

Introductory Statement from Anne Graham, Chief Executive, National Transport Authority

Thank you for the invitation to attend. I am joined by my colleague Hugh Creegan, Deputy CEO of the NTA. I understand that the Committee wishes to focus upon the Core Bus Corridor Project which is part of the **BusConnects Dublin** programme.

Background

The overall framework for transport provision to meet the needs of the region over the next two decades is set out in the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2016-2035, which was approved by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2016. The strategy outlines the various networks to be developed – heavy rail, light rail, bus, road, cycling and pedestrian networks, together with supporting measures including park and ride provision, information provision, integration and demand management measures. The Core Bus Corridor project is outlined in that strategy.

BusConnects Dublin

BusConnects which was launched last year, aims to overhaul the current bus system in the Dublin region by:

- building a network of new bus corridors on the busiest bus routes to make bus journeys faster, predictable and reliable;
- completely redesigning the network of bus routes to provide a more efficient network, connecting more places and carrying more passengers;
- developing a state-of-the-art ticketing system using credit and debit cards or mobile phones to link with payment accounts and making payment much more convenient;
- implementing a cashless payment system to vastly speed up passenger boarding times;
- revamping the fare system to provide a simpler fare structure, allowing seamless movement between different transport services without financial penalty;
- providing a number of supporting Park & Ride facilities;
- rolling out new bus stops with better signage and information and increasing the provision of additional bus shelters; and
- transitioning to a new bus fleet using low emission vehicle technologies.

BusConnects Dublin is a programme of integrated actions which, together, will deliver a bus system that will enable more people to travel by bus than ever before, and allow bus commuting to become a viable and attractive choice for employees, students, shoppers and visitors.

Impact of Congestion on Bus Travel

From the perspective of public transport, congestion is a major problem. On the busiest bus routes, bus lanes are only in place for less than one third of the corridor. This means that for most of the journey, buses are competing for space with general traffic and so are also affected by the increasing levels of congestion.

As a result, whereas bus journeys should be fast, reliable and predictable, the increasing impact of congestion is undermining that objective. Additional buses are being added to the system simply to compensate for delays in journey times.

Importance of Bus in Dublin

The bus system is important because, simply put, it is the main component of the solution to address our current congestion problem and to meet our future transport needs. As Dublin is a low density city there are few areas with the size and concentration of population for rail-based public transport. This means that for most corridors in Dublin, bus travel represents the optimum form of public transport.

Dublin Bus carried 137 million passengers in 2017. When combined with Bus Eireann commuter services in the Dublin region, 143 million passengers were carried on State operated bus services in the Dublin area, compared with 38 million on Luas and 33 million passengers on the DART and rail commuter services.

Core Bus Corridor project

Overall, the Core Bus Corridor project envisages the provision of about 230 kilometres of bus lanes on sixteen of the busiest bus corridors in Dublin, which we refer to as “Radial Core Bus Corridors”. These corridors are shown in Appendix 1.

Our objective is to provide a continuous bus lane in each direction as well as maintaining two general traffic lanes. In addition, we also want to provide a dedicated cycle track on each side of the road, providing safe cycling facilities, segregated from other vehicular traffic. The standard layout also includes footpaths for pedestrians and supporting elements such as pedestrian crossings at all key road crossing points, and bus shelters for waiting passengers.

However, this standard layout is difficult to achieve in practice and there are a number of challenges that we face in trying to implement this target layout. Difficult decisions will have to be made and some locations will require more changes than others. Some of the likely impacts that will arise from the Core Bus Corridor project are set out in the following sections.

Traffic movement

By creating more priority for buses and cycling there will be changes to how traffic currently moves around the streets. Some roads may become one-way, new bus-only sections will be introduced and in some places general traffic will have to take new routes in and out of the city.

Acquisition of Parts of Gardens

Because there is so little unused space along these busy roads, it will often not be possible to accommodate the bus lanes and cycle lanes in the width available. In order to achieve the required space it will be necessary, in places, to acquire parts of front gardens and land in front of commercial properties to allow the bus and cycle lanes to be provided. This would require rebuilding new garden walls a short distance back from the existing road boundary.

Reduction of On-Street Parking

Because the roads we are widening travel through residential and business areas there will be a need to reduce the amount of on-street parking to accommodate the new layout.

Removal of Trees

As with the need to remove some parts of front gardens and footpaths there will be also be a need to remove trees along some of the corridors.

Mitigation

Every feasible option will be looked at to minimise the disruption to people, their properties and the wider local community. Where there is simply no viable alternative, and where we know we have to remove trees, portions of gardens or parking, we will ensure appropriate mitigation measures are put in place, wherever practicable.

Benefits of Core Bus Corridor Project

Improving Cycling Infrastructure

The major bus corridors across Dublin city are also the main cycling arteries. The widening of these roads for bus lanes provides the opportunity to transform the cycling infrastructure at the same time.

On each of the 16 radial core bus corridors our objective is to provide high quality cycling facilities, segregated from the bus lanes and general traffic lanes as far as is feasible. We calculate that over 200kms of cycle tracks/lanes will be either built or current lanes improved upon. A better cycling network is good for all transport users. It avoids cyclists sharing bus lanes with buses and will remove many of the conflicts between buses and cyclists. This initiative is the foundation of the overall cycle network that has been planned for the Greater Dublin Area.

Getting home quicker

The core bus corridor project will deliver on improving journey times and creating certainty and confidence in the bus system. Improving the current journey times on the key bus corridors will make bus travel more attractive, will improve the efficiency of the services and give people the reliability of knowing exactly how long their journey will take. On average bus journeys will be reduced by up to 40 – 50%.

However, in the absence of BusConnects, journey times will continue to get worse and commuters will spend more time travelling to and from work each day.

Climate Change

We have all heard the recent reports that Ireland is performing poorly in comparison to our European partners when it comes to reducing carbon emissions and meeting our climate change targets. The Transport Sector in Ireland is the largest fuel consumer in the economy (33%), and the sector with the largest share of energy related CO₂ emissions (35%). It is vital that we move more people from cars onto sustainable transport which is a key component in reducing CO₂ emissions, in addition to addressing congestion with all its adverse environmental impacts.

Supporting the economy and jobs

A well-functioning public transport system is a basic requirement for any metropolitan area that aspires to providing plenty of good employment opportunities for its people into the future. With bus, rail and trams, Dublin boasts some really great services but if we are to maintain our capacity as a city, a region and a capital, to continue to attract the best jobs and the best employers, we will have to do more, and urgently.

By improving the overall public transport offering, these proposals will make commutes shorter and more reliable, and will therefore make Dublin a more attractive location for employers.

It will also make it easier for people to get out and enjoy the city and all it has to offer, which is good news for businesses in the city centre and beyond.

Public consultation

Public consultation is being undertaken in three phases. Phase 1 consists of four corridors and consultation commenced on 14th November and will continue until February 2019. Consultation will commence in January on Phase2 and in February on Phase 3.

All property owners potentially affected by the proposals will be notified by post in advance of the public consultation and a one-to-one meeting will be offered with each of those impacted.

The NTA is establishing a community forum for each corridor where there will be an opportunity for a representative from Residents' Associations, Community Groups, Public Representatives and Interested Groups to get informed and engaged during the public consultation process.

A series of public information meetings will be held in venues along the corridors.

Written submissions and observations on the Phase One corridors may be made:

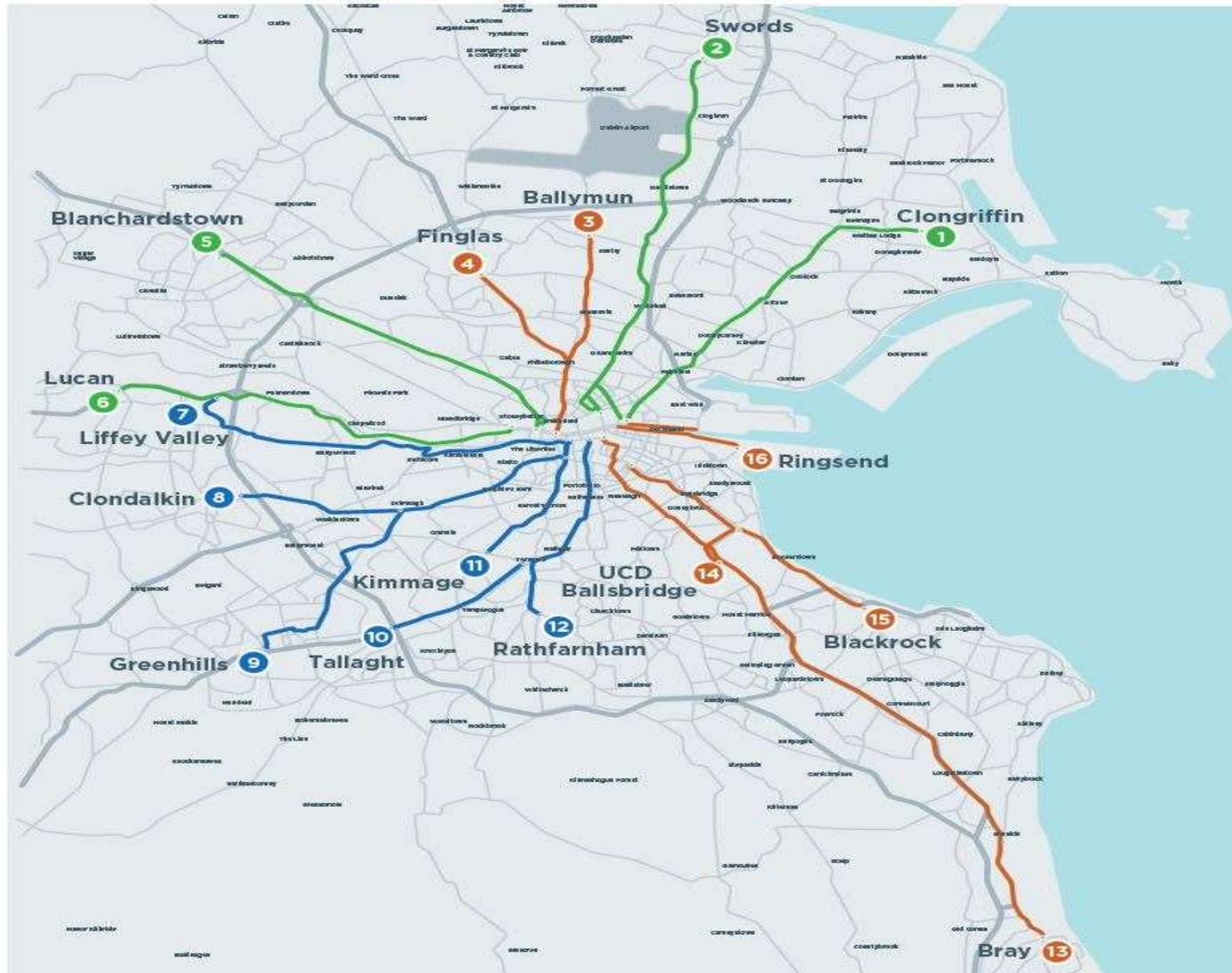
Online at: www.busconnects.ie;

Via post to: Core Bus Corridor Project, NTA, Dun Sceine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2, D02 WT20;

By email to: cbc@busconnects.ie.

That concludes my introductory statement. I trust that I can answer any queries that arise.

Appendix 1 Core Bus Corridor Project



Radial Core Bus Corridors Emerging Preferred Routes Public Consultation Phases

Phase 1:
14th November 2018
to 15th February 2019

1. Clongriffin to City Centre
2. Swords to City Centre
5. Blanchardstown to City Centre
6. Lucan to City Centre

Phase 2:
Mid-January to
End March 2019

7. Liffey Valley to City Centre
8. Clondalkin to Drimnagh
9. Greenhills to City Centre
10. Tallaght to Terenure
11. Kimmage to City Centre
12. Rathfarnham to City Centre

Phase 3:
Mid-February to
End April 2019

3. Ballymun to City Centre
4. Finglas to Phibsborough
13. Bray to City Centre
14. UCD Ballsbridge to City Centre
15. Blackrock to Merrion
16. Ringsend to City Centre.