



SUBMISSION re METROLINK | EMERGING PREFERRED ROUTE

- MAY 2019 -

1. Introduction

Dublin Chamber, which represents 1,300 companies across the Greater Dublin Area, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the preferred route for MetroLink. This submission follows on from a previous Dublin Chamber submission made in May 2018 regarding the Emerging Preferred Route for MetroLink. Dublin Chamber uses this submission to re-state many of the points made in that previous submission.

MetroLink remains a project that Dublin Chamber is supportive of. We believe the publication of the Preferred Route to be another small, but significant, step along the path to delivery of a project that is urgently needed.

Dublin Chamber has long advocated the construction of an underground rail link between North County Dublin and the city centre, including a stop at Dublin Airport. Following many false dawns over the past two decades, we are delighted to see that the delivery of such a project is again being considered.

2. Dublin Chamber's Transport Vision

Dublin Chamber's vision is for Dublin to be a city that offers a high quality of life and a world class transport system. In order for that vision to become a reality it is vital that Dublin is an easy city to move around and where short, consistent commute times are the norm. Sadly, Dublin is significantly behind where it needs to be in this regard as a result of severe under-investment in our public transport infrastructure over recent years. This is a major frustration for businesses and for citizens. The delivery of projects such as MetroLink are key to that ambition being realised and Dublin and its businesses cannot afford further delays in its delivery.

Dublin Chamber's position on MetroLink is based on feedback from our member companies and also from the fruits of our Dublin 2050 project. The cornerstone of this project was the Great Dublin Survey, which was carried out in the summer of 2017 and garnered responses from more than 20,000 Dubliners about how they would like to see Dublin develop over the coming decades. The findings, published in 'A Vision for Dublin 2050' identified a number of red line issues for citizens if Dublin is to become one of the best places in the world in which to live.

Dublin Chamber welcomes the progress made in recent years in reducing private car use in the city. However, insufficient investment in public transport means that progress has been too slow in this regard.

Looking ahead, we believe that public transport, cycling and walking should be the dominant way of moving around Dublin, certainly within the M50.

As well as the public transport network, cycling and walking infrastructure in the city requires a significant upgrade. This improvement cannot be made overnight and will take time to be delivered, with investment required at consistent levels over a concerted period of time.

Similarly, it is vital that we aim for the infrastructure that we do build over the coming years – in light of the significant shortfall over recent decades – to be of a world class standard. MetroLink will be one of the biggest and most ambitious projects ever delivered in Ireland. That should not put us off building it, but rather the focus must be on delivering the best piece of infrastructure that we possibly can. Dublin Chamber and the Dublin business community look forward to working with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) over the coming months and years to ensure that such an outcome is achieved.

3. The Need for a Metro

Dublin Chamber strongly welcomes the ambition of the NTA and TII to provide a safe, fast, efficient, high frequency, and high capacity rail service connecting Swords, Dublin Airport, Dublin City Centre and the south-side of Dublin.

Over the past 20 years, Dublin Chamber has consistently called for the delivery of an underground Metro to be prioritised. It is a huge frustration for Dublin's workers, citizens and businesses that the project has been repeatedly delayed.

Dublin Chamber believes that the MetroLink project is a piece of infrastructure that will have a lifespan of well over 100 years and that will potentially act as the spine of an underground rail network in Dublin. It is in this context that the cost and disruption involved in the delivery of the project must be considered.

Many of the big infrastructure investments required in the GDA, including MetroLink, will have a major national impact.

Dublin Chamber welcomes the plan to link the MetroLink line up with the existing commuter and DART lines, via the placement of stations at Cross Guns and Tara Street. These links will significantly enhance Ireland's national rail network and will mean that people from all over the country will be able to access Dublin Airport directly by train for the very first time.

This is particularly important in the context of the need to better link Ireland's main cities via improved public transport links. The National Competitiveness Council has said that enhanced city performance has positive spill-over effects in the country as a whole, and that prioritising investment and initiatives to develop the competitiveness of our cities is a most effective use of Exchequer funds.

Dublin has been ranked as the 7th most congested city in Europe, with public transport usage by commuters in the capital standing at just 21.5%. Meanwhile, TII's 'National Roads Network Indicators 2017' report notes that congestion levels returned to pre-boom levels in 2015 and now stand at a record level.

The Department of Transport recently released its estimate of the economic cost of traffic congestion in the GDA in response to a parliamentary question. Its estimate is an annual cost to the Irish economy of €350 million, rising to an annual figure of €2 billion by 2033. Dublin Chamber believes this to be a conservative estimate. Back in 1997 the Dublin Transportation Office estimated the cost at £500 million, or c. €1.2 billion today adjusted for inflation.

The European Commission has noted that urban Ireland particularly suffers as a result of shortcomings in transport infrastructure, and warned that the situation will be further aggravated by rising economic activity and population growth.

It is worth noting also that among both high-income and low-income groups, levels of life satisfaction are lower in Irish cities than in rural areas. Other research has found that Dublin has one of the lowest levels of self-reported life satisfaction in Ireland.

Urban Ireland should not be punished for its success, but rather supported in driving prosperity nationally. Dublin Chamber believes we should provide Irish city-dwellers and commuters with the same high standard of urban living that can be expected elsewhere in Europe.

Many transport projects within Dublin are of national and European importance.

Dublin Airport, for example, is of paramount importance to the country's global connectivity. With over 80% of overseas visitors arriving through the facility, it is

effectively Ireland's national airport. Improved connectivity to Dublin Airport is a national and EU imperative for the years ahead.

4. Creating an Integrated Transport Network for Dublin

To develop Dublin and other urban regions, the Government should learn from models of best practice in urban planning such as Copenhagen, where planners have followed a coherent cross-party policy of 'infrastructure first'.

The proposed MetroLink line has the potential to become the spine of Dublin's public transport network, providing the foundation for the city to become one of the world's most attractive and competitive cities in which to live and do business.

Dublin Chamber is pleased to see that the proposals for a revamp of Dublin's bus network, in the form of BusConnects, have been published since the last round of consultation on MetroLink. While the BusConnects proposals undoubtedly require further refinement, the potential is there for BusConnects to provide Dublin with the standard of bus service that the city requires. The publication of the draft BusConnects proposal means that people now have a clearer idea of how the two plans – BusConnects and MetroLink - will work together to provide Dublin with an integrated public transport network.

Dublin Chamber remains very disappointed that the Dart Underground project is not being progressed at the same time as MetroLink. MetroLink and Dart Underground are the two most important major transport infrastructure projects that will be built in Dublin over the next 50 years. Operating together, they will form the spine of a public transport network that will support Dublin for the next century and beyond. It is unfortunate that the plans for Dart Underground are not available at this time, with details of start and completion dates. Considering the route and construction of both

MetroLink and Dart Underground in conjunction would have made sense, with the potential for some infrastructural works being done in tandem, i.e. station box construction. Dublin Chamber is concerned that not enough future-proofing is being done with MetroLink, particularly in terms of the construction of station boxes (at key points such as St Stephen's Green). It is essential that there is greater recognition of the need to lay the foundations for the integration of more underground metro lines in the future.

Dublin Chamber would like to see extensive bike parking facilities included at all MetroLink stations. For inspiration, Dublin would do well to look at the types of bike parking infrastructure that has been put in place at train stations in other European cities such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Edinburgh.

Dublin Chamber welcomes the idea of creating a large park and ride facility at MetroLink stops in North County Dublin. This will help encourage increased use of the new MetroLink line.

Dublin Chamber strongly welcomes the linking up of MetroLink to the Maynooth and Hazelhatch rail lines, as well as to the DART and commuter network via a stop at Tara Street station. We strongly recommend that these aspects of the project be retained in any future iterations of the MetroLink plan.

5. Accelerating Modal Shift

Progress on getting people in Dublin to switch from the private car to public transport has been too slow over the past 20 years. This is mainly a result of the consistent under-spend on infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Region. There are still too many people in Dublin who do not have a compelling public transport option available to

them. As a result, congestion remains a major problem in Dublin and a significant detractor from quality of life.

No single infrastructure project alone will solve Dublin's current or future congestion problems. What is required over the coming years and decades is a consistent ambitious infrastructure investment that will deliver an integrated transport system in Dublin so that it can rival the best cities in the world.

6. A Solution for Dublin Airport

Dublin Chamber is keen to see more information regarding how the Metro stop at Dublin Airport will be linked to the two terminals. While the Chamber accepts that the placement of the station at the mooted area is necessary, we believe it is extremely important that both terminals are well-linked to the Metro station. A great deal of care must be shown regarding how passengers will move between the terminals and the Metro station. Dublin Chamber's preference is for both terminals to be linked to the station via an underground tunnel. Failing that, a fully enclosed and covered over ground tunnel will be required that provides for a speedy and comfortable transition between the airport terminals and train station.

7. A Solution for North County Dublin

Building MetroLink – together with new and improved bus links, cycle infrastructure and park and ride facilities – is key to solving North County Dublin's congestion issues and to ending the commuter misery of thousands of existing and future residents of the region.

The current modal share of car traffic into Dublin city centre at peak traffic times will not be sustainable as the economy continues to grow. However, currently, public

transport is incapable of dealing with the additional demand required for the modal shift required for Dublin to remain a thriving and living city centre.

The largest feeder town to Dublin city and suburbs currently is Swords, with almost 8,000 of the 20,000 workers in Swords commuting to work. Almost two thirds of this group travelled to Dublin's inner metropolitan area by car. By contrast, in Skerries, which is on the Dundalk rail line, almost half of workers travelled by train to work in Dublin City and Suburbs. The story is similar in Donabate, where 44 per cent of workers take the train.

These figures prove that MetroLink is a project that can transform how people living north of Dublin access the city and move around the region.

8. The Scrapping of the Southern Section (Charlemont to Sandyford)

Dublin Chamber notes the decision not to proceed with the upgrade of the Luas green line between Charlemont and Sandyford.

Dublin Chamber admired the ambition shown by the NTA to have a dedicated Metro line that would run all the way from Swords to Sandyford. However, the NTA's decision to alter this aspect of the plan is understandable and necessary in order to push the project forward. Dublin Chamber's own submission last year called for more detail on how the upgrade of the Luas Green Line to Metro standard would work and also the level of impact this would have on the running of the Green Line during the construction phase.

The proposed approach makes sense and will hopefully allow for construction of the project to begin as soon as possible.

Dublin Chamber believes that stopping the Metro at Charlemont leaves open a whole host of opportunities to expand the Metro in the coming years and decades into other areas of Dublin's southside. As mentioned previously in this submission, it is vital in this regard that consideration is given in the planning and construction of MetroLink to the future expansion of Dublin's underground network.

9. Managing Disruption to the City

The Dublin business community is acutely aware of the benefits that MetroLink will bring for the Dublin region for decades to come. That said, while we accept that disruption to the city is inevitable during the construction phase, Dublin Chamber's support for the project is based on a condition that the adverse effects of the construction work be mitigated to allow businesses in the city to operate effectively and to allow commuters to move around the city as easily as possible. Good communication between the various stakeholders in the city will be essential to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum during the construction phase.

Dublin Chamber recommends that a MetroLink Project Group be established to ensure that all stakeholders, including business groups, Gardaí and public transport operators, are kept up-to-date on all issues during the enabling, construction and completion phases. This group should replicate the successful Department-led 'Luas Cross City Project Group', which was in place during the construction of Luas Cross City.

10. Cost Benefit Analysis

Much has been made of the price tag associated with MetroLink. However, Ireland can no longer afford to shy away from expensive infrastructure developments.

Ireland's unambitious and sporadic patterns of investment in infrastructure cannot be

allowed to continue. This pattern undermines economic potential and competitiveness, reduces quality of life, and leaves Ireland in a permanent state of catch-up with respect to its public infrastructure needs.

Unstable capital investment patterns have undermined Ireland's ability to plan its cities effectively in the past, and a shift in policy will be required if future urbanisation is to be managed consistently. Government should explore alternative financing models for major infrastructure projects, paying particular attention to the role of private finance or public-private partnerships, in order to ensure a more stable flow of capital investment in the future.

Once the route for MetroLink is finalised, Dublin Chamber looks forward to seeing a full and comprehensive schedule for works. Similarly, Dublin Chamber looks forward to seeing a full cost/benefit analysis of the project once the proposed route has been finalised.



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