



Case Reference / Description	ABP-302010-18 Proposed MetroLink for Swords-Airport-City Centre Corridor.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
Meeting	Meeting with National Transport Authority		
Date	17/12/19	Start Time	3 p.m.
Location	Offices of NTA	End Time	5 p.m.
Chairperson	Brendan Wyse	Executive Officer	Kieran Somers

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Staff Member	Email Address	Phone
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning		
Kevin Moore, Senior Planning Inspector		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer	k.somers@pleanala.ie	01-8737250
Representing NTA		
Hugh Creegan, Deputy Chief Executive		
Eoin Gillard, Head of Public Transport Investment		

Introduction

The Board indicated that the meeting was essentially an information-gathering exercise. A record of the meeting would be taken and this would be made public at the closure of the pre application consultation process. A copy of the record will be forwarded to the NTA.

The Board noted that the purpose of pre-application consultations with respect to railway order applications is to advise on procedural issues and any matters related to proper planning and sustainable development and the environment which, in the opinion of the Board, might have a bearing on the decision on any subsequent application.

The Board set out the progress of pre-application consultations to date. It advised that three meetings have been held with the prospective applicant. Meetings with representatives from Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council and the Office of Public Works/Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht have also taken place.

The Board noted the fact that the development, as originally proposed, had been intended to extend from Estuary, Swords, to Sandyford, including an upgrade of the Luas Green Line. Subsequently, the proposed development was amended to omit the Luas Green Line link. The preferred route document was published in March 2019.

At the third meeting with the prospective applicant, on the 8th November 2019, the Board focussed, in particular, on a number of high level issues relating to Swords, the North City and the South City. These issues formed the basis of the consultation with the NTA as follows.

Swords

The Board's representatives questioned if the proposed corridor from Swords to Dublin Airport is justified at the present time and if the proposed alignment is the correct one with regard to the existing and future development of Swords. The Board also raised the matter of the future role of the R132 and access to proposed stations. It also queried the number of stations proposed for the Swords area (four in total). The Board referred to Fingal County Council's ambitious future plans for Swords.

The NTA referred to the transport strategy for the Dublin Area which it said had identified the corridor selected for the proposed development. It said that the primary driver for the said corridor was expected commuter demand. While Dublin Airport was also an important driver in this regard, it was not the most important one.

With regard to existing and future development in the Swords area, the NTA noted that Fingal County has been the largest growing county in the State in recent years. With respect to the selected corridor for the proposed development, the NTA acknowledged that a robust case will have to be made for this in the application. In relation to the proposed alignment, the NTA indicated that it was appropriate and noted that the Fingal/North Dublin Transport Study envisages the transitioning of the R132 into an urban road. Proposals include a change to the environment of the road to reduce traffic speeds and the dominance of cars. In this context there is a need for further consideration, in conjunction with Fingal County Council, of access options to the stations, particularly Swords Central. The preferred approach is for at-grade crossings.

The Board's representatives suggested that the overall picture regarding the future development of Swords, and integration with Metro Link, is somewhat unclear at the present time. The NTA indicated that the decision to opt for the east side of Swords was predicated on the location of significant residential and employment centres there. It also noted that Swords at present is very spread out geographically and that serving the area with one corridor is challenging. It agreed that further work with Fingal County Council would be necessary in order to bring clarity to these matters.

The Board's representatives noted the proposed provision of park-and-ride facilities as part of the proposed development. The NTA said that such facilities are an important component of the proposed development and noted a core objective to decrease the number of cars entering Dublin City Centre. The Board's representatives indicated that, first and foremost, the proposed alignment should properly serve residential and business users in the immediate hinterland.

With regard to the Board's concern on the number of stations proposed in the Swords area, the NTA acknowledged that this would have to be fully justified in the forthcoming application.

North City

The Board's representatives queried the rationale for Glasnevin being favoured over Drumcondra, noting that the Metro North alignment had included the latter. The Board noted, in particular, that the proposed alignment runs very close to the recently extended Luas Green Line. The Board suggested that a robust case would have to be made for the selection of the Glasnevin alignment and queried as to whether there might be a catchment overlap with the Luas Green Line.

The NTA replied that the decision to position the proposed alignment on the Glasnevin side was one that it was satisfied with given the inter-changeability this offers with other commuter and mainline services. It accepted that a strong case will have to be made as part of the planning application for this decision. The NTA also confirmed that Irish Rail is committed to providing its proposed new station concurrently with the MetroLink Project.

South City

The Board's representatives queried the selection of the east side of Stephen's Green as the appropriate location for the proposed station, noting the distance from the Grafton Street shopping area and the Metro North proposal for the station at the north west corner of the Green. The Board also noted the fact that the OPW and the Department had raised significant concerns with regard to this particular proposal during the course of its meeting held in September. Possible future interchange with the Dart Underground was also raised. The Board also queried if the Charlemont Station was still appropriate given the decision to omit the Luas Green Line upgrade from the project and the likelihood that Charlemont would effectively be a terminus for the Metro for a very considerable period of time.

The NTA indicated that further discussions were due to be held with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in relation to the St. Stephen's Green proposal. Noting the Department's expressed concerns on the location of the proposed station, the NTA said its intention would be to resolve any such issues prior to the lodging of a Railway Order Application. The NTA also said that it is comfortable with the proposal for St. Stephen's Green and outlined some of the principal reasons for choosing the east side of the park. The NTA also noted the concentration of businesses and offices in the area to the east side of St. Stephen's Green.

With regard to the Dart Underground Project, the NTA said that this will proceed at some point in the future but that the alignment is likely to be different to the one previously approved. It particularly noted that the opening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel to commuter traffic has significantly changed the context for Dart Underground. The Board indicated that clarity on the future delivery of the Dart Underground Project would be important vis-à-vis the instant proposal.

With regard to the future status of Charlemont as a terminus for the project, the NTA said that the intention here was that it would provide a high-level of connectivity between the proposed development and the existing Luas Green line. The NTA said that truncating the scheme at St. Stephen's Green would not make sense as the connectivity between the two lines would be much poorer in such a scenario. The NTA also referred to future plans to introduce a one-fare pass which would readily facilitate inter-changeability between various transport modes such as Luas and Dart.

Other Matters

With regard to the proposed Collins Avenue Station, the Board queried if it should be located further south so as to better facilitate DCU. The NTA replied that the location of the proposed station here was predicated on the basis of inter-changeability with the strategic Bus Connects corridor proposed for Collins Avenue. The NTA also noted the large residential catchment area in the vicinity of the proposed station.

Conclusion

A copy of the record of the instant meeting will be forwarded to the NTA. The record will be made available to the prospective applicant and will be on the public file when the pre-application consultation case is formally concluded.

Brendan Wyse
Assistant Director of Planning

23 December 2019