

56 Riverwood Gardens  
Castleknock  
D15YFC4

28 October 2022

An Bord Pleanála  
Dart +West SID Application

Dear Sir / Madam,

The current Dart +West SID Application is unfortunately still based on the premise that the Dart+ Project requires closures of a number of level crossings on the line and in certain cases then doing nothing further and in other cases as at Coolmine Crossing develop alternative proposals which will seriously impact road users including pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and importantly also rail users (i.e. us the residents of these areas).

It can be shown that given a combination of state-of-the-art rail safety systems, innovative thinking and adoption of EU best practice highly efficient and reliable Rail Networks can interface safely with vehicular, cycle and pedestrian traffic via a system of automated level crossings and would cut current closures of roadways by 50 -75%. At Coolmine by moving the westbound platform to the opposite side of the roadway crossings closure times would also be further reduced by 60-70% for Maynooth bound trains.

If these options and various other state of the art Rail Network Safety Systems were incorporated into DART+Project Concept it would become readily apparent that this fairly drastic solution to a fairly basic problem would be resolved with minimum capital cost if incorporated into overall project and most important of all would maintain what is effectively a status quo in terms of the current interface between rail, road and pedestrian traffic.

Even with DART+ not progressing at present there remains an immediate need to improve signalling and the crossing excessive closure times being currently endured.

Attempts to eliminate one aspect of this will not solve the current issues but will merely 'kick the cars down the road' and most concerningly move any delays at the current 1990's crossing along to the extensive traffic and pedestrian interfaces on the various road tributaries in the area.

Closing the level crossing will obviously mean closure of the Coolmine Road at the Station meaning cars from Coolmine side will have to take 'long way round' to get to Rail Station car park further adding to already increasing traffic volumes given recent high-density developments in the area.

If dropping passengers at Coolmine side vehicles will drive up to newly formed cul de sac and drop off passengers and then attempt to turn around and drive out again. Similar drop and go pattern will result at Carpenterstown side and this will further increase interfaces and associated risks of accident involving vehicles and pedestrians in the immediate area of Coolmine Station.

At present there are around 12 'official' pedestrian or pelican crossings within 2 minutes of Coolmine Level Crossing – more than half are within 1 minute away.

At Carpenter shops which is adjacent to Castleknock Community College and St. Patrick's National School whose combined school rolls are in excess of 2,000 pupils there are currently 5 pedestrian crossings – one light controlled with the remaining 4 of the 'flashing amber' pelican crossing type.

At opposite end of this loop is sited Luttrellstown Community College and Scoil Choilm National School with increasing and equivalent respective schools' rolls. Here at moment, there are a similar amount of (in this case and at this point) mainly light controlled crossings.

All pupils will intersect directly with part of this orbital road either being dropped off by car or for the majority in walking to and from respective school probably several times a day

As with rail passenger journey to and from station the virtually continual use of the respective pedestrian crossings at peak times will cause extreme levels of stress and frustration amongst respective vehicle drivers and this along with the increased numbers of vehicles no longer being able to travel over the rail crossing will further increase risk to the school children involved to a totally unacceptable level. As has been stated by others Irish Rail plan to close the Level Crossings but they will not have to live with the consequences, and it is we who live in the area will have to bear that burden for decades to come.

At present the crossing at Coolmine typically closes for up to 4 minutes 30 seconds for every Maynooth bound train stopping at Coolmine - it then only takes the train approximately 20 seconds to move off from the platform and cross the roadway in front of patiently waiting cars, cyclists & pedestrians. On rail networks utilising rapid barrier systems, barriers close and re-open within 1 minute with trains passing through crossings at speeds of upwards of 100km/h. Most crossings on Dublin - Maynooth line are close to stations and trains are travelling at fraction of these speeds and it is further envisaged new rolling stock will also incorporate modern systems further adding layers of safety to rail and road users. Therefore, not alone will crossing closure times not be increased but by incorporating modern crossing infrastructure into the overall Dart+ West Project current crossing closure time could actually be reduced even with the envisaged increase in train numbers. If long established level crossings, many of which are centuries old 'Right of Way' remain open this will maintain the status quo in terms of road and rail users within the respective communities.

At various meetings and discussions during the various Consultation periods it became apparent there was virtually unanimous agreement from residents in the various house developments on either side of Coolmine Station that the minor inconvenience of delays whilst crossings are closed were much preferred to a prospect of permanent crossing closure and the associate creation of 'no go' areas around the stations and associated increase in anti-social behavior which will undoubtedly result.

Also, and importantly from an Irish Rail perspective, maintaining current crossings will allow continued ease of access to platforms on either side of the line and particularly for passengers and pedestrians with reduced mobility who will not be faced by the daunting process of traversing inclines on large concrete pedestrian bridges over the rail line. Crossing upgrades must therefore be seen as an integral part of the Dart+ Project to maintain the present open and safe environment in and around rail stations as well as the surrounding amenity of the respective areas.

Yours Sincerely

Bill Fordyce

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