

# SUBMISSION TO METROLINK PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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Suggested Route Map including stations Rathmines, Terenure, Rathfarnham

## INTRODUCTION

I am writing as a public representative for Dublin Bay South in support of the Metrolink project.

I regret that the project was not progressed earlier, having been identified as the first priority investment in the Platform for Change transport strategy, which was agreed far back in 2001.

That strategy was based on a long term assessment of future travel needs. Unfortunately in the interim period it was decided to prioritise the widening of the M50 and upgrading of the road network leading to the city. This has led to the gridlock we now face, as the road network reaches full capacity and demand for travel expands in line with our growing economy.

We need urgent investment in our public transport system if Dublin is to work as a city. Doing so will bring major social and environmental benefits as well as meeting our transport needs. The Metro was always designed to open up land banks on the North side of the City, to help tackle our housing crisis. For this reason alone we need you to meet your tight development time-lines.

While I support the overall concept I am proposing three alterations to the plan, which I hope you will agree to before submitting a final design to An Bord Pleanála.

The first is to use the opportunity and to tackle a public transport black-spot in the South West of city, by continuing the tunneling machine 4.5km after Charlemont Station to new stations in Rathmines, Terenure and Rathfarnham, rather than connecting to the Green Luas line. I propose such an alternative to expand our rail network but also recognising it would avoid some of the serious consequences for the communities close to the Green Line stations from the segregation measures proposed in the Metrolink plan. Should the new spur line not be agreed, then such concerns could in part be addressed by extending the underground tunnel to the South of Beechwood station as was in the original design for the cross city Metro line.

The second recommendation would be to ensure that the station in St. Stephen's Green is built to accommodate a future connection with the proposed Dart Interconnector. That project is included in Project Ireland 2040 but seems to have been forgotten about in the Metrolink design.

Thirdly we should extend the line on the Northside to connect with the Dublin/Belfast rail line at Donabate station. This would provide better connectivity than the proposed park and ride facility, which will only add to congestion on the M1 and will require a very large plot of land.

I have set out the thinking behind these three proposals below and look forward to engaging with your office as you consider such alternatives and finalise your plans.

## 1. METRO TO RATHMINES, TERENURE AND RATHFARNHAM

### Addressing a Public Transport Blackspot

This alternative routing would provide a high quality solution for an area of the city that is not well served by public transport. Such a route to the South West was included in the original Platform for Change Metro plan and it still makes transport sense today.

A Luas line was also originally proposed to connect from the Northside via Terenure and Rathfarnham to Dundrum. A detailed analysis was carried out in the middle of the last decade to examine this overground light rail route but it was found not to be feasible, due to constraints in the road system in Churchtown, Terenure and Harold's Cross.

The same lack of street space has undermined the Rathfarnham quality bus corridors and the NTA will have similar great difficulty in rolling out the Bus Connects project on this most constrained route. The latest monitoring [report](#) shows that modal share for buses on the Rathfarnham route is declining. Average bus speeds are stuck at 10 kph, which is less than half of what is been achieved in more successful bus corridors. The area is a public transport blackspot in need of a solution and an underground metro line to the area is the best option open to us.

This 4.5km of line would include two additional underground stations and one overground terminus. Given the existence of the boring machine and the standardisation of station construction we will never have a better, low cost opportunity to address the problems we face on this route.

I have identified three sites which could be ideal locations for the new stations:

The car park to the rear of Tescos at the junction of Rathmines Road Upper and Rathgar Road is one kilometer from the proposed Charlemont Street Stop and would be an ideal location for an underground station in the town center, with access to either street.

The public Car park at the junction of Terenure Road North and Eaton Road could be the location for the second stop and would transform a village which has had chronic traffic problems for decades.

A third overground terminus and station could be provided in the car park of Rathfarnham shopping centre. This should allow a sufficient distance for the tunnel boring machine to come out of the ground to the south of the Dodder river and should have enough space to provide for a terminus for the metro trains.

It should be possible for the Line to continue beyond Rathfarnham should this spur be agreed to in principle. Further stations could be introduced at Knocklyon, Firhouse and Tallaght either at

the initial or later stage. An alternative or additional routing would be to connect the line back to the Green line Luas at Dundrum.

### **Avoiding the costs of segregating the Luas Green Line**

The provision of the new route to Rathfarnham would of course have consequences for the proposed upgrade of the Green Luas Line to Metro status. Passengers on this line would still be able to access Metrolink via a station interchange at Charlemont Street and would have a new option to connect to Rathfarnham using the new spur. However, there would still be a need for us to address the capacity limits on the Green Line.

The lengthening of the Luas trams will provide an interim solution to the capacity problems on the line, by increasing capacity from 5,000 persons per hour in one direction to 8,000. I believe other measures such as increasing frequency times may allow us then get closer to the forecast demand of 13,000 passenger per hour in 2057, without having to create a segregated line as is suggested in the Metrolink project.

The concern about plans to segregate the track is that the change will materially affect local communities from Sandyford to Beechwood and change the quality of the experience for passengers who currently have much easier access options to and from at each station.

The proposed closure of Dunville Avenue at Beechwood station is the most significant change, which will significantly divide the local community. The closure will have a negative effect on what is a thriving urban village with volumes of local traffic to schools and shops on either side of the line.

The decision to fully segregate the line would have other consequences at every station from Cowper to Sandyford, and along the length of the track. Such restricted access could undermine what has been one of the real strengths of the Luas system, which is the way it has been integrated at street level in local communities.

Should the line to Rathfarnham be agreed instead of the connection to the Green Line then it would be much easier to operate Metrolink as a fully segregated and automated system. We would also avoid the wider cost involved in losing this service for the period it would be out of action during the upgrade.

If the proposal to run the underground tunnel to Rathfarnham is not accepted then an alternative approach to address public concerns in Ranelagh would be to continue the tunnel south from Charlemont Street and connect back to ground level either south of the Beechwood stop or north of the Milltown stop.

This proposal to return the Metro to ground level to the south of Beechwood station was the proposed solution in earlier design stages for the Metro. It would involve a further 1km of

construction but would avoid the closure of the road at Dunville Avenue and should not materially affect the overall design of the scheme as presented. Continuing to Milltown to connect the two lines would require a 2km tunnel extension and would bring the same benefits.

## **2. PLANNING FOR THE DART INTERCONNECTOR**

The original plan for the Metro envisaged that it would be developed in conjunction with the building of a new underground interconnector between Heuston Station and Spencer Dock. The two lines were due to connect at a combined station at St. Stephen's Green which would bring together all the main rail lines coming into the city and provide increased cross-over patronage on each line.

While the interconnector is mentioned a medium-term objective in the Government's national plan, there is no reference to it in the Metrolink project. There seems to be no provision for the construction and preservation of a space for a future Dart station in St Stephen's Green and no recognition of how the line fits into other transport plans for the city. The variation of the route on the North of the city to include the Glasnevin stop seems to have been undertaken to provide an alternative link to the East-West rail line coming from the Phoenix Park Tunnel. This solution will not provide the same level of increased integration of our whole rail system that will come with the proposed Dart Interconnector.

We should be planning our network for a long term future where the majority of all passenger trips within the city are taken either by active travel modes or on public transport. It is remarkable that the National Transport Authority seem to have abandoned the Dart Interconnector and provision for the future line should be put back in the plans.

## **3. EXTEND THE LINE FROM LISSEN HALL TO DONABATE**

Metrolink should extend beyond the current terminus at Lissen Hall to include a final station beside the mainline rail station at Donabate. Such a final destination would allow for connection to all rail users and would ensure there is a rail link to the Airport from the North and East.

I am concerned about the scale of the proposed park and ride site at Lissenhall will increase traffic on the M1 which is already close to full capacity and cannot be expanded. Such a park and ride facility would require a very large land area and it would be far better to provide for greater rail and local cycling connectivity rather than promoting more long distance car commuting in this plan.