

Introductory Statement

From Peter Nash, Rethink Metrolink Group

To the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport

Wednesday 18 July 2018

Introduction

Chairman, we thank you for the opportunity to address you today. We also wish to thank those members of the Oireachtas associated with Dublin Bay South constituency who facilitated our presence here today.

My name is Peter Nash and I am a representative of the 'Rethink Metrolink' group in Ranelagh-Rathmines. I am joined by Jennifer Gilmore, Denis Kinsella, Greg Ward and Neil Murphy. We represent a business and residential community broadly defined as living within the catchment area of the Luas Green line between Milltown and Charlemont stops. Our comments today represent a consensus of the views of a series of very well attended public meetings.

Summary of our overall position

At the outset, we wish to emphasise **our support for capital investment in suburban and urban rail networks** as a solution to Dublin's transport needs into the future. The existing LUAS is a clear example of the transformative positive impact such investment can have on urban communities.

We can summarise our concerns around the emerging preferred route for Metrolink as the 'three P's', that is People (meaning the negative consequences for the Community), Policy (this proposal represents a wasteful approach to transport infrastructure investment) and Politics (the public consultation on this project has been totally inadequate). I will briefly deal with each of these in turn.

People: The impact on our community

The **negative impact of the emerging segregated over-ground Metrolink rail solution** on local city communities has not been adequately considered to any extent so far in the process.

Converting the current Luas Green Line to a segregated high-speed over-ground Metrolink southwards from Charlemont has significant adverse social, environmental and commercial consequences for the adjacent

neighbourhoods. Because of its speed, frequency and inaccessibility, segregated high-speed over-ground rail creates a clear physical partition within communities.

Notwithstanding their most recent response to our local politicians, NTA have asserted that **complete segregation** of the line will be necessary as a design principle for the Metrolink. This will directly impact the local communities at not one but five separate locations in the area – Dunville Avenue at Beechwood Stop, Cowper Drive at Cowper Stop, a smaller Luas crossing at Albany Road, and two crossings at Milltown stop /Alexandra College.

Traffic volumes on the remaining key Charleston Avenue link route between Rathmines and Ranelagh will increase hugely with knock-on impacts on **traffic** back to Rathmines and forward to Ranelagh.

As **pedestrian** crossing of the upgraded line will not be permitted at any point, the proposed availability of lifts and overpasses at crossing points is problematic. At peak times, in particular during school term, the volume of **cyclists** crossing the current Luas line could not in any practical way be facilitated by lifts. These displaced cyclists will have no choice but to reroute to very busy alternatives compared to the relatively quiet streets around the existing surface crossings at Dunville and Cowper. We are talking about safety and threat to life here, not inconvenience.

The implications of the segregated rail solution for **families with young children** and **persons with limited mobility** are of particular concern. The current light rail system has an excellent regime for disabled people as the trams are accessed at street level. The segregated approach will require lifts at all stations and experience to date with the LUAS illustrates the constant problems with lift maintenance due to technical problems and anti-social activity.

The segregated line will partition both **Beechwood Catholic and Sandford Anglican parishes** and will impact parishioners at Sandford and Holy Trinity Church as well as placing a burden on related social services including local Meals on Wheels distribution.

The construction of the proposed Metrolink will have significant impact not only on our community but also on **today's' users of the existing Green LUAS Line**. Given that it is proposed to shut down the Green line for at least nine months while constructing the Metro it is concerning that the economic, environmental and social impacts have not been considered and clearly communicated. How are the 75,000 people who commute in and out of the

city every day going to get to work for these nine months? In addition, the management, logistical and health and safety aspects of hundreds of school children who currently cross the Luas line each day has not been considered.

Policy: The emerging Metrolink option flies in the face of policy best practice at many levels

Turning from our community concerns to the subject of transport policy, we do not accept that there is a convincing case in favour of the emerging preferred route for Metrolink especially in respect of Dublin south city. The value of **concentrating unprecedented amounts of transport capital investment** in an area that is currently well served with a relatively recently completed light-rail system is unproven and questionable. Under the current proposals, there are large geographical areas in South Dublin where major public transport deficiencies will remain unresolved in the long-term.

Serious questions also arise about the waste of public money in dismantling the existing LUAS line which has only recently been expensively revamped as well as the **waste and environmental irresponsibility** associated with destruction of any public transport infrastructure. We have yet to see a detailed cost-benefit analysis of the impact of full closure of the line during the upgrade period; in fact the economic and social cost to the city could arguably amount to a multiple of the actual cost of the upgrade. In addition, from a risk perspective it is not evident that any Professional Risk Assessment has been carried out as demonstrated by the fact that the current proposal shows all of the capital investment is concentrated on one line which also means that all of the people flows are concentrated on one line: that is on a single point of failure which in business is considered **very high risk**.

Politics: The public consultation process has been totally inadequate

The current public Metrolink consultation process is inadequate. The community is concerned about the **absence of real interactive engagement** and no clear commitment on the part of NTA/TII to meet local communities to directly address community concerns. We are very appreciative of the rapid and enthusiastic engagement of our local politicians who have moved very quickly to listen to our concerns. However, the implications of the proposed scheme require a much more interactive and intensive consultation.

Since we submitted our documents for this meeting, the most recent proposal from NTA/TII has been made available to us. Sadly their latest partial proposal focusses exclusively on only one of the many issues we have highlighted,

namely the Dunville Avenue crossing. **The emerging proposed Metrolink proposal has been compared to the imposition of a 'Berlin Wall' in the south city. Keeping Dunville Avenue open is akin to the opening of 'Checkpoint Charlie' in Berlin – the wall remained intact, the community remained divided.**

Members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee, the Rethink Metrolink Group wish to thank you for giving us the opportunity to meet you today.