



## **Submission to Irish Rail on the DART+ West Consultation**

**October 2020**

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 upgrade of existing lines. By using and upgrading the current infrastructure the DART+ programme can be delivered rapidly as the DART is currently already over capacity during peak rush hours. This programme has the potential to be transformative for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) providing a sustainable and most importantly reliable and frequent rail service.

DART+ West is the extension and delivery of the DART service from the city centre out to Maynooth and the M3 Parkway, 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+ 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+ 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+ 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 to commit to, and expedite, projects such as the DART+ West. Alone, this project will have a small impact, but to transform Dublin's public transport system 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.<sup>1</sup> 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+ West are vital to combat and reverse the cities escalating congestion problems. The National Development Plan outlines four key stages of the DART network expansion. All 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 their development and require a strong commitment to delivery and investment from the

---

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

Government. 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 users reservations about the rail network and encourage modal change, it does not adequately address how the DART integrates and interconnects with the cities 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<sup>2</sup>. 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 also with each other. The Dublin Chamber 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 major sustainability-mobility project which will have a significant impact in empowering modal shift<sup>3</sup>. 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 and population growth while maintaining Dublin's competitiveness and transforming it into a smart, sustainable and resilient city.

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/dart\\_underground\\_business\\_case1.pdf](https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/dart_underground_business_case1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2019.pdf](https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate_Action_Plan_2019.pdf)

The DART+ programme 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.

Extending the DART line out to Maynooth and M3 Parkway would open up the line to tens of thousands more people offering them a compelling and reliable public transport option. The proposed DART+ West will enable faster journey times. Increases in the frequency of trains from the current level of 7 per hour per direction to meet current and future demand. This change represents an over 50% increase in frequency of service and passenger capacity will increase from 4,500 in 2019 to 13,750 passengers by 2025.

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 to 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 Chamber's ambition of having 20% modal share by active transport by 2030.

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 legislation for innovative micro-mobility schemes, 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 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 was temporarily suspended on Irish Rail, Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus services,<sup>4</sup> and post crisis public transport users will have enhanced expectations of the service offering. Digital integrated ticketing is an issue that Dublin Chamber raised previously and following the crisis there will be an acceleration of demand for digital only services.

The roll 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

---

<sup>4</sup> The Irish Times, 'Coronavirus: Bus and train drivers will no longer accept cash, says union', 2020; <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/coronavirus-bus-and-train-drivers-will-no-longer-accept-cash-fares-says-union-1.4204146>

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 the 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, estimates of a growing population and high levels of congestion and housing shortages. Improving and investing in key infrastructure projects, such as the DART+ West extension, are vital to sustaining this growth and maintaining Dublin's competitiveness.

Dublin Chamber is an advocate for transport oriented development, 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+ 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.

### **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. Late night workers, such as those in the hospitality sector or healthcare sector, need to have access to these services to commute to and from work. The lack of housing in the city has compounded this issue and increased commute times for many workers. At Christmas time for the last number of years the Luas and DART have both operated late-night services to meet increased demand at that time of year. The Chamber would like to see increased focus on the possibility of more late night services or possible 24hr services which would help to support Dublin's night time economy.

### **Conclusion**

Dublin Chamber supports the DART+ Programme and the expansion of the DART+ West expansion. The proposed extension will create a key public transport corridor connecting the growing communities along the Maynooth and M3 Parkway to the city centre and beyond. Dublin Chamber ultimately views the DART+ West extensions 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.