
Dublin Bus Covid-19 Oireachtas Submission

Covid-19 and beyond

Reimagining bus services in Dublin



Introduction

Dublin Bus welcomes the opportunity to present this submission to the Covid-19 committee. In the first instance we in Dublin Bus would like to put on the record our thanks for the dedication, support and professionalism of our employees, trade unions, the NTA and Government, without which we would not have been in a position to provide continuous service for essential workers through every phase of this pandemic.

The purpose of this document is to outline the immediate challenges posed by COVID-19, its impact on Dublin Bus and our vision for how we can contribute to the transport needs of our capital city. In the short to medium-term a comprehensive plan for public transport will be a key enabler for the phased reopening of the economy and society. The ideas that we set out in this document will help to meet public transport needs in the short to medium-term.

As we recover from the effects of COVID-19 there is an opportunity to build public transport services and infrastructure that meets the many needs of a growing, vibrant city. This will make a significant contribution to the economic, mobility and environmental demands of a thriving, ambitious and forward-looking city in the post pandemic era.

Impact of COVID-19

We are living through extraordinarily challenging times. In the past few months our normality has radically and suddenly altered. This is true of our own lives and it also true for businesses across the island, including Dublin Bus.

This section of the document sets out the impact of COVID-19 on Dublin Bus. It also addresses the ‘issues for consideration’ as set out in the submission request.

Impact of COVID19 on staffing	
Total employees absent as result of COVID19 (absence never breached 200 on a rolling weekly basis. Figure almost exclusively self isolators)	410
Number of employees currently self isolating	30
Number of employees returned to work after self isolation	380
Total employees as of 20 June	3,577
Impact of COVID19 on Revenue to date	
% Revenue loss to date vs 2019*	39%

Impact of COVID19 on forecasted Revenue	
Projected % Revenue loss 2020 vs 2019 - PSO and Commercial	58%
Projected % Revenue loss 2020 vs 2019 – Commercial**	87%
Projected % Revenue loss 2020 vs 2019 – PSO***	55%
Service Delivery	
Pre COVID level of fleet in service	100%
Pre COVID level of customers	100%
April 1 level of fleet in service****	77%
April 1 level of customers	11%
Phase 1 roadmap – 18th May – level of fleet in service	88%
Phase 1 roadmap – 18th May – level of customers	18%
Phase 2 roadmap –8th June – level of fleet in service	93%
Phase 2 roadmap –8th June – level of customers	27%
Phase 3 roadmap – 29th June – level of fleet in service*****	90%
Phase 3 roadmap – 29th June – level of customers	34%

* Period 1 and Period 2 and half of Period 3 experienced normal pre-COVID19 level, the revenue for the second half of Period 3 and Period and 5 was significantly reduced.

** Commercial services are suspended for the remainder of 2020.

***The recent increase in capacity per bus arising from the mandatory use of face coverings may increase projected revenue levels, this is currently being examined.

**** Level of fleet in service had to be significantly higher than level of demand due to social distancing measures

*****Capacity per bus went from 20% to 50% plus the introduction of summer service timetables to reflect faster journey times on bus routes

Other issues for consideration

Issue	Status	Comment
Face coverings	active	Dublin Bus welcomes the decision to make face masks mandatory. Surveys carried out by Dublin Bus show usage of coverings is increasing. We expect this to increase further once legislation is drafted and enacted.
Second wave	active	The risk of the second wave has been factored into the company's pandemic planning process by the dedicated project team. A second wave would obviously pose significant financial challenges for Dublin Bus.
Future pandemics	active	Pandemic planning is a key part of the company's emergency planning and risk management procedures.
Learnings and Recommendations	n/a	Specific expert guidance on public transport from Department of Health. Priority testing/screening for essential service workers to provide resilience in the services Secure supply chain for the likes of - PPE, hand sanitiser, face

		coverings, gloves. Continued access to training to ensure essential employees remain available for service delivery (e.g. driving tests for new licence etc.
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Beyond Covid-19

This section of the document is intended as a framework for a discussion on what public transport in Dublin should look like once we are through the worst of the public health emergency.

Prior to COVID-19 Dublin faced significant mobility and environmental challenges caused by population growth, urban planning density, increased urbanisation, congestion and other transportation-related challenges.

As we emerge from this public health crisis we must think about what new ideas and new infrastructure Dublin needs to facilitate economic renewal, social integration and the effective operation of public transport in the city. Transport operators and policy makers face challenges around how best to facilitate a growing, thriving city whilst transforming the quality and sustainability of the transport eco-system.

It is our view that the National Transport Authority’s ambitions to modernise and invest in Dublin’s bus infrastructure through BusConnects is key to improving public transport in the Greater Dublin Area. While we believe that the bus is critical to Dublin’s public transport needs it is but one part of the multi-modal transport solution required in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

With that in mind we have set out our plans for improving the public transport offering and enhance the customer experience across our capital city. More details on these projects are outlined below and they include:

- Implementation of BusConnects with immediate effect
- A clear plan to develop and increase the number of people participating in active travel which will complement the value chain of an integrated public transport system
- Dynamic pricing models to reflect the new environment
- Introducing demand management measures so Dublin works better for our people and the environment

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- Retaining an enhanced cleaning regime of all public transport modes
 - A faster transition from old payment methods (e.g. cash) to new customer friendly ones.
 - Transitioning towards an even lower emission fleet with a clear plan, infrastructure and financing, for making a percentage of the public transport bus fleet being zero emission

These measures will help ensure high quality public transport creates the efficient platform from which both private business and the entrepreneurial state sector can drive economic renewal.

Active Travel and changing travel patterns

Dublin Bus supports the development and implementation of policies which will increase the number of people participating in active travel. Active travel is an integral part of a multi-modal transport solution in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and as such infrastructure should be developed to work cohesively with the public transport network. The reduction of car traffic during this public health crisis has shown clearly that walking, cycling and public transport all have an important role to play in developing a sustainable city.

It is our view that Dublin as a city, look at a number of measures with the common objective of improving **connectivity**. These include:

1. Expansion of bike rental schemes to include e-bikes
2. Introducing e-Scooters and powered personal transporters (PPTs)
3. Enhanced priority for sustainable modes (bus, cycling, PPTs, walking)
4. Enhanced bus network with bespoke solutions for certain cohorts (e.g. Demand Responsive Travel).

All of these measures will further encourage modal shift from the private car to sustainable modes and will complement the public transport value chain.

Dynamic pricing

Enhancing customer comfort at peak times will be required to continue the growth of public transport use. A significant element of this will be reducing peak loading per vehicle. In order to reduce the capacity per bus we can leverage the supply side of vehicles (provide more buses to carry the same people) or leverage the demand side (customer travel).

Encouraging a shift in customer travel patterns can be done by way of dynamic pricing strategies. Most public transport systems throughout the world worked on the premise of sweating the assets at peak times, with heavy loading of customers for the morning and evening peak commute. When Government and Authorities are deciding what is in the public interest for our public transport system, it is unlikely that what was a norm in terms of peak travel loading will continue into the future.

Dynamic pricing to encourage off peak travel can flatten the curve of peak travel. Examples include free travel for anyone boarding prior to a certain time (say 6am in the morning peak). A 5% peak movement adjustment on the demand side would be the equivalent of adding 50 buses on the supply side if moving customers from peak travel.

Transport vehicle demand management measures

Dublin as a city has natural constraints which will remain a barrier to significant modal shift from private cars to public transport without alternative interventions. These constraints include the existing road alignments and characteristics, the river Liffey and existing structures/buildings of historical significance. Equally the current public health crisis has shown that Dublin doesn't have to be a city dominated by cars. It can, and should be, a city for walking, cycling and sustainable modes like public transport.

In order to develop sustainably, the city must be able to cope with increased movements of people. The only sustainable method of doing this is by way of an integrated multi modal public transport system. Many public transport users are also car users. While we badly need to increase modal shift in Dublin, COVID-19 means we need to carefully manage the transition to further public transport usage.

During Covid19 there was zero traffic congestion in the city. We lived through a real time modelling experience. Bus journey times decreased by 50% in all areas, including traditional congestion locations in both the suburbs and the core of the city centre. Alternative public transport modes in the city complemented each other (e.g. bus/Luas operations) with no impact on service levels. This was achieved while increasing road space to active mobility modes.

A transition to further public transport usage will require a consensus on the introduction of demand management principles in our city. Examples include fixed automatic number plate recognition (ANPR), bus only roads, adjusted (lower) road speeds for all vehicles, end to end priority for public transport modes, congestion charging, increased on street allocation to

sustainable modes of transport. These will need to be complimented with active enforcement of these measures through visible and mobile policing with significant deterrents for any breach.

Retain enhanced cleaning regime on public transport

Restoring customer confidence in the safety of our services is the biggest challenge facing Dublin Bus. It is our view that the enhanced and inter-peak cleaning should be retained in the post COVID-19 environment.

Remove the remaining barriers to public transport

One of the remaining barriers to further increasing public transport use is the traditional ticketing and payment methods. Traditional transport ticketing systems are 'Card Centric' or use cash payments. For card centric, this means the travel information and the right to travel on public transport is stored on or in the actual card itself (in Dublin's case, this is the Leap Card). Globally, as technology has move on, such systems are not easily deployed throughout public transport networks (as we currently experience in Ireland – Leap is not available on all public transport modes in all locations).

Account-based ticketing (ABT) is a system now in place in many cities and industries which allows a customer to use contactless cards, mobile phones, wearables (Apple Watch, Garmin Pay etc) to pay for public transport. While this is planned for in Dublin, expediting the implementation should take priority to enable the benefits to be rolled out to all public transport modes and customers throughout Ireland. Using account-based ticketing provides for faster boarding times, enhanced customer product information in real time and dynamic pricing for customers, which can be used to manage peak demands as required on a regular basis.

The near ubiquitous levels of smartphone and contactless credit/debit cards adoption means the transition to account-based system should be expedited.

Fleet conversion to zero emission

Aside from just looking at modal shift we also need to make our services more sustainable. While the bus is an inherently sustainable mode, with one full bus taking 80 cars off the road, conversion to a zero-emission fuel will help further improve our sustainability offering. The technology currently exists which would allow us to convert our full fleet to a zero-emission alternative, which consists of a mix of electricity and hydrogen as a fuel source. Conversion of our full fleet to a zero emission fuel would prevent 75,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually

however this process could take up to 10 years, in the interim, converting just 300 of our buses, which may take between two and three years, will prevent 22,500 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually. This is readily achievable and will play be vital to creating a more sustainable city.

With this goal of a more sustainable city in mind, Dublin Bus is now in the process of introducing a fully electric fleet for our supervisors. This process is underway and will shortly be completed. Once completed it will mean that Dublin Bus is the only public transport provider in the state with a zero emission fleet of vehicles for supervisors. This is an important first step as we seek to accelerated the process of reducing our carbon footprint.

Conclusion

Dublin city faces countless modern challenges, including urbanisation, housing, transport and climate change. This is before the economic and societal challenges posed by COVID-19 are factored in.

Covid-19 offers us a chance to develop a new deal for public transport and deliver high quality urban bus services for people across Dublin. But to do so, we need to start making significant changes if we are to avoid a 'lost decade' in terms of investment and development of a world class public transport system for Ireland including its capital city.

All these options should be up for discussions with a view to building consensus around the option which works best for Dublin. As we build and recover from COVID-19, the urban bus will continue to be by far the largest mode of public transport in Dublin for decades to come. It is critical we are ambitious and invest in our bus network so it meets the needs of people, supports economic renewal and also meets our social and environmental aspirations which are representative of a modern European capital city.