

5th June 2020



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Ms Aileen Fallon
Special Committee on Covid-19
Response
Leinster House
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

Dear Ms Fallon,

Thank you for the invitation to make a written submission to the Special Committee on Covid-19 Response.

As Ireland's largest transport provider, I am pleased to attach CIÉ's response which includes input from all our operating companies including, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann.

You will note that our submission,

- Identifies recent upward trends in public transport usage across our network, which will likely reach operating capacity in the coming weeks given social distancing restrictions
- Identifies the importance of demand management measures to ease capacity pressure on services and to manage congestion
- Outlines our approach to managing public transport services linked to international travel

If the Special Committee has any further queries, I would be pleased to address them through correspondence or in person.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Ross', is written over a horizontal line.

Fiona Ross
Chairman CIÉ



Córas Iompair Éireann



Submission to the Special Committee on COVID-19 Response: COVID-19 Travel Restrictions

1. 5th June 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The CIÉ Group welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Special Committee on COVID-19 Response on the topic of COVID-19 travel restrictions, within which the Group:

- Identifies recent upward trends in public transport usage across our network, which will likely reach operating capacity in the coming weeks given social distancing restrictions
- Identifies the importance of demand management measures to ease capacity pressure on services and to manage congestion
- Outlines our approach to managing public transport services linked to international travel

2. PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITATING TRAVEL TO WORK

Public transport is playing a critical role in transporting essential workers during the COVID-19 crisis and will serve as a key enabler for the revival of the economy and movement of citizens, with the reopening of business and society.

A coordinated plan of action delivered by the CIÉ Group of companies including Iarnród Éireann, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann, in co-operation with government departments, the NTA and other stakeholders has contributed to a successful response to the public health crisis. The measures implemented as part of this response have supported the strategy to flatten the curve and have kept customers and employees safe.

Public transport is critical for facilitating increased economic activity and access to social and public services. The role of the public transport network as a safe, affordable, accessible transport system will be crucial for cross sections of the population and workforce, as the economy reopens.

Adherence to public health measures and the implications for capacity and safety are creating multi-faceted challenges. To address these challenges, CIÉ continues to work closely with all Stakeholders, including the National Transport Authority (“NTA”) and Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (“the Department”), on a coordinated approach to support the public transport network in getting people back to work.

2.1 CAPACITY MANAGEMENT UNDER SOCIAL DISTANCING

Of critical consideration is the impact on service provision of the social distancing measures. The maintenance of a ‘2-metre safe distance’ curtails service capacity severely and public transport services (and school transport when it recommences) are operating at significantly reduced capacity. Figure 1 overleaf outlines the maximum service levels of each of our operating companies, given social distancing rules of 2 metres.

Operating Company	Current service levels – based upon curtailed timetable (% of normal pax)	Normal services levels – using normal timetable (% of normal pax)
Iarnród Éireann	10%	Below 15%
Dublin Bus	Below 20%	25%
Bus Éireann	Below 20%	25%

(Fig. 1 – Max. operating capacity of public transport services, given social distancing rules of 2m)

Through the initial stages of the lockdown, demand for public transport was low, however, a recovery in passenger numbers is now evident right across our network of services, with passenger numbers doubling from 440,000 weekly passengers in mid-April to over 880,000 in the final week of May. As we move through subsequent phases of the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business, demand will likely exceed capacity while the current guidance for physical distancing remains in place.

Across the public transport network, in an environment of unfulfilled and unpredictable customer demand, customer and staff issues need to be carefully managed. So to do measures designed to minimise potential for anti-social behaviour. CIÉ, as well as other operators, are in regular contact with the NTA to address these complex operational challenges

2.2 DEMAND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

In order to ease the above-mentioned capacity issues, measures designed to reduce and spread demand and avoid traffic congestion are critical.

Measures that alleviate demand during peak hours will prove important. Provisions for staggered start times for educational institutions, retail, offices, and industry all need to be considered and planned for collectively by relevant stakeholders. To this end, CIÉ are working closely with the NTA, the Department and the Department of Education to identify how best this can be achieved.

An increase in private car use is anticipated during the recovery phases. Without traffic management controls and measures, we could experience unprecedented levels of congestion and disruption of services. As traffic conditions change during the coming months, predicting and reacting to the dynamic changes will prove challenging to delivering efficient transport services. Ongoing close cooperation with local authorities and the support of An Garda Síochána traffic division will be vital to avoiding gridlock.

2.3 INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

A number of other countries at different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic have implemented measures, on a gradual basis, to begin increasing public transport capacity. With the assistance of our network of international operators, we have provided frontline operational feedback to the NTA and the Department on experiences in several other countries.

Current government guidance on the use of face coverings has had low uptake and is not currently enforceable on public transport. Successful adoption of the use of face coverings has been achieved internationally by using a combination of mandatory face coverings, penalties, and distribution of face masks at transport hubs.

The CIÉ Group supports the use of face coverings by customers using public transport. We are working closely with the NTA and the Department on practical measures that will increase usage rates.

3. CROSS BORDER AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Public transport is a critical service for inter-regional and cross-border travel and supports industry, trade and tourism. The CIÉ Group network provides international services that represent key transport corridors for access to the UK and Europe. Protocols on social distancing and international travel restrictions differ between Ireland, the UK and internationally, causing operational and health and safety issues. These issues arise across a number of services operated by the Group:

- Bus Éireann's Expressway service is the largest coach operator at Dublin Airport
- The Expressway Euro lines service (currently suspended), operated jointly with National Express in the UK, transports passengers by coach and ferry from Dublin, via connection points across Ireland, to Holyhead and London and with connections to other major UK destinations.
- Bus Éireann's Expressway services to destinations across Northern Ireland, operated jointly with Translink
- Iarnród Éireann's Enterprise Service between Dublin and Belfast, operated jointly with Translink
- Iarnród Éireann is the Port Authority for Rosslare Europort

We work closely with Translink to reconcile any differences in COVID-19 protocols to ensure safe journeys for the thousands of essential workers who continue to use our cross-border services. Further consideration will be given to the practical consequences were face coverings to become mandatory on public transport services in Northern Ireland, in line with measures effective from 15 June in England.

We are working closely with the NTA and the Department to ensure clear guidance for those arriving from abroad, especially through Dublin Airport, and who are required to self-isolate for 14 days and how they should access transport services for travel to the location of self-isolation.

Rosslare Europort is the country's second busiest Ro-Ro port and nearest port to mainland Europe. Rosslare Europort is maintaining full operations, with freight volumes settling at 80% of normal volumes, but passenger volumes are almost eliminated. The PSO support provided to shipping operators from the Department is critical in supporting this key shipping corridor.

4. COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Consistent and clear communications, coordinated by the NTA, for public transport users has been a feature since the commencement of the pandemic. This remains equally important as we move through the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business. Our communications objectives continue to support the Department of Health's safety advice and will focus on building confidence in the use of public transport. In order to do this, we will work closely with the NTA and other Stakeholders to deliver what we believe is important, namely:

- A national communications plan for safe and responsible use of public transport.
- Expanded communications to customers on safety measures for access, waiting and use of services.
- Expanded communications to customers on personal protection measures for hygiene, face coverings and access and use of services.