

Opening Statement of the National Transport Authority

Chairperson, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to attend this Committee. I understand that the Committee wishes to discuss the Citizen's Assembly report on the Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin. I am joined by Hugh Creegan, Deputy CEO of the NTA and Director of Planning & Capital Investment.

The report identifies that Transport is one of the areas that should be devolved as a function to a Directly Elected Mayor of Dublin. Transport is a very broad term but given that the local authorities are already road authorities, I assume it is Public Transport that is being recommended for transfer in the Citizen's Assembly report.

The NTA recognises that it is ultimately a decision of the Government to legislate for a Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin and set out what functions are devolved to that role. There are a few issues that I would suggest are considered prior to the legislation being completed.

The NTA currently has the statutory function to deliver a strategic transport strategy for the Greater Dublin Area – an area which incorporates Wicklow, Meath, Kildare as well as the four Dublin local authorities. The choice of this wider area for strategic transport planning recognises that public transport serving Dublin doesn't stop at the border of the four Dublin authorities but extends into the hinterland. Consideration should be given to whether a Transport Strategy can be delivered for Dublin without considering how the counties in the Eastern Region would be developed such that they support a Dublin Transport Strategy.

The NTA manages the Government's investment in sustainable transport infrastructure and prioritises that investment based on what returns the greater benefit. We act as Approving Authority under the Public Spending Code for investment in Active Travel, Heavy & Light Rail infrastructure. In terms of Bus Priority Infrastructure the NTA is the Sponsoring Agency for BusConnects and is proposing to deliver this infrastructure directly which overcomes the fact that this infrastructure crosses the boundary between Dublin City and the three Dublin County Councils plus Wicklow County Council, ensuring a more efficient delivery than if it was delivered by each Local Authority.

The National Transport Authority has been designated as the competent authority to regulate the delivery of public transport services under EU Regulation 1370/2007 as amended and the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 as amended.

The delivery of subsidised public transport services must be provided through a public services contract. There is currently only one public services contract whose geographic area of operation is fully contained within the Dublin Local Authorities i.e. the Luas contract covering the Red and Green lines, which is managed by Transport Infrastructure Ireland on behalf of the NTA. The other main public transport contracts with Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann Go-Ahead Ireland and Iarnród Éireann all extend beyond the Dublin local authority boundaries.

The NTA has developed the technologies that support integrated information and ticketing systems that are deployed nationally. Consideration should be given to whether there are any benefits to having a stand-alone ticketing system for Dublin given that the services are not contained within the boundary.

The NTA is currently the national taxi regulator who licences all spsv vehicle licences and manages the administration of spsv driver licensing. The taximeter area is national and the regulations apply on a national basis. The splitting of the taximeter areas would require a change in legislation and could lead to inefficiencies compared to a centralised system.

NTA has built considerable expertise in strategic transport planning, management of sustainable transport investment, public transport services and infrastructure design, contract management, information and ticketing technologies, bus and spsv regulation. The division of the current responsibilities of the NTA to city regions would require the development of this expertise in those authorities which I believe would lead to inefficiencies overall.

This completes my statement and I am happy to take any questions