



Submission to Irish Rail on the DART+ South West Consultation

June 2021

Dublin Chamber is a strong supporter of public transport and recognises its importance to the success of Dublin. Businesses throughout Dublin need an effective public transport system for both their employees and consumers alike.

Dublin Chamber welcomed the commitment given in the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan which pinpoints the DART expansion plan as one of the major national infrastructure projects to be accessed and delivered by 2027. The Dart+ Programme will triple the length of the DART network from 50km to 150km of integrated railway corridor through the electrification and upgrading of existing lines. By using and upgrading the current infrastructure the DART+ programme can be delivered rapidly as the DART is already over capacity during peak rush hours. This programme has the potential to be transformative for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) by providing a sustainable and most importantly, a reliable and frequent rail service.

DART+ South West is the improvement, delivery and electrification of the DART service from the city centre via Park West, Clondalkin, Adamstown and continuing to Celbridge, it is included in the overall DART+ Programme which will deliver frequent and electrified services from Dublin city centre to: Maynooth and M3 Parkway; Hazelhatch and Celbridge; Drogheda; and Greystones. The Chamber is fully supportive of the proposals and the further enhancement and development of the DART Network across the city and Greater Dublin Area and we have repeated this in various submissions.

The DART+ South West represents one of a number of essential improvements that are needed to deliver the world-class and sustainable public transport system that the city needs. 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. Projects such as the DART+ South West provide an alternative public transport option that is more reliable, efficient, sustainable and faster, and further connects more communities into the wider Dublin rail network.

Overview of Dublin Chamber Position

Dublin Chamber is broadly supportive of the DART+ South West expansion and emerging preferred route. The proposed DART+ programme comes at a crucial time for Dublin. With **the city due to grow by 25%** and congestion one of the most significant challenges facing the Dublin region, particularly with the capacity constraints imposed by the Covid-19 crisis, the expansion of the DART is needed now more than ever. If Dublin is to achieve its aim of

becoming a sustainable and dense city the role of public transport must dramatically increase.

Capacity, congestion, and cars are the three C's that currently dominate Dublin's transport system. Capacity has for several years been a significant issue on the DART during peak commuter times. Dublin has been consistently ranked as one of the most congested cities in the world and according to the latest research (tom tom) the issues is getting worse, not better. This congestion has a knock-on effect on Dublin's bus network and overall transport service. With an unreliable bus service, at capacity rail network and lack of segregated safe cycling infrastructure, Dublin's transport system has an over reliance on the private car. In order for Dublin to have a world class modern, sustainable public transport system it has to invest in its transport infrastructure and commit to, and expedite, projects such as the DART+ South West. This project in isolation will have a small impact, to transform Dublin's public transport system entirely we need to implement the full DART+ Programme alongside the MetroLink, BusConnects and the Greater Dublin Area Cycling Network Plan.

Dublin Chamber are calling on Irish Rail to expediate plans for the 4 key DART+ projects so that they are completed as soon as possible, Irish Rail need to accelerate the current programme timelines to ensure that the DART is a first class transport system for a smart growing city. Clear and ambitious delivery dates for the projects are needed.

A more detailed outline of the Chamber's view is included in the remainder of this document.

Securing Investment

Transport is a critical function of any city, and Dublin is seeing the effects of years of underinvestment in urban infrastructure with high levels of congestion. Dublin is frequently ranked as one of the world's most congested cities.¹ In times of crisis, recession, and economic downturn the first projects to be pulled are often capital investments in infrastructure.

Projects such as the DART+ South West are vital to combating and reversing the city's escalating congestion problems. The National Development Plan outlines four key stages of the DART network expansion. Each of these developments are vital in serving these growing communities, enhancing capacity, and developing a functional interconnected transport system in Dublin.

The delivery of a much-improved public transport system will require a significant increase in the level of investment in public transport services by central Government. Higher levels of investment in transport infrastructure will be required in order to address the shortfall of the past decade. Several projects, including, DART+, MetroLink, BusConnects, the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network and the four proposed Luas extensions, are at a critical stage in development and require a strong commitment to delivery and investment from Government.

¹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/dublin-one-of-worst-cities-in-world-for-traffic-congestion-1.3791651>

We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past and further delay these projects due to lack of investment. These projects will help to dramatically improve quality of life in the Dublin region, reduce the chronic traffic congestion that is holding the city back, and provide huge impetus to the Government's aim of reducing carbon emissions by moving millions of journeys each year from cars to sustainable public transport.

A reliable, consistent, efficient and – importantly – sustainable service needs to be delivered for Dublin in the next 10 years.

Transport Interchange and DART Underground

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. Particularly during peak commute times, trains and buses 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. While the enhanced capacity, frequency and reliability that will be delivered under the DART+ Programme will resolve many user's reservations about the rail network and encourage modal change, it does not adequately address how the DART integrates and interconnects with the city's wider transport system. The current proposals do not resolve the over reliance on Connolly Station and the creation of bottle necks in the city centre.

The rail network in Dublin will remain incomplete until the DART Underground is built. This vital piece of infrastructure, a 7.5km underground tunnel linking the Northern line to the Heuston mainline would unlock the potential of the existing rail infrastructure.² The DART Underground will produce a step change in rail efficiency and accessibility by linking together the disparate rail lines into a functioning network.

The benefits are many, providing more direct routes for users while also providing more interchange options and better connecting communities in the GDA with the city and with each other. The Chamber stressed the importance of the DART Underground project in our recent submissions to the NTA on the GDA Transport Strategy and to the Government on consultations on the Review of the National Development Plan and the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland. Dublin Chamber once again strongly recommends that both the Government and Irish Rail revisit the DART Underground project and reprioritise its delivery. This project is essential in transforming Dublin's public transport infrastructure from a collection of routes into a functioning network.

Sustainable Transport and Modal Change

The Government's Climate Action Plan lists the DART Expansion as a major sustainable-mobility project which will have a significant impact in empowering modal shift.³ The cost of time lost due to congestion in the Dublin Region is €350 million per annum and is forecast to rise to €2,000 million per annum by 2033. Sustainable public transport will sustain economic

² https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/dart_underground_business_case1.pdf

³ https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate_Action_Plan_2019.pdf

and population growth while maintaining Dublin's competitiveness and transforming it into a smart, sustainable and resilient city.

Goal nine of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals focuses on building resilient and sustainable infrastructure.⁴ When considering prioritisation of transport and infrastructure projects, we must now consider the environmental impact, the air and noise pollution impact, and the potential long-term environmental costs. The DART+ programme meets the aims of the SDGs and will transform the rail network into a sustainable and modern system. It will deliver trains that are more sustainable and cleaner than current diesel trains. The enhanced capacity will encourage modal change, reduce reliance on private cars and transform Dublin into a resilient city.

Investment in the DART line out to Celbridge would open the line up to tens of thousands more people, offering them a compelling and reliable public transport option. The proposed DART+ South West will enable faster journey times and increase peak passenger capacity from 5,000 to 20,000 per hour per direction. This change represents a 300% increase in passenger capacity. The increase in capacity, frequency, and reliability will transform this service and encourage modal-change. The DART+ programme is vital if we are to reduce the significant reliance of commuters within the GDA on their private car to access the city.

Active Transport

The Chamber have long been strong advocates for the progression of the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan. In recent months due the Covid-19 crisis we have seen a significant demand for greater infrastructure for active transport. Segregated cycle paths and dedicated active transport infrastructure will create modal change and help to realise the Chambers ambition of having 20% modal share by active transport by 2030. We welcome the proposed provision of segregated pedestrian and cycle lanes as described in the proposals when carrying out significant renovations to bridges, particularly the Le Fanu Road Bridge. The Chamber notes the consideration of active transport and highlights the need for this approach in all elements of the DART+ plan as appropriate.

More must be done to cater for start-of-journey and end-of-journey active transport. This plan needs to take steps and reflect the need to promote integrated active transport by enhancing facilities at train stations. Greater provision of secure bike parking and facilitation of micro-mobility initiatives, such as e-scooters, are vital in addressing 'last mile solutions'. Further integration of bike sharing schemes with train stations should also be examined to allow users options to get to their final destination.

Improvements to Fares and Ticketing

The Covid-19 crisis has resulted in a significant increase in the pace of digitalisation across many sectors, including public transport. The rollout and investment in integrated and digital ticketing is now essential. Cash is currently no longer being accepted on most public transport offerings in the GDA and post-crisis public transport users will have enhanced expectations of the service offering. Digital integrated ticketing is an issue that Dublin

⁴ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, Industries, Innovation and Infrastructure, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/infrastructure-industrialization/>

Chamber raised previously and post-pandemic there will be an acceleration of demand for digital only services.

The role out of the Leap card and its ability to work across the DART, Luas and bus network has been a welcome development for the city, however, more must be done to harness the latest payments technology to improve access to transport across Dublin. Dublin Chamber welcomed the introduction of the 90min fare period for Dublin Bus, this was long overdue in a city of Dublin's size. Fare prices need to more accurately reflect the full passenger journey rather than charging for each part and discouraging modal interchange.

The Chamber also calls for technology to be used to enhance access and integration of Dublin's public transport offering. Buses, trams, and trains are not competitors but all essential components of Dublin's public transport offering. Greater collaboration is needed between the organisations that run these services to enhance the transport network and their passenger's complete journeys. There is a need for a single Dublin transport app that integrates across all transport networks, bus, bike, Luas and DART, and shows accurate 'real-time' information to allow passengers commute to their destination in the quickest way possible. Such a move would strengthen Dublin's 'Smart City' credentials.

Dublin's Growth and Development

Plans to expand the DART were listed in the National Planning Framework (NPF) as a key future growth enabler, alongside other key rail projects, including the development of the MetroLink and Luas expansion. Alongside the NPF a key aspect of Dublin's Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) is to sustain the growth of the city. The city faces significant challenges relating to estimates of a growing population which will further impact on high levels of congestion and housing shortages. Improving and investing in key infrastructure projects, such as the DART+ South West extension, are vital to sustaining growth and maintaining Dublin's competitiveness.

Dublin Chamber is an advocate for transport oriented development and that development, particularly the development of housing, employment, public services and leisure spaces, occur within close proximity to key public transport corridors or facilities. The NPF also highlights how developing new public transport corridors can open up key sites in the city for brownfield regeneration. By developing the DART+ South West we can enable community transformation by opening up areas to new opportunities. The increased capacity of the DART and its ability to create modal change can act as a catalyst for local regeneration by un-locking brownfield sites for development and enabling greater density in the areas it serves.

New Train Stations

As noted in the consultation documents, while the 'Emerging Preferred Option' will be compatible with future stations at Kylemore and Cabra, the construction of these future stations is not part of the DART+ South West Project. The Chamber urges Irish Rail to reconsider and include their provision. In order to address the GDA's congestion challenges, encourage modal change, and unlock sites via transport oriented development, their needs to be more ambitious with the DART+ South West Project.

The Kishoge station, which has not been in use since its completion in 2009, should also be incorporated as part of DART+ programme. The station is a vital public transport link to the rapidly growing community in Clonburris. Opening the station, coupled with the enhanced capacity on the line, would provide the people in the surrounding communities with a new artery into the public transport network and city centre. It would also be a vote of confidence in the local growing community and enable further development.

Dublin: The 15 Minute City

The Covid-19 crisis has brought new issues to the fore in relation to public transport. Since the start of the crisis there has been a dramatic fall off in public transport usage. This reduction is a result of travel restrictions on individuals, reduced service offerings, and people avoiding public transport fearing risks of infection. There is a fear that the hard-won modal shift from the private car to public transport could regress after this crisis due to fears of infection.

In considering the development of the DART+ South West it is important to also look at emerging trends in regards to remote working and how they will impact on the transport system required. Another impact of the Covid-19 crisis is that people have changed the way that they work, which in turn impacts on the way they commute and move around the GDA. Remote and flexible working practices may have a notable impact on transport infrastructure usage and capacity in the future. Careful consideration needs to be given to how this emerging factor will impact on longer run transport trends and how they should be accommodated.

In response to the ongoing problem of congestion within Dublin, the emerging trends in flexible working and the policy requirement for compact growth and urban density, the Chamber recently produced a report setting out our vision of Dublin as a 15 Minute City. Dublin Chamber's vision is that within 15 minutes of active transport (i.e. walking or cycling) from their home, Dublin residents should:

- Have access to a key public transport hub to commute around the city to access work or higher-level services;
- Be linked to their local community through safe, accessible, and well-connected footpaths and cycle paths;
- Have access to an open greenspace and high quality public realm;
- Have facilities and services that facilitate local living and support a local economy.

Excellent public transport is essential to realise the vision of a 15 Minute City. In creating 15 minute communities, Dublin must also link them together and into the wider city using public transport such as the DART. Our report details how modal change can be achieved if people can access reliable and efficient public transport within 15 minutes of their home, to commute to work or access the wider city.

Late-night Transport

Dublin Chamber has long advocated for the rollout of 24-hour and late-night transport facilities, recognising the need and demand for such services. The Chamber has previously welcomed the rollout of a 24-hour service on the 41 (City Centre, Airport, Swords) and the

15 (Ballycullen road, City Centre, Clongriffin) Dublin Bus routes. The current way in which our transport system operates does not reflect how our city functions. Dublin Chamber would like to see an enhanced roll-out of 24-hour and late-night transport services across the city where appropriate. With the expansion of the night-time economy under review⁵, both consumers, students and late-night workers will need to have access to these services to commute to and from home, places of employment, and entertainment and cultural venues. Dublin's transport infrastructure, whether it is bus, rail, light rail or cycle share schemes, currently caters only to the traditional day-time commuter patterns and a shift in thinking and vision will be required to ensure that our night-time economy has the necessary infrastructure in place to support it. Dublin Chamber would like to see increased focus on the possibility of more late night DART services or possible 24-hour services to support the vision of a vibrant and diverse night-time economy in Dublin.

Conclusion

Dublin Chamber supports the DART+ Programme and the expansion of the DART+ South West expansion. The proposed improvement to the line will create a key public transport corridor connecting the growing communities in Celbridge and Adamstown to the city centre and beyond.

Dublin Chamber ultimately views the DART+ South West extension as part of a larger plan to alleviate congestion and enhance public transport infrastructure in the city. Ambitious, concerted investment in new transport infrastructure is needed to revitalise the economy and ensure that Dublin's transport system is ready to cope with both existing demand and future growth.

⁵ Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, 'Night-time Economy Taskforce', 2020, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d86df-night-time-economy-taskforce/>