



**SUBMISSION re METROLINK | EMERGING PREFERRED ROUTE**

**- MAY 2018 -**

## 1. Introduction

Dublin Chamber, which represents 1,300 companies employing more than 300,000 workers in the Greater Dublin Region, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the emerging preferred route for MetroLink.

Dublin Chamber has long-advocated for the construction of an underground rail link between North County Dublin and the city centre, which includes a stop at Dublin Airport. We are delighted to see that the delivery of such a project is again being considered.

Dublin Chamber's Great Dublin Survey, carried out in the summer of 2017, 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 of Dublin is to become one of the best places in the world in which to live.

The survey found that a city that is easy to get around is central to quality of life. Respondents to the Survey voiced frustration regarding inconsistent commute times, congestion, emissions and a lack of joined-up thinking in our planning process.

Dublin Chamber has an ambition for Dublin to be ranked amongst the best cities in the world for quality of life. The delivery of projects such as MetroLink are key to that ambition being realised.

Due to many years of underinvestment, the public transport network in the Greater Dublin Region is significantly behind where it needs to be. This is a major frustration for businesses and for citizens.

Dublin Chamber's vision is for the public transport network in the region to be on a par with anything that is available in other major cities around Europe. To that end, the Chamber recognises that there is an over-reliance on car use in the region and that a strong focus is required which will see large numbers switch from the private car to public transport, cycling and walking. Certainly within the M50, we believe that public transport, cycling and walking should be the dominant way of moving around.

As well as the public transport network, cycling and walking infrastructure in the city requires 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 the infrastructure that we do build over the coming years and decades – in light of the significant shortfall over recent decades – is 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 NTA and TII over the coming years to ensure that such an outcome is achieved.

## **2. The Need for a Metro**

Dublin Chamber strongly welcomes the ambition of the National Transport Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland to provide a safe, high frequency, high capacity, fast, efficient and sustainable public transport 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. 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.

Ireland has tended to both underestimate its future infrastructural needs and failed to provide for them. For example, the Government's previous long-term plan for Dublin transport (out to the year 2016) underestimated the rate of population growth by 50%.

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's 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 of 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 in the years ahead.

### **3. Creating an Integrated Transport Network for Dublin**

To develop Dublin and other urban regions, 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 foundations for the city to become one of the world's most attractive and competitive cities in which to live and do business.

It is regrettable that the full details of the recent bus network review and plans for the Bus Connects programme, including a schedule of delivery, are not available at this juncture. Sight of these plans would allow for all parties to gain a clear picture of how each individual project will integrate with each other to create an integrated public transport network.

It is hugely disappointing that the Dart Underground project is not being progressed at the same time as MetroLink. These two projects combined have the potential to transform Dublin's public transport network. 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 100-150 years

In order for the full potential of MetroLink to be realised, the line must be complemented by a comprehensive cycle network and a world-class bus network which offers attractive and consistent journey times. 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's terminus at Estuary. The potential for more park and ride facilities should be explored at other stops along the MetroLink line to help reduce the number of

cars travelling inside the M50 and to encourage increased use of the new MetroLink line.

While the availability of park and ride facilities has increased over the past decade, usage levels remain disappointingly low. The promise of fast and consistent journey times on the MetroLink will make parking the private car and riding the Metro very compelling – particularly if an attractive fare structure for those who park and ride is put in place.

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 advocate for these aspects of the project to be retained in future iterations of the MetroLink plan.

#### **4. 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's required over the coming years and decades is a consistent ambitious infrastructure investment that will deliver an integrated transport system in Dublin that rivals the best cities in the world.

A Metro line between North County Dublin and the city centre is urgently required to help ease the ever-increasing congestion - and high dependency on the private car - that currently exists.

The proposed MetroLink project will help to address those congestion issues.

MetroLink will also connect the country's largest and most important airport to the wider national rail network.

Dublin Chamber also supports the push to have as much as possible of Ireland's public transport fleet being electrified as the country sets out to meet future climate targets.

## **5. A Solution for Dublin Airport**

Ireland needs a direct rail link between the national airport and the centre of the capital, allowing travellers arriving at Ireland's global aviation hub to connect quickly and conveniently with the central business district and the wider public transport network. The absence of this modern amenity makes an underwhelming impression upon business travellers and foreign investors. Dublin Chamber is aware that the lack of a rail line between the city and Dublin Airport has already cost Dublin and Ireland investment and jobs over recent years.

Dublin Airport has grown at an extremely impressive rate of the past decade. Since 2011, annual passenger numbers at Dublin Airport have increased by 58% from 18.7 million to 29.6 million. The vast bulk of the growth has occurred in the past four years with passenger traffic increasing by 47% between 2014 and 2017. Huge opportunities exist for Dublin Airport to grow passenger numbers further over the

coming years and decades. However, if Dublin Airport is to keep growing, it must be supported by continued investment in its facilities. A rail link on its doorstep, which provides a 20-minute train journey to the city centre and a link to the national rail network, will greatly enhance Dublin Airport's attractiveness to both airlines and passengers.

However, Dublin Chamber is concerned that the location of the Metro stop at Dublin Airport is at a considerable distance from both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2. While the Chamber accepts that the placement of the station at the mooted area may be necessary due to existing and planned development at Dublin Airport (including Airport Central), we believe it is extremely important that both terminals are well-linked to the Metro station. The draft drawings included in the MetroLink Public Consultation document lacks detail regarding how passengers will move between the terminals and the Metro station. Careful consideration must be given to this aspect of the project. Dublin Chamber calls for both terminals to be linked to the station via either an underground tunnel or, at the very least, a fully enclosed and covered over ground tunnel that provides for a speedy and comfortable transition between the airport terminals and train station.

## **6. A Solution for North County Dublin**

Too often, MetroLink is mistakenly branded as a solution for Dublin Airport only. However, a central argument for MetroLink's construction is to help address the chronic lack of public transport in the rapidly-growing North County Dublin area. Fingal County currently has a population of 296,214, making it the third most populous county in the country and also Ireland's youngest population.

Tens of thousands of people commute each day between North County Dublin and Dublin city centre. Too many of these journeys are currently made by private car, resulting in chronic congestion on the M50, M1 and arterial roads such as the N2, N3 and N1. This problem is only likely to worsen over the coming years, unless new solutions are put in place. Indeed, it is estimated that the number of people commuting between North County Dublin and Dublin city centre will increase by around 40,000 by 2035.

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.

Dublin Chamber notes the alternative option proposed for the line between Seatown and Swords Central. The Chamber very much favours the current option of elevated track entirely along this section. While this option may add some cost to the overall project, the ultimate benefit will be substantial given that it will ensure that the line will run separately from the road infrastructure below.

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.

Evidence shows that where high quality public transport is available, people will use it. The latest Census figures show that towns outside of Dublin City and Suburbs within the Dublin Region and in surrounding counties, with access to Dart or Commuter Rail, have much higher public transport use than towns without rail

access. Having access to the DART increases a town's public transport usage overall by 10% and access to commuter rail increases usage by 6%.

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 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.

Figures from the European Commission paint a damning picture of Ireland's public transport offering – furthering the case for major investments such as MetroLink. A recent analysis by the European Commission <sup>1</sup> found that Irish cities offered the least good access to public transport relative to comparable sized cities elsewhere in the EU. Dublin is listed as performing poorest on this measure of all European capital cities. Dublin was shown to have the lowest percentage of population with access to high frequency public transit. One in 5 were found not to have any easy access to public transport. Almost 40% of the population has low access to public transit, according to this study.

## **7. The Southern Section (Charlemont to Sandyford)**

While Dublin Chamber is fully supportive of the section of the proposed MetroLink route between Estuary and Charlemont, there is considerable concern in the Dublin

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 European Commission, 2015. 'Measuring Access to Public Transport in European Cities'. Regional Working Paper 01/2015 accessible here: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/work/2015\\_01\\_publ\\_transp.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/work/2015_01_publ_transp.pdf)

business community regarding the southern section of the project. Further information is required around the likely impact of the works which will see the Luas Green Line track between Charlemont and Sandyford converted to Metro standard. Dublin Chamber recognises - and supports – that the intention was always to convert this section of the Luas Green Line to Metro. However, we call on the NTA and TII to publish as soon as possible a comprehensive overview of how these works will materialise, including timeframe and also alternative travel options for users in the event that this section of the Luas Green Line (Charlemont to Sandyford) is closed for any length of time, either in part or in its entirety.

As stated earlier in this submission, Dublin Chamber recognises that MetroLink is only one of a number of major transport projects (including both light and heavy rail) required in Dublin over the coming years and decades. These include solutions that will address the lack of public transport options for residents and workers in many areas of the city. Some of these have been highlighted in the Capital Plan. Dublin Chamber notes commentary around MetroLink which suggests many alternate routes for the southern section of the project, notably along the N11 and to areas in the south west of Dublin between the Luas red line and the proposed MetroLink route. Dublin Chamber accepts that these are areas which need to be better addressed by public transport, preferably by light or heavy rail.

## **8. 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 an over-arching strict condition that the adverse effects of the construction work needs to 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, Gardai, 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.

## **9. 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: It 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 comprehensive cost/benefit analysis of the project once the proposed route has been finalised.

Dublin Chamber believes that the business case for MetroLink comes alive when you consider the huge potential for high density development along the proposed route. This is particularly true in the areas of Ballymun, Swords and the North County Dublin region generally. One of the biggest contributors to the current congestion issues facing Dublin – and the over-reliance on the private car for moving around – is the failure to properly link the construction of new homes with the development of good public transport infrastructure. This is a structure that has worked very successfully in cities such as Copenhagen. It is important that the potential for new homes to be delivered along the MetroLink route is factored into any final cost/benefit analysis.

**- Ends -**



Dublin Chamber  
7 Clare Street  
Dublin 2  
(01) 644 7200  
policy@dublinchamber.ie