enhance the current service offering. However DART Underground remains a critical national infrastructure project. As well as linking all rail, DART and Luas services in the capital, it would potentially provide direct connections between Cork and Belfast, or Waterford and Dundalk.¹⁹ Together with the DART Expansion Programme, it would result in a high-capacity integrated rail network across the Greater Dublin Area which would support the economy, the growing population, and the required shift towards greater urban density.²⁰

While public transport only accounts for 5% of Ireland's overall transport emissions,²¹ the transport industry needs to be a leader in improving fuel efficiency and sustainability. Dublin Chamber welcomes the plans for further electrification and the purchase of electric and bi-mode trains. This will allow the expansion of the DART to progress initially without electrification using a hybrid fleet to build up capacity prior to electrification of those lines. Ultimately, electrification of the rail network needs to expand beyond the Greater Dublin Area, and InterCity services should be prioritised for transition to a low-carbon service.

Recommendations

- Focus rail investment where it will have the greatest economic, social, and environmental impact. Services that offer the greatest return on investment need to be prioritised.
- Prioritise the delivery of enhanced rail services for the Greater Dublin Area which will enable high-density and compact growth to become a feasible option in the city as the required transport links will be in place.
- Ensure investment in infrastructure, such as new carriages, is progressed before services reach capacity. Future planning needs to be prioritised to ensure that the rail network is servicing current and future demand.
- Put in place a definitive timeline for the delivery of the DART Expansion Programme.
- Improve the environmental sustainability and energy efficiency of rail services by progressing electrification plans in the Greater Dublin area and continuing the roll out to the Intercity services.
- Develop key stations into transport hubs where DART, DublinBus, DublinBikes, Luas and future MetroLink services meet to facilitate integrated transport and increased passenger numbers.
- Increase frequencies and maximising the potential of existing lines and services in the Greater Dublin Area. This includes opening up access to existing lines and prioritising new stations
- Work towards a sustainable, high frequency, high speed Intercity service connecting Dublin to the other major cities identified in the National Planning Framework.

¹⁹ The Journal, September 2017, <https://www.thejournal.ie/dart-underground-dublin-delays-2-3609701-Sep2017/>

²⁰ Iarnród Éireann, *Dart Expansion Programme*, <http://www.irishrail.ie/about-us/projects-investment/dart-expansion-programme>

²¹ Joint Committee on Climate Action debate, *Third Report of the Citizens' Assembly: Discussion*, October 2018, https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_climate_action/2018-10-04/2/