Name: Dr. Dara Coyne

Address: 30 Lohunda Park, Clonsilla, Dublin 15

Phone: [redacted]

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Re : Dart+ West Railway Order application; Case reference: NA29S.314232

I wish to make a submission / observations on a Strategic Infrastructure Development application, namely, the Dart+ West railway order and object to the draft railway order as it now stands.

As a background to myself, I have lived in the area since born over 40 years ago, except for 3 short periods where I lived away from home, studying and working for the State abroad. My Principle Primary Residence has always legally been in the Dublin 15 area even during my periods of absence. I also have used the train service most weekdays for the majority of this time since starting college in 1997 to present day and as someone who used to endure regular 2-hour delays (in particular in 1998), I am heavily in favour of and support improvements to main line heavy rail in the area. I work as a civil servant in the City Centre and the train is still the only mode of transport I use to go in and out of the office. To clarify, I did submit most of my below objections (1, 2, 3, 4a) during the earlier public consultation periods, in particular around the closure of level crossings. As my concerns have not been addressed, I have decided to make this submission to An Bord Pleanála.

I object to the granting of the railway order as a direct result of six elements of the project,

1. The permanent closure of Coolmine level crossing to vehicular traffic
2. The permanent closure of Clonsilla level crossing to vehicular traffic
3. The permanent closure of Porterstown level crossing to vehicular traffic
4. Insufficient and inappropriate provisions proposed for people with mobility, medical and physical challenges, including
    a. lack of provision of toilet facilities, either on board or at the station
    b. lack of provision of overhead and designated luggage racks, increasing the risk of items being left at floor level, impeding safe use by visually impaired people
    c. removal of level crossing access with grossly inappropriate bridge alternatives with very long ramps rendering them unusable for most older and mobility impaired people.
5. Severe curtailment of the road infrastructure in the Dublin 15 area having direct effect on the ability of emergency services to respond
6. Much of the increase in frequency is dependent on phase 4 of the City Centre re-signalling project which according to the Iarnród Éireann website will allow for 20 trains to pass through the Connolly to Pearse loop every hour. Based on the current number of trains on this part of the DART line, the proposed increase in the number of trains on the Maynooth line, and already severe congestion in the loop at peak hour, increasing the number of trains to a level that requires the level crossings to be permanently closed will have severe adverse effect on the rail network between Connolly and Pearse for the whole city in the absence of Dart Underground or other solutions.

For the reasons described below, I request An Bord Pleanála give the Railway Order careful consideration and to refuse the application as it currently stands or grant it with conditions to ensure that the issues raised are adequately addressed. If you require any further information from me or wish me to attend for an oral hearing, I am happy to accommodate.

1. Coolmine level Crossing – The Dart+ West documentation informs that the following interventions are proposed at Coolmine level crossing: *'Permanent closure with diversion of vehicular traffic to existing crossing points at Castleknock and Diswellstown Road with associated road junction improvements. A new pedestrian and cyclist footbridge will be provided at the existing level crossing and a new station accessibility bridge and lift will be provided within the station.'* It was originally envisaged that a vehicular overpass would be built in Coolmine but this was changed apparently following public consultation. It was also changed to be in line with objective 141 of the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 that was to *'Prohibit any road bridge at this location'* (I am advised that the original proposal was for an inappropriately and unnecessarily long flyover). It is noted that in order to comply with objective 141, the new plan for closure of Coolmine to vehicular traffic completely contradicts objective 142 of the same development plan, which was to *'Preserve the existing pedestrian and vehicular right of way at the Coolmine Level Crossing'*, therefore, the Dart+ West planning report is being selective with the objectives it decided to adhere to and what objectives it decided to disregard.

In order to facilitate the closure of Coolmine level crossing, the upgrade of junctions are proposed as follows

- At the Diswellstown Junction, Castleknock Junction and Porterstown Road Junction additional traffic lanes are being proposed so that the junction can operate efficiently with the additional traffic flows projected following the closure of the level crossing.
- At the Clonsilla Road roundabout, the roundabout will be changed to a signalised junction to allow better management of the additional traffic flows projected following the closure of the level crossing.
- A passenger drop-off area will be created on the North side of the level crossing to prevent people parking in residential areas on the North side of the track as they will lose their easy access to the park and ride.

I request that permission is refused to permanently close Coolmine level crossing for the following reasons:

1. People on the North side of the level crossing will be prevented from using the park and ride without availing of a significant diversion via either Castleknock Bridge (Granard Bridge) or Diswellstown Road (Dr Troy) Bridge, including through residential areas, both already chronically congested at peak hours.
2. People on the North side of the level crossing use this crossing as one of the primary access routes into Dublin City Centre. The only realistic routes into Dublin City are via the N3 (Navan Road), Blackhorse Avenue, Phoenix Park and Chapelizod.
    a. The Chapelizod route, which is the easiest route to access for much of the area during peak times due to congestion, will be all but eliminated.
    b. Access via Diswellstown Road (Dr. Troy) Bridge is not a credible alternative during morning rush hour due to the construction and poor positioning of a school after the

bridge where parents drive their children to school, blocking all roads in the area, queuing to access the school. Queues in excess of an hour currently occur during school term at this one junction. This junction, which is signal controlled, already struggles to keep up with traffic flows at certain off-peak times. The proposed 'solution' (see below) actually would exacerbate this problem, and that is before even considering the planned developments that will be accessed by this same turn and increase in traffic congestion at this junction as detailed in d, e, f and g below.

c. This route guides people onto country roads, either via the Strawberry Beds or via Porterstown, on roads not designed to take such traffic volumes.
d. A new development, Kellystown, is proposed for the area, with access via the Diswellstown Road Junction, increasing volumes significantly at this already chronically overused junction at peak hours, according to the Kellystown Local Development Plan (LDP). This route is due to experience significantly more traffic (it is the junction with the most significant increase in delays in the modelling outlined in the LDP) with the proposed development at Kellystown, as detailed in the Kellystown LDP.
e. The turning traffic 'volume over capacity' for the Diswellstown Junction at the school as a result of the Kellystown development alone (which will also be the junction with Kellystown Road) is forecast to increase by over 85% both at AM and PM periods. Considering this turning traffic is already the primary cause of congestion at peak hours, this will essentially cut off the North side of the tracks for significant periods of the day.
f. Despite the current ongoing chaos caused by the one school currently present, the Kellystown plan would include two new schools that would be accessed via the same chaotic right hand turn.
g. A cemetery is also planned for the area, again with access via the right hand turn of the same junction. Given the volumes that currently use Glasnevin and Dardistown, it is fair to assume that funeral traffic will cause regular increased disruption throughout the day on top of the already diverted traffic from Coolmine.
h. Access to Dublin City via the N3 is already heavily congested and I would consider a non-starter to facilitate extra capacity. In addition, there is reduced capacity along the Quays due to lane removals.
i. Access to the City via Castleknock (and the Phoenix Park/Blackhorse Avenue) which currently has two access points, Coolmine and Castleknock (Granard) bridge, will be down to Castleknock (Granard) bridge only and is again heavily congested, made worse by the fact that a Lidl was allowed be built in Castleknock Village (which has on occasion adds 30 minutes to my journey times when I need to drive).
j. The extra traffic on Granard Bridge will make this route even more dangerous for pedestrians using this bridge. As it is, there is a dangerous and narrow path for pedestrians who can easily fall off the path onto the road and increasing traffic flow and pedestrian flow on the bridge will enhance the risks. I currently use this bridge on average, 10 times per week as a pedestrian.

3. People on both sides of the level crossing will be cut off from each other and from services on either side of the level crossing, requiring long diversions via heavily congested routes to circumvent the blockage.
4. The two proposed measures, which are linked, with the aim of getting all Coolmine and Clonsilla traffic to divert via the Diswellstown Road (Dr. Troy) Bridge are grossly inadequate. This bridge is already completely congested at many times during the day, not only caused

by poor traffic management but also poor planning, allowing a school be built in the vicinity (with two more planned in the near future). This road (and only other alternative route via the Porterstown Road) takes upwards of one hour to pass during school term, the main blockage being traffic turning right into the school. As it is, parents haphazardly drive their vehicles as close to and into the school grounds, using both sides of the road, blocking traffic in both directions on the Porterstown Road and access road into the school, reminiscent of my time living and driving in New Delhi, India. Examining the schematic for the proposed changes, I was shocked to see the proposed solution was to bring two lanes into three lanes at the junction, creating one turn left lane, one go straight lane and one turn right lane measuring approximately 87 metres each based on the submitted drawing, using Google maps to measure. The current layout has one turn left and go straight lane and one turn right lane (measured via google maps) which is also only 87 metres long. Essentially, the proposed layout will not see any increase in capacity for cars to turn right, the main problem, as this back-up blocks access to the other lane (soon to be two lanes). Using my average car as an example (4.25 metres long), leaving 2 metres between each car, you could fit less than 14 cars in the turn right lane before it fully blocks access to the other two lanes. This is not a hypothetical issue but core to part of the current problem (This horrifying best-case scenario is also incorrectly assuming the school traffic wouldn't also use the other two lanes, as is currently done with the current turn left/go straight lane). This inadequate turn right lane is already what we have and does not offer any solution. Furthermore, the scores of cars currently using the old Porterstown Road will be forced to use Dr Troy Bridge and join this 'right turning brigade', amplifying the problem to a level never seen before. It is noted that the bridge leads on to what is effectively a small country road where all the through traffic will be diverted to. When the development plans of Kellystown and the cemetery are factored in, the matter becomes worse by orders of magnitude. The junction is forecast to experience 625 extra car movements between 8 and 9 just for Kellystown traffic. The turning traffic 'volume over capacity' for the Diswellstown Junction at the school (which will also be the junction with Kellystown Road) is forecast to increase by over 85% both at AM and PM periods based on the submitted LDP for Kellystown. Considering this turning traffic is already the primary cause of congestion, this will essentially cut off the North side of the tracks for significant periods of the day.

5. It is noted that the report assumes no bus routes will be affected by the closure of Coolmine. However, this is just not the case and fails to understand that the traffic has to be rerouted, onto bus routes. The route 37 will be directly affected by this at all times. In addition, the extra proposed traffic on Dr Troy Bridge will likely create longer tailbacks stretching to the 39 route during peak periods. (The L52 route will presumably have to be diverted through this bridge too if its normal crossing at Clonsilla is eliminated). In addition, changes to Castleknock (Granard) Bridge and the extra volumes of traffic will have a direct impact on the 38 and 70D routes. It is concerning that the report stated no bus routes would be affected despite the fact that some of the primary bus routes into and out of the area will be directly and negatively affected, and severely undermines the quality of studies undertaken in this examination for Dart West and in the making of these proposals to close roads.
6. The proposal to replace the roundabout on the Clonsilla Road with traffic signals is also concerning as the roundabout facilitates a level of necessary cooperation between drivers, facilitating greater movement of vehicles on the heavily congested roads and will not be improved by this change. Any natural 'you go, I then go' fairness that has saved this junction to date will be eliminated in favour of lights that will not know if one direction of traffic is

unable to proceed during green time due to traffic backing up from the Coolmine Industrial Estate junction.

7. The proposal to provide a pedestrian and cycle bridge to reduce isolation is not sufficient. Much of the population of the area is over 65 and many neighbours, family included who will not be able to use the footbridge. On a side, the 39 bus service to Blanchardstown Village via the Clonsilla Road has been slaughtered in favour of the 39A which bypasses the area, replacing the majority of the 39 buses with 39A buses, further impacting the population of the area (42 services per day, versus 196 buses on the 39A route). On examining the pedestrian bridge in the published schemes, I was stunned to learn the length of the bridge that mobility challenged people will have to navigate to cross the railway. The bridge has 4 switchbacks, each nearly the length of a four carriage train (>80m), giving a total distance of around 300 metres/0.2 miles. While fit people will not have to endure this extra distance, bypassing the extra length in favour of stairs, people like my mother will be physically prohibited from crossing the railway and in reality, this will only be useful for people on electronic mobility scooters. The area under these switchbacks in the 3-D rendering is reminiscent of underpasses where teenagers and others gather to loiter, and I also fear would create a space for this to happen in Coolmine, further socially isolating older and more vulnerable people (an important lesson I learnt from volunteering at an Alone Christmas Dinner and sitting with and talking to older people).
8. The idea that a passenger drop-off area is the solution to preventing those who can no longer use the park and ride from parking in residential areas nearby is very odd and presumes everyone has partners and family who have licences and can drop travellers to the station whenever they need to go. It is not clear what solution there is for single people, widowed people, people who travel together for the same train etc.. and what they are meant to do. It is also noted that reference is made to the fact that there is still parking available in Coolmine at 8am and therefore capacity exists. No reference was made to the fact that no parking was available at 8am before car parking charges were introduced and the number of cars parking in nearby residential areas has increased as a result (as has the vandalism against cars belonging to commuters in what I and many interpret as an effort to discourage park and riders using local roads).

2. Clonsilla Level Crossing - In order to facilitate the closure of Clonsilla level crossing, the upgrade of measures are proposed as follows

- The Barberstown level crossing road replacement
- The facilitation of pedestrian and cycle traffic will be facilitated through a new bridge adjoining Beechpark

Clonsilla level Crossing – I request that permission is refused to permanently close Clonsilla level crossing for the following reasons:

1. Clonsilla level crossing is a masterpiece of 19th Century (unsure of completion date of the mechanism but railway opened in June, 1847) engineering and is mechanically operated via a wheel in the historic signal box. The working level crossing is a part of living history and should be preserved in working order for future generations to experience. The EIAS does acknowledge that '*the proposed bridges for pedestrians and cyclists to replace existing level crossings will have negative effects on structures of architectural heritage significance in the vicinity, including the former schoolhouse at Porterstown, the canal bridges adjacent to the*

level crossings and the signal box at Clonsilla Station.' Closing the level crossing or replacing it with an alternative level crossing or bridge would be an act of cultural vandalism. This monument to engineering still operates today and serves as a critical link between Clonsilla, Leixlip and Lucan (including the L52 bus route).

2. This is the primary access route between Clonsilla and Lucan for generations. People on the North side of the level crossing use this crossing as the primary access route to Lucan, the N4, Liffey Valley and the Hermitage Hospital. I myself regularly use it to access Red Cross ambulances stored in Grangecastle. The alternative routes require significant and inconvenient diversions via the Clonee to Lucan road or over the chronically congested and virtually unusable Diswellstown Road (Dr Troy) Bridge. Realignment of the road several years ago does encourage people to continue straight to this more dangerous road, leading to problems on the other route, in particular with the junction at Rugged Lane. As a result, I like many, continue to use this level crossing as the safer option. Even with this in mind, access via the Diswellstown (Dr Troy) Bridge is not a credible alternative during busy periods due to the construction and poor positioning of a school after the bridge where parents drive their children to school, blocking all roads in the area, queuing to access the school. In addition, there are traffic lights after the bridge that cause congestion in the evening times. Without a grade separated freeflow junction, this cannot be adequately resolved. As discussed earlier, the proposed 'solution' does not increase capacity to turn right in any way and will also increase the number of cars diverted, forced into this turn right queue from the diverted traffic from what is the 'proposed to be' closed Porterstown Road. Any freeflow junction would also not work during school periods where parents stop cars on the roads, blocking all lanes. Queues in excess of an hour occur during school term at this one junction. Even if there was a freeflow junction, traffic is then funnelled into what is effectively a country road. Further details in relation to the issues with this route are detailed in the Coolmine section above.
3. The alternative route suggested via Barberstown is rural and earmarked for significant development. It is a significant diversion from Clonsilla to reach this on a road that is not yet built. Given the proposals in the area and new constructions between there and Clonsilla to date, there is no reason to believe the problems on the Diswellstown Road will not be (if not already are) as severe, in particular when examining the LDP for Kellystown. There is also no reference to a date for commencement or completion of these works and appears to be separate from the railway order itself, giving no guarantees that this will even happen. There is also two new schools planned for the locality which will severely inhibit traffic flow further.
4. The proposal to provide a pedestrian and cycle bridge to reduce isolation and allow access is not sufficient and is bizarrely even longer than that proposed for Coolmine. Much of the population of the area is over 65 and many neighbours, family included who will not be able to use the footbridge. On examining the pedestrian bridge in the published schemes, I again was stunned to learn that the length of the bridge that mobility challenged people will have to navigate to cross the railway. Measuring the footbridge ramps gave a total distance well in excess of 400 metres, over ¼ mile. While fit people will not have to endure much of this extra distance, older people and people with physical disabilities will be physically prohibited from crossing the railway and in reality, this will only be useful for people on electronic mobility scooters if they have enough battery range to clear it. The area under these switchbacks in the 3-D rendering, like in Coolmine, is reminiscent of underpasses where teenagers and others gather to loiter, and I would fear would create a space for this.

There is an argument in the report that there are too many trains to allow for the level crossings to remain. In terms of the three level crossings, there are currently around 121 scheduled train movements through the level crossings each day. The information provided regarding future running of the line states that *'DART+ West will increase train frequency from 6 to 12 trains per hour per direction and passenger capacity from 5,000 to 13,200 per hour per direction'*. It is fair to guess that the proposed number of scheduled services will increase to around 225 services (taking into account the intercity services of which there are around 17 per day, will not increase). This is assuming that the congestion currently being experienced on the Maynooth and DART lines between Liffey Junction and Connolly are resolved and allow this number of services to pass through.

Currently, there are 210 scheduled train movements through the Merrion Gates and all level crossings between Pearse and Bray. This is comparable to the number of proposed services on the new Maynooth Dart West line, based on the information provided (I estimate to be 225 movements). Given the magnitude of impact these closures would have on the area, I implore that the DART+ West railway is not granted without either building overpasses to replace these level crossings or keep them open, albeit with greater closure times for road traffic. A study of the level crossings by a local, John Todd was conducted and there is much room for improvement in tightening the level crossing closures, a lot cheaper than the proposal to build pedestrian bridges, tunnels and alter junctions, albeit, to inadequate levels. The results of this study and an email he sent to Ministers is attached in **Appendix 1** which I would also request you fully consider. Another earlier submission to Iarnród Éireann during the public consultation by John Todd also addresses issues around the level crossings and comes up with proposed solutions **(Appendix 2).** None of this report appears to have been taken into account either. Due to a lack of response, another email has now again been sent by John Todd to Ministers and politicians in the hope to get important questions answered (**Appendix 3**). Again I request that you also fully consider the content and arguments of appendices 1, 2 and 3 when assessing the proposal. It is clear that there are alternatives to closing the level crossings that would keep the area united and not essentially trap huge swathes of people from accessing the city centre, other suburbs or the other part of the locality at many times of the day.

3. Porterstown Level Crossing – The proposed Porterstown level crossing closure is not considered heavy usage and therefore, no alternative vehicular access is proposed, with the report stating that there is sufficient capacity on the existing road network.

Porterstown level Crossing – I request that permission is refused to permanently close Porterstown level crossing for the following reasons:

1. The Porterstown level crossing currently acts as an alternative and overflow to the chronically congested Dr. Troy Bridge and even though it too gets gridlocked at peak hour, diverting this extra traffic onto the Dr. Troy Bridge will only make matters worse. The report makes no reference to this and appears to have a complete misunderstand of the workings and traffic flows of the junction by the school. With the proposed closure of Coolmine and Clonsilla, there will be no safety valve whatsoever to cross the railway.

2. The closure of the route, similar to the other level crossings, goes against Objective 137 of the Fingal County's Development Plan 2017 – 2023 which aims to preserve vehicular access across the railway at this point.
3. The proposed cycle and pedestrian access, while friendly to able bodied young people, is completely unsuitable for mobility impaired or older people at over 300 metres (0.2 miles) long if you avoid the stairs.
4. The proposed pedestrian bridge at this area will also have a negative impact on the old school which while (conveniently) is currently is a very bad state, is recognised as an important structure of architectural heritage significance. As mentioned above, the EIAS does acknowledge that *'the proposed bridges for pedestrians and cyclists to replace existing level crossings will have negative effects on structures of architectural heritage significance in the vicinity, including the former schoolhouse at Porterstown, the canal bridges adjacent to the level crossings and the signal box at Clonsilla Station.'*

4. Insufficient and inappropriate provisions proposed for people with mobility, medical and physical challenges

4a. Lack of provision of toilet facilities

There are currently 11 stations on the line between Dublin Connolly and Maynooth, an increase of three stations since 1997 along with the extension of the service to Dublin Pearse on the other end. There is also a proposal for another potential station at Kellystown in the Kellystown LDP. Journey times have increased along with the increase in stations, with times from Maynooth to Dublin Pearse now scheduled to take between 50 minutes and an hour, with delays frequent during the peak (due to several factors but usually primarily due to congestion joining the loop line at Connolly). The direct Maynooth to Bray service takes 1 hour and 41 minutes if it runs to schedule. However, delays joining the main DART line are frequent due to capacity issues in the City Centre and this can frequently take longer, up to the same time as an intercity train to Belfast or longer.

There are currently toilets on board all Maynooth line services but none in the stations (except Maynooth, Connolly and Pearse). The new trains ordered have no toilet facilities. This appears a very unusual decision as it is planned to eventually run the DART from Maynooth to Bray.

Given the greater extent of the DART network over the coming years and with that, greater journey times, it is not reasonable to not provide toilet facilities.

In addition, as a civil servant involved in property matters, I understand the importance of universal accessibility for all public buildings, and any building we now consider, will be ruled out fully, solely on the grounds of universal accessibility if this cannot be provided. This, rightly, is government policy. There are many people who for medical or other reasons, need toilets regularly. Having toilets on our trains facilitates everyone, including those needing toilet facilities, provide a good way of travelling for most people. It is beyond me why a decision was made not to include toilets in the 21st Century when we have a much greater understanding that public transport is for everyone, not just the young and healthy. Public transport should truly be as accessible as possible and I see this as a major step backwards. It is noted from below that the proposed universally accessible bridges on the route will increase journeys to an extent that mobility impaired people without means of electronic propulsion will be unable to avail of the 'solution'/pedestrian overpasses.

Ideally, toilet facilities should be located on board services, however, given the trains are already ordered, if trains cannot be retrofitted, there is a necessity to provide toilet facilities in stations.

I request that the DART+ West railway order is not granted without a caveat for the requirement to have adequate provision for toilet facilities, either on board trains or at every station along the route.

4b. Lack of provision of overhead and designated luggage racks, increasing the risk of items being left at floor level, impeding safe use by visually impaired people (Happy to discuss this point from my experience of helping keep a working office safe for people with visual impairments)

The current DART trains and the ones ordered do not have overhead storage racks. Bizarrely, on the promotion video for the new DART trains, a hook at low level between the doors is shown holding a backpack in quite an intrusive manner where people with visual impairments may easily trip over if standing on a peak hour service.

All Maynooth line trains currently have overhead racks to conveniently store coats, bags etc... This assists with keeping aisles and seats clear while also increasing capacity of the trains. However, many visually impaired people, including the partially sighted with poor peripheral vision will be unable to see any baggage left at ground level, causing a hazard to them. While it is a small element, it shows again that the trains ordered were not bought with true universal accessibility in mind or with maximising capacity with such an easy 'win'/measure. I request that any decision to grant the railway order include a caveat to address this small measure.

4c. Removal of level crossing access with grossly inappropriate bridge alternatives with very long ramps rendering them unusable for most older and mobility impaired people.

The proposal to provide pedestrian and cycle bridges to reduce isolation and allow access to the other side of the tracks, apart from not being sufficient, is very damaging to mobility impaired persons and cannot be considered 'universally accessible'. The length of the 'disability access ramps in Coolmine and Porterstown is 300 metres and in Clonsilla is over 400 metres. Much of the population of the area, who are over 65 and my neighbours, family included, will not be able to use the footbridge unless they have motorised mobility scooters and a battery range to facilitate this. While fit people will not have to endure much of this extra distance, people like my mother will be physically prohibited from crossing the railway due to the extra 0.2 miles and 0.25 miles respectively they would have to walk. While this does not seem too far, for someone for example who can't shop in the local Dunnes Stores because it is too big, cannot be expected to make such a diversion. The area under these switchbacks in the 3-D rendering, like in Coolmine, is reminiscent of underpasses where teenagers and others gather to loiter, and I would fear would create a space for this. This too, as I learnt from talking to older people at an Alone Charity Event would cause a lot of anxiety to many older people who are already terrified to leave their houses. While this proposed measure has direct and negative effects on all in the area, the worst affected are the most vulnerable and older people in the area. On this basis too, I again request that any granting of the railway order has a caveat not to allow the closure of the level crossings facilitated by the proposed measures.

5. Severe curtailment of the road infrastructure in the Dublin 15 area having direct effect on emergency services

The proposed road/level crossing closures, aside from reasons of traffic which is clearly outlined above, will also result in emergency services accessing parts of the area with a much longer response time. For example, if a fire breaks out in Station View, Coolmine, the fire brigade could be on scene in under 2 minutes (0.7 miles) with low levels of residential housing *en-route* and a low risk to pedestrians. If the proposed closure goes ahead, the same incident would take the fire brigade at least 5 minutes (1.8 miles via traffic on heavily residential roads) on a journey with much greater risks of injury to passers by/ children at play etc...

6. Much of the increase in frequency is dependent on phase 4 of the City Centre re-signalling project which according to the Iarnród Éireann website will allow for 20 trains to pass through the Connolly to Pearse loop every hour. Based on the current number of trains on this part of the DART line, the proposed increase in the number of trains on the Maynooth line, and already severe congestion in the loop at peak hour, increasing the number of trains to a level that requires the level crossings to be permanently closed will have severe adverse effect on the rail network between Connolly and Pearse in the absence of Dart Underground or other solution.

The final stages of the Dart City Centre Re-signalling project started in November 2020 and appears to have been completed in August 2021 (however, no hard evidence of this was found, but a parliamentary question indicated it would be complete before the end of 2021 and records from the INEA who are over the European funds for the project indicate it was completed in August 2021). The proposal is to increase train capacity through the vital city centre corridor from 12 trains to 20 trains per hour.

Despite the works done to date, there are still daily capacity issues on the DART line and frequently, the Maynooth line trains have to wait outside Connolly for significant amounts of time before getting onto the loop line. In addition, when you do get into Connolly between 08:30 and 08:45, there is more usually than not, delays to DART services who struggle to get into Platform 5 due to congestion on the line. A hard example of this was on 03/10/2022 when the 08:58 hours service from Drumcondra to Connolly departed at 08:58:35, stopping twice on the route into Connolly Station, finally arriving at 09:15:18, making the 6 minute journey, which left on schedule, 11 minutes late due to congestion on the DART line. In the absence of DART Underground or another solution to increase capacity, increasing trains on the Maynooth line to a level where the level crossing should be permanently closed, is not credible, unless the number of services on the current DART line is significantly reduced.

Appendix 1 – Email from John Todd to the Taoiseach and Minister for Transport and thread, including details of level crossing operations, issues and suggestions

Dear Taoiseach and Minister for Transport,

Please see below my very recent email to DART+ WEST. (26-09-'22)

In the meantime, everyone will welcome an improved train service on this western route.

In my opinion there is an alternative to the full-time closing of the Level-Crossings on the Maynooth/M3 Parkway lines, as has been proposed by Irish Rail.

That is to fully upgrade the Signalling System and

To construct New Platforms on the approach side of Level-Crossings at the stations, in order to reduce the intervals that the gates are closed and keep the traffic moving.

It would be a much cheaper alternative to achieve to same objectives.

It would greatly reduce the duration taken to complete that project and it could be a win/win/win/win situation for the Tax-payer, the Commuter, the General Public and Irish Rail.

If the vehicular traffic on over 5 local railway crossings in the Dublin 15, where the population is still increasing, are compressed onto just 2 bridges, then traffic congestion in the area could be massively increased, valuable time could be lost while sitting in cars, very scarce fuel would be wasted, causing needless emissions and even more damage to the environment.

It would also demonstrate how Bus Services would be affected, along with other vehicles.

This is why I think that closing 3 Level-Crossings to vehicles only, for a 48-hour trial period mid-week during the school term, is urgently needed before even a Euro is approved for this project.

If, as I understand it there are no toilets on the new 'rolling stock' that is on order, then trips for commuters could be confined to those going to or from Connolly or Pearse Stations, where there are toilets. Is this the plan?

The proposed Pedestrian Bridges may be 300 meters long if the long ramps are included (close to one-fifth of a mile) so it may only be the 2 stairways that would be used. (Maybe without weather protection?)

(Detailed, dimensioned drawings should be issued so that everyone can get the full details of what is being proposed for them.)

What area of habitat would be lost and how many mature trees would be felled, at Coolmine and other L.-C's?

Finally, I do not agree with the demand for €50 to lodge one's objection to An Bord Pleanála.

If Irish Rail answered questions promptly, there may be no requirement for anyone to go to A.B.P.

I forwarded my latest email, this one with an attachment 'Level_Crossings' to dartmaynooth@irishrail.ie, on March 24th., 2022, and I am still awaiting detailed answers to the questions posed to them. (It was also copied to many of our elected public representatives.)

Is that acceptable from a body that receives so much funding from the Tax-Payer?

I now look forward to your response.

Best regards,

John Todd.

From: John Todd
Sent: Monday 26 September 2022 20:22
To: DARTWest <DARTwest@irishrail.ie>
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Subject: DART+ WEST, - Maynooth/M3 Parkway.

Project scope:- There is a proposal to replace the present diesel-car system with a more frequent, day-time, DART service, on the Maynooth/M3 Parkway lines but also to slam shut all Level-Crossings to vehicular traffic, 24/7.

Dear madam/sir,

I would like the Dart+ West Project Team to examine my latest surveys regarding the intervals that Coolmine Level-Crossing is closed to traffic at present and to answer the questions that follow.

Please copy your response to this and my previous emails to all of our elected representatives, listed above.

SURVEY UNTAKEN ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH., AT COOLMINE STATION, FOR OUTWARD TRAINS.

Note: On the I.R. timetable the duration for trains between Castleknock and Coolmine Stations is **2 minutes.**

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
07:26:08	(3:27)	07:29:35	(+0:32=3:59)	07:30:07	(+0:17=4:16)	07:30:24.	**4 m. & 16 s.**
08:09:58	(3:16)	08:13:14	(+0:38=3:54)	08:13:52	(+0:17=4:11)	08:14:09.	**4 m. & 11 s.**
08:34:07	(3:31)	08:37:38	(+0:50=4:21)	08:38:28	(+0:20=4:41)	08:38:48.	**4 m. & 41 s.**
16:30:03	(3:08)	16:31:11	(+0:45=3:53)	16:33:56	(+0:14=4:07)	16:34:10.	**4 m. & 41 s.**
16:42:00	(3:20)	16:45:20	(+0:50=4:10)	16:46:28	(+0.18=4:28)	16:46:28.	**4 m. & 28 s.**
16:47:49	(3:04)	16:50:53	(+0:40=3:44)	16:51:33	N.A.		
17:10:50	(3:44)	17:14:34	(+1:07=4:51)	17:15:41	(+0:20=5:11)	17:16:01.	**5 m. & 11 s.**
17:40:21	(3:28)	17:43:49	(+1.04=4:32)	17:44:53	(+0:20=4:52)	17:45:13.	**4 m. & 52 s.**
17:47:36	(2:20)	17:49:56	(+0:44=3:04)	17:50:40	(+0:17=3:21)	17:50:57.	**3 m. & 21 s.**
17:54:06	(3:01)	17:57:07	(+0:39=3:40)	17:57:46	(+0:17=3:57)	17:58:03.	**3 m. & 57 s.**

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 26TH.

17:08:22	(3:20)	17:11:42	(+0:46=4:06)	17:12:28	(+0:20=4:46)	17:12:48.	**4 m. & 46 s.**
17:21:45	(3:10)	17:24:55	(+0:51=4:01)	17:25:46	(+0:16=4:17)	17:26:02.	**4 m. & 17 s.**
17:44:10	(2:58)	17:47:08	(+0:48=3:46)	17:47:56	(+0:17=4:03)	17:48:13.	**4 m. & 03 s.**

Please allow 1 or 2 seconds either way.

A: Time that the Audio and Flashing lights commenced at. Important note:- The gates are completely down after about 30 seconds from the time that the Audio and Flashing lights commence.

B: The duration between the Audio and Flashing lights commencing and the outgoing train stopping at Coolmine Platform. The front of the train stops at the drivers VDU, that is about 75 to 80 yards back from the Level-Crossing.

C: The time that the outgoing train stopped adjacent to Coolmine Platform at.

D: Add the duration at the platform to the previous total to get overall time since the Audio and Lights commenced.

E: The time that the train moved from Coolmine platform at.

F: Add extra duration for the movement of the train to the level crossing to the previous total to get the total time since the Audio and Flashing lights commenced.

G: The time that the train reached the Level-Crossing at.

M: The overall time that the outgoing suburban train took to reach the Level-Crossing, from the time that the Audio and Flashing lights commenced, highlighted in minutes and seconds.

Note: It appears from the above survey that the average time that the gates at Coolmine L.C. are closed, before an outgoing suburban train reaches them, is in excess of 4 minutes.

The fact that the suburban trains stop at Coolmine platform, 75 to 80 back from the L.C. for passengers alighting or getting on, is it necessary to have the gates closed for such a very long duration?

If the train reached the platform before the barriers dropped down, then there would be a large saving of time for all road users. Then there may be no need to close the Level-Crossing, even for peak time, frequent trains.

Do some of the drivers on the Maynooth/M3Parkway service require upskilling?

At Connolly Station there are at least 4 cul-de-sacs platforms where the train drivers are able to halt at a short, safe distance back from the 'stops' on the tracks.

At Heuston Station there are about 8 cul-de-sac platforms and trains arrive from Cork approximately every hour.

Trains also arrive at Heuston from Waterford, Galway/Westport and Portlaoise and halt safely , without incidents. Trains sometimes park very, very close behind other trains on the tracks, - sometimes within a few yards from them with no apparent problems.

In some cases, it appears that the Audio and Flashing Lights commence at Coolmine L.C. even before a suburban train stops at the previous station at Castleknock, that is about 0.8 miles away.

Is that an accurate observation for many of the outward suburban trains at present?

If the total Signalling System on the Maynooth and the M3 Parkway lines were upgraded using the most up-to-date technology that is available in the 2020's, could the commencement of the Audio and Flashing lights at Coolmine L.C., be delayed until a train actually arrives at Coolmine Platform, biased on the above figures and examples?

The duration that the train stops at the platform plus the time taken to reach the L. C. appears to be far greater that the time necessary for the barriers to drop down into position.

If the Audio and Flashing lights commence say 4 minutes before the outgoing inter-city train to Sligo, then the train travelling at 60 m.p.h. would be passing through Broombridge Station, at that time. Is that what is recommended?

On Tuesday September, 13th., the Maynooth train to Connolly Station departed Drumcondra Station at 10:59. Following one long stop and one short stop, including slow moving, that train arrived in Connolly Station at 11:13, that is 14 minutes later. The I.R. timetable shows 6 to 9 minutes travelling time between those stations for ingoing trains but only 4 or 5 minutes for outgoing trains.

If the train numbers were to increase, before the Signalling System is fully upgraded, the trains on the Maynooth line and also on the Kildare line, that both come together at Glasnevin Junction, could be greatly affected by longer delays. Going through Drumcondra Station should be okay but getting through the junction with the northern routes, to access Connolly Station, may affect commuters and for many of there may be consequences such as missing transfers or being late for work or appointments.

How do the present closure times of the Coolmine L. C. gates compare with those at Lansdowne Road L. C. or at Merrion Road L. C.?

On St. John's Road West and on Parkgate Street the LUAS trams pass on the level-crossings very frequently, sometimes only a few minutes behind the previous one. Traffic moves in both directions in the meantime. What is the difference over the LUAS Level-Crossings compared with Coolmine L. C., apart from their traffic-lights systems?

Also, there were frequent LUAS trams going in the opposite direction. Recently, on Parkgate Street, the traffic lights changed to green before the end of an outwards LUAS had cleared the L.C. so, traffic moved immediately it had passed.

If new platforms were constructed on the approach side of level-crossings, at each station and the Signalling System was upgraded, trains could stop at a safe distance back from each Level-Crossing before the gates would close to traffic. Commuters could get off and others could get on and then the train could move towards the Level Crossing. When the train has crossed the L. C., the gates could be opened up after a minimum duration. For the short durations while the trains are passing over the L. C. there would be no need to close the L. C's. full-time to traffic, even at peak times. The same would apply to suburban trains going in the opposite direction.

Why is there a proposal to close Level-Crossings for off-peak times, on Sundays, on Bank Holidays and overnight when no trains are running?

If there was no desire to close the Level-Crossings, there would be no need for the proposed very large and long pedestrian bridges.

Also, the project timing schedule could be greatly reduced and all at an enormous saving to the tax-payer.

Also, at Ashtown, there may be no need for the proposed very large tunnel under the railway lines and the Royal canal.

Obviously, the advantage at Ashtown, is that there is a gate attendant there to close and open the gates, when necessary.

If a new platform was constructed there, the existing push/pull gates were replaced by lifting gates similar to those at Coolmine L. C. and the gate attendant's cabin was moved onto platform no. 1, for close observation of train movements, it may be possible to reduce closure times even further. This would be similar to the attendant's observation from the signal-box at Clonsilla Station, at the L. C.

For the ever-increasing population in Dublin 15, how is it expected to compress the traffic, at the moment using 5 roads, between and including Granard Bridge (close to Castleknock Station) and Callaghan Bridge (close to Clonsilla Station) over 2 bridges, that is Granard Bridge and Dr. Troy Bridge, that is on Diswellstown Road.

Can this be done without affecting Ambulance services, Fire Brigades, Gardai, Postal deliveries, the General Public, etc?

Access and egress to pharmacies, grocery and hardware shops, restaurants, pubs, G.P. clinics, schools, churches, etc., are very important, as everyone knows.

What is the area of habitat to be lost in order to construct the proposed pedestrian bridges and how many mature trees are expected to be felled at Coolmine Station, if that element of the project gets the go-ahead?

On Tuesday, September 13th. the Audio and flashing lights commenced at 17:10:50. An outward train that stopped at Coolmine reached the L.C. at 17:16:01, an interval of 5 m. and 11 s. An inward train reached the L.C. at 17:18:39, a further interval of 2 m. 38 s. An outward train to M3 Parkway that stopped in Coolmine reached the L.C. 17:22:46, a further interval of 4 m. 8 s.

The gates were fully raised at 17:23:17 to give an overall traffic stoppage time of **12 minutes 27 seconds.**

A few recommendations:

1/. Upgrade the Signalling System on the Maynooth line as soon as possible because that would have to be done in any event.

2/. Carry out Traffic Surveys in the whole area as soon as possible, that is over every railway crossing point mid-week, whether that be over a Bridge or over a Level-Crossing in order to get accurate, up-

to-date figures. Add all the figures obtained together in order to get the total vehicle movements, over the tracks, in the area.

(School peak-times surveys, mornings and afternoons, should give everyone some very valuable information.)

3/. Give adequate notice and then close all Level-Crossings on the line to vehicles only, for a 48 hours period, mid-week, in order to see what the consequences of closing them are. Very important to do this before any expenditure is approved.

4/. Depending on the allocated budgeted expenditure approved, it may also be necessary to add on a very large percentage as a contingency, in order to complete the project. For example, compare the original project estimates for the Broadband roll-out and also for the Children's Hospital to what the final costs will be.

5/. Consider a parking area close to Castleknock Station in order to reduce parking on the nearby roads and thus improve traffic flow.

I now look forward to your detailed response.

Regards,

John Todd.

P.S. A special word of thanks to Fingal Cllr. John Walsh for his recent information meeting.

Appendix 2 – Submission of John Todd to the Public Consultation process on Dart + West.

The upgrading of the Connolly to Maynooth / M3 Parkway railway service to a DART-like service will be widely welcomed by commuters, all along those routes and from beyond, using any of the stations along this service. However, for this "preferred option", there may be
negative aspects for the whole community if the level-crossings were closed full-time.

With respect, this note was written regarding the proposed closure of level-crossings, to vehicles, along those routes and the possible issues that are likely to be caused as a result of those closures.

It contains an alternative to the full-time closing of the level-crossings, as detailed below. In short, minimise the duration that barriers are lowered and otherwise keep the traffic moving.

A FEW SUGGESTED PRIMARY TASKS.

1. **Upgrade the signalling system to reduce to a minimum the duration that the level crossings are closed to vehicular traffic, for all passing trains. This must be given a high priority as it may also save many train-delays in the short-term, especially for those going into Connolly Station, as well as in the long-term.**
2. **Give advanced notice and close the level-crossings at Coolmine, on Porterstown Road and at Clonsilla to all vehicular traffic for a period of say 48 hours on weekdays, in order to gauge the level of disruption that would be caused. Granard and Dr. Troy bridges are expected with all of the traffic. (Allow all pedestrians and cyclists to pass through, during this trial period.)**
3. **Submit to the relevant Government Departments, the calculated expenditure and contingency for the "preferred option" and seperately put forward a cost for this alternative. Obviously the 'ceiling costs' would be very beneficial to all.**
4. **Issue all the detailed, fully dimensioned drawings, for all of the interest parties to see. That includes two elevations viewed at 90 degrees to each other and also plan views. Scaling of drawings is not sufficient for accuracy.**

A FEW SUGGESTED SECONDARY TASKS.

1. **Conduct an intensive and thorough traffic counts over all bridges and level-crossings for one week, between the bridge on the Rathoath Road (R805) and Barberstown level-crossing, as detailed later.**
2. **Closely scrutinise all the findings from No. 2 above in terms of traffic disruption, length of queues and time lost. There is also the cost of the fuel wasted by detours and the damage caused by the extra unnecessary emissions into the atmosphere.**
3. **Construct new platforms on the approach side of the level-crossing, for those that are close to stations. If suburban trains stopped at a safe distance from any level-crossing it may not be necessary to bring down the barriers until a train was almost ready to move away from the platform. This could greatly reduce the duration that the barriers are down and also decrease the waiting time for drivers (and passengers) in vehicles and also pedestrians.**
4. **Carry out a detailed costing analysis for this proposed option and compare it with the construction of a tunnel under the railway and canal at Ashtown and the construction of pedestrian bridges about one-fifth of a mile long, in Coolmine and Clonsilla. (See No. 3 in top section) Destruction of Ashtown Stables would be a major loss to the community.**
5. **Compare the timing schedule necessary for the upgrade of the rail system, - constructing the tunnel and the 2 long pedestrian bridges with the duration required for the construction of new platforms, where necessary. Most of the work possibly could take**

place without any inconvenience to the community.

6. **Put yellow bands on the mature trees to be felled, particularly in Coolmine and outline the area that each pedestrian bridge would cover in order that everyone can clearly see the area of habitat to be lost.**
7. **Ensure that costs for the pedestrian bridges includes those for ESB networks and Eir, for the rerouting of cables and putting up extra poles. Also, Fingal Co. Co. for any lamp standards that have to be relocated and rewired.**
8. **Upgrade the display boards in the stations to give reliable, updated information.**
9. **What extra car parking facitities will be provided for commuters, from the overall area?**

Detailed below is an engineering alternative to the proposed closing of 3 level crossings, very close to suburban railway stations, on the Connolly to Maynooth or to the M3 Parkway, railway stations. Must be worthy of due consideration even at this stage because of possible cost-savings, the disruption to traffic and general inconvenience. Those 3 level-crossings, very close to stations, are at Ashtown, Coolmine and Clonsilla.

In particular, a major signalling upgrade, sooner rather than later, may assist those trains entering onto the North-South DART, suburban and intercity lines, at the junction close to Connolly Station, as being frequently experienced at present. One example, the train that left Coolmine at 10:02, on December 6th., 2021 and was due in Connolly at 10:27. It arrived there at 11:34, that is 1 hour and 7 minutes late. We were informed at infrequent intervals, that this was due to signalling issues because we had stops just west of Ashtown Station, a very long delay in Pelletstown Station, another delay east of Broombridge Station and again a long delay between Dromcondra and Connolly Stations. (Commuters could have opted to get on the LUAS from Broombridge if the seriousness of the problem, had been announced. Many of commuters, if they had the recently available TFI 90 Minutes Fare, (TFI Leap Card) would have lost out on their possible savings, due to being outside the 90 minutes transfer deadline.) On February 16th. 2022, a city-bound train left the platform at Coolmine Station at 10:29:20. That same train left Drumcondra Station at 12:48:25 and following 2 long intermediate stops, it arrived in Connolly Station at 13:12:35, following an interval of 24 minutes and 10 seconds. {The timetable shows 4 or 5 minutes for the section of tracks, that are about 1.4 miles (2.25 km} long and any annoucements on the train could not be heard.}

If there are more trains expected to go on the Maynooth line, without the signalling system being first fully upgraded and also if there is a possibility that there will be extra trains from the Kildare line joining at Glasnevin Junction, then the delays getting into Connolly Station could be even more frequent and for longer durations. {Glasnevin Junction is about 2.1 miles (3.4 km) from Connolly Station and Drumcondra Station is on that section of the tracks.}

The display boards at many of the stations on the line need to be upgraded so that accurate information regarding the interval before the arrival of the next train is available, it is correct and is continuously updating.

Does the attendant manualls close the L.C. gates at Ashtown Station, even before an outwards suburban train leaves the platform at Pelletstown Station, about 0.8 miles (1.25 km) away and it stops at Ashtown platform, prior to reaching the level-crossing? (3 minutes according to the timetable) Are the L.C. gates closed at Ashtown Station even before an inwards suburban train leaves Navan Road, Parkway Station, about 0.6 miles (1 km) away? (2 minutes according to the timetable)

At present it appears that the barriers drop down at Coolmine L.C. even before a train leaves the platform at Castleknock Station, that is about 0.8 miles (1.25 km) away and when it reaches Coolmine Station it stops about 75 yards back from the level-crossing. Is that a correct assumption for many of the commuter trains? (It shows 2 minutes on the timetable compared with the time that the barriers are down before the train reaches Coolmine L. C.) Also, it appears that the barriers drop down at Coolmine L.C. even before a train leaves the platform in Clonsilla Station, that is about 1.4 miles (2.25 km) away. Is that correct for many local trains? (3 minutes on the timetable) Generally there is a duration of between 4 and 5 minutes from the time the audio and flashing lights commence at Coolmine, that a suburban train after stopping at Coolmine platform about 75 yards away, actually reaches the level-crossing. Why is this the norm in the 2020's with the great advancement in technology?

*** Construct new platforms at those 3 stations, on the approach side of the level crossings and use them instead of the existing ones. (For one side only.) For Ashtown and Coolmine it would mean constructing new platforms, say No. 3, on the western side of the level crossings, to replace the existing platform No. 1. At Ashtown, the new platform would commence just west of an existing dwelling. For Clonsilla, a new No. 4 platform, on the eastern side of the level crossing, would replace the existing No. 2 there. Have the design engineers actually visited every level-crossing and railway station, on the Maynooth line that branches through Dunboyne and on to the M3 Parkway station? Have they examined every option in minute detail?**

This alternative would save the loss of the unique ameniety known as the Ashtown Riding Stables, save the undesireable construction of a tunnel under the railway lines and canal and the issues that it could generate in Ashtown. It would also save the construction of the proposed very long pedestrian bridges at Coolmine and Clonsilla. Many pedestrians may be able to cross-over the tracks by way of the stairways, on both sides of the tracks but those adults with buggies, prams or with small children, many senior citizens and also the wheelchair users, will not have that choice so must use the very long route including the 2 ramps, in all weathers.

Commuters from the local areas, needing to cross-over the tracks, walking to or from the nearby No. 37 bus stop on Carpenterstown Park East or the No. 39 bus stop on Clonsilla Road, would also be unduly inconvienced by the closing of Coolmine level crossing.

Has a lift system, having 2 or 3 liftshafts, on both sides of the tracks, being thoroughly examined as another option to the proposed pedestrian bridges?

ACTIONS.

1. Bring forward the complete upgrading of the signalling system on the Connolly to Maynooth railway lines to incorporate GPS and the most up-to-date advanced technology. Is there upgrading required for the train-drivers 'traffic lights' system, in those stations?

2. Carry out an intensive and thorough traffic counts on the following routes:-

To be carried for a full week, - say Wednesday to Wednesday, so that it is absolutely clear what the existing traffic movements are over the bridges and level-crossings. This would gauge how Granard Bridge (may be a protected structure) and Dr. Troy Bridge would be affected if the traffic from the 3 local level crossings closures, were re-routed onto those 2 bridges, along with the existing traffic.

2a. Over the new bridge, crossing over the railway and canal, on Ratoath Road, R805.
2b. Over the level-crossing, on Ashtown Road / Longford Bridge. (Adjacent to Ashtown Station)
2c. Over the new bridge, on Dunsink Lane, R102.
2d. Over Granard Bridge, on Castleknock Road, R806.
2e. Over Coolmine level-crossing / Kirkpatrick Bridge.
2f. Over Dr. Troy Bridge, on Diswellstown Road
2g. Over the level-crossing / Keenan Bridge, on Porterstown Road.
2h. Over Clonsilla level-crossing / Callaghan Bridge.
2i. Over Barberstown level-crossing / Pakenham Bridge.

A. If 2 or 3 traffic counts can be undertaken at the same time it would greatly reduce the duration required to establish and quantify those very important totals, over those bridges and level-crossings. Those traffic counts would also be very important because Granard Bridge and Dr. Troy Bridge are on bus routes so bus delays may be encountered.

B. Could those 2 bridges named above (Granard and Dr. Troy) cope with existing and also the diverted traffic? How will the traffic at present using Coolmine, Porterstown Road and Clonsilla level-crossings be compressed to go over Granard Bridge {about 9.18 metres between the walls and about 7.15 metres (23' – 5.5") between the footpaths} and Dr. Troy Bridge, {about 13.51 metres between the side-walls and about 7.52 metres (28' – 8") between the cycle paths that are alongside footpaths} along with all of the vehicles already using those particular routes.

What significant impact would the proposed local junction upgrades have for all of the vehicles trying to make their way across those 2 bridges? {The distance between the traffic lights at both ends of Granard Bridge scale to be about 300 yards (274 metres) apart.}

Traffic usually increases to and from the local shopping centres and in particular the

Blanchardstown Town Centre, for many weeks before Christmas and also afterwards for the January sales.

C. Looking at the I.R. Website and in particular the **"Dart + and Riverwood Court bridge"** drawings, the proposed bridge, (presumed pedestrian) in the elevation (top) view does not appear to match what is shown in the bottom (plan) view.

Take a line along the canal, in both views, - the width of the bridge in the elevation appears to be over 5 times the width of the one in the plan view. This is very misleading and if there are any errors on the drawings issued, they must be corrected immediately for distribution to all parties. Also, an elevation of this proposed pedestrian bridge, looking from south to north, accurately showing the dwellings on Sheepmoor Lane and Kirkpatrick Drive in the background, would give the residents there some indication of how their properties are going to be over-looked, not alone from one of its ramps but also from along it, at high level.

D. Traffic counts over railway crossing points and the bridges, close to schools need to be highlighted for school opening and closing times because traffic volumes on the local roads are already very heavy, that is bumper to bumper, during those periods.

E. A large percentage increase in traffic volumes may have to be added on to the survey's figures to take into account, a fast-growing population in the areas. For example:
For all of the new developments being constructed in the Pelletstown and Ashtown catchment areas.
For all of the new Dunsink proposals.
For guests and staff in the proposed 28 storey, 459 bedrooms hotel and for staff in 3 or 4 office blocks, - one is 13 storeys high, - all on the existing Junction 6 site.
For the proposed development on Brady's site on the Old Navan Road, Blanchardstown,
For the new 6, or 8 storey apartment blocks now being constructed on Windmill Estate that will have 211 apartments. (At the rear of St. Mochta's Estate.) They are off Clonsilla Road where they must enter from and exit to.
{Traffic on Clonsilla Road will therefore increase greatly. The main road from St. Mochta's estate, Stationcourt and Windmill all lead to a cross-roads with traffic lights on Clonsilla Road and it scales to be only 106 yards, (97 metres) from the traffic lights on the Coolmine Road T-junction, with Clonsilla Road.}
For all of the new Kellystown proposals, and for traffic from the proposed Link Road, etc.
For the new St. Joseph's Estate in Clonsilla where construction is well advanced.
For all of the construction projects progressing in Ongar.
For all other developments in the pipeline, on both sides of the railway lines.

F. Close to both ends of Diswellstown Road there are schools, each with staff and a large attendance of students. From the 4-roads junction with traffic lights at the southern end of Dr. Troy Bridge, one road leads to the entrance to Scoil Choilm and the nearby Luttrellstown Community College. It will also lead to the new Kellystown Cemetery that is due to open around mid-year. (This is the road that may be extended westwards in the future to become a major link road.) St. Moctha's school is very close to the other end of Diswellstown Road. For staff and students going to Coolmine Community School or Castleknock Community College, (on Carpenterstown Road) the loss of Coolmine level-crossing would mean long detours and possible delays, if going by car, to their colleges.

G. To get to churches for services, funerals, etc., long detours will be necessary.

H. Will the projected figures for commuters travelling on suburban trains be upgraded because of the numbers now working and shopping from home? Requirements may have altered in the meantime.

{Footnote: Kirkpatrick Bridge was constructed and has been in use since 1796. (Over 225 years ago) The Royal Canal opened as far as Kilcock, in that year. Just south of Kirkpatrick Bridge, a level crossing was created when tracks were laid and trains from Broadstone Station to Enfield Station and back, commenced a service in June, 1847. (Almost 175 years ago.) Coolmine station opened around 1990.}

3. Modify existing platforms as may be required, that are at present on the approach side of level-crossings. Move back the driver's VDU, (Visual Display Unit, - drivers screen) to the desired distance from the level-crossing. Construct new platforms as detailed above.

That would mean that all trains could stop at the station platforms, at a safe distance from

the level-crossing, before the need for the barriers to drop down. This would be for outwards and inwards trains, if the new platforms were constructed.

(At Coolmine, from the commencement of audio and flashing lights to the barriers being fully lowered, takes about 30 seconds. At Ashtown it takes longer because the swing gates there at present have to be closed and opened manually.)

For inter-city trains, select a minimum distance for each train to be from a level-crossing, before the barriers are lowered.

3a. The access to or egress from the new inwards platform at Ashtown could be by using a short section of the existing Royal Canal Way, just past the existing dwelling. In Coolmine, west of the level-crossing and Kirkpatrick Bridge, the present proposals are to divert the Royal Canal Way, over onto Sheepmoor Lane, on the northern side of the canal and it would be extended over to Keenan Bridge. It would be then on the opposite side of the canal and that would give even more space for a new platform there, adjacent to the inwards track. At Ashtown, relocate the gate attendant's cabin onto platform No. 1, in order that the attendant has an excellent view of all local trains movements, in both directions, as at Clonsilla Station.

4. Modify existing swing gates at Ashtown and Clonsilla level-crossings to barriers similar to Coolmine, Porterstown Road and Barberstown L.C's., for faster operation and in particular raising them up as soon as possible, after each train has passed.

4a. Use all available up-to-date technology to minimise the duration that the barriers are down. This could also save time when trains going in opposite direction, are say, more than 2 minutes apart reaching each level-crossing. The barriers could be raised in the meantime assisting the flow of traffic. {This would same valuable time for vehicle drivers (and their passengers) and also save on fuel wastage and reduce exhaust emissions.}

5. Tightly control the lowering the barriers, by local or remote operation to keep the durations to a minimum. That duration could incorporate the period that a train usually remains at a platform and then the time taken to move to the level-crossing. {There is a cul-de-sac platform at Clonsilla Station and at least 4 in Connolly Station, (possibly 8 at Heuston Station) where many, many trains have stopped safely over the years, without incident, so this proves the skill of the train drivers. Train are also parked, end to end, very close behind other trains}

5a. Depending on the numbers of commuters alighting from trains and for others getting on, the duration that the trains are parked at a platform and then advance to reach the level-crossing, could be 40 seconds or more. (Longer that the time it takes for the lights to flash, the audio to sound and for the barriers to drop down)

5b. Immediately the trains have cleared the level crossing, the barriers could be raised, helping to minimise the closing time, that effects traffic movements.

5c. For through-trains such as the Sligo inter-city, (At present 8 trains both ways on weekdays and 6 both ways on Sundays) the barriers could be lowered at any of the crossings, while the train was still at a safe distance away from it.

IMPORTANT POINTS.

Issue accurate, fully dimensioned drawings, for all the new structures such as the proposed tunnel and pedestrian bridges, so that all of the information for any proposal, in any district, is available to the general public and public representatives. The width of all structures shown in plan and elevation views must match so accuracy is very important and dimensions are paramount. Elevations, with all dwellings in the background, will give everyone an indication of the scale of what is proposed.

Those drawings must also clearly show and list, the number of and exact location of all mature trees to be felled for each bridge. (Possibly 11 trees alongside the walkway at the rear of the ticket office at Coolmine Station and possibly 4 or 5 more alongside Sheepmoor Lane. The area of hedgerow and greenery / habitat to be lost there would also be useful.) Are the detailed drawings available at present or will they be made available on display at Fingal Co. Co. offices or in the local libraries, for every effected district and for the general public to view? (Fingal Co. Co. offices reopened in Blanchardstown on February 7th. last)

If Coolmine level crossing was closed, there would be no access to the approximately 200 spaces in the I.R. carpark at Coolmine Station, for commuters from the Coolmine Road area, Delwood and Glenville Estates and beyond. Will other parking spaces be provided or will the vehicles just move onto the nearby, narrow cul-de-sacs?

Possibility; wheelchair users and adults with small children, senior citizens, etc., would have to be dropped off on Coolmine Road. For those going westwards from Coolmine, they would have to make their way to the base of the ramp on Sheepmoor Lane, travel the full length of the pedestrian bridge to reach the carpark. From there they would have an extended journey to the ticket dispenser or scanner and onto the platform. The reverse would be necessary if travelling on an outwards train, stopping at Coolmine Station. They would have to exit the platform and make their way to the ramp. Then climb the ramp, continue along at high level the full length of the pedestrian bridge and then decend the ramp to ground level, on Sheepmoor Lane.

For those wheelchair users or for commuters with disabilities that can drive to the Coolmine Station, there will be no access to the 8 wheelchair parking bays, in the I.R. carpark.
(Coolmine Pedestrian Bridge may be approximately 330 yards or close to one-fifth of a mile long and probably does not have any weather protection)

If all barriers down-times are be greatly reduced, by upgrading the signalling system and the barriers operation, why would there be a necessity to close the level-crossings other than for a few minutes while a train is using it? Why even suggest those level-crossings be closed during off-peak hours on weekdays, through the nights when there are no passenger trains or on Sundays and bank holidays when there are reduced services?

The first train inwards from Coolmine Station on Sunday, January 9th., left at 10:01. On Sunday evening the audio and flashing lights started at 19:55:24 for an inwards train that reached the level-crossing at 19:59:08. That was 3 minutes and 44 seconds duration for a 3 minutes, full-cycle time, according to the timetable. That 3 minutes from the timetable includes the time standing at Coolmine Station platform.

For how long did the flashing lights and audio commence and the barriers drop down in Coolmine, before the train actually left Clonsilla Station, platform No. 1, that is about 1.4 miles (2.24 km) away?

What about access for the emergency services, - the ambulances and fire brigades from Coolmine Fire Station and also the gardai from local Blanchardstown Station needing to get to any housing estate, school or industrial estate, etc., close to any level-crossing, in a hurry? An Post use Coolmine L.C. for many vehicles going out with mail and also returning.

By fully upgrading the signalling system, constructing new platforms as above, installing new drop-down barriers where gates are installed at present and leaving the level crossings open to vehicles, apart from the few minutes that a train is actually crossing it, there may be a Win/Win/Win/Win, all around.

For Irish Rail: Significantly reduced construction costs and architects fees, such as those for a tunnel under the railway lines and canal, the pedestrian bridges, etc. Rerouting of telephone and electricity cables would not be necessary as they may be for the pedestrian bridges.

It should also greatly reduce the time-scale for this very important upgrade of the rail service.

For the new platforms it may be possible to do most of the work without causing much or any inconvenience to the general public.

For Ashtown Stables: It would not be necessary to close down such a unique facility having so many horses and serving the riders of all ages.

For the community: There is an ever increasing population in many, many areas: The overall area would not be divided into two sections, for those using their vehicles, that is, north and south of the railway lines. Also, commuters on the north side of the tracks would have access to the Coolmine, I.R. carpark where there are approximately 200 spaces including 8 wheelchair spaces. (There would be loss of habitat if the 11 mature trees close to Coolmine Station and also the trees and greenery alongside Sheepmoor Lane, if these areas were destroyed. Animals and birds shelter there.)

For the taxpayer: It could greatly reduce the scarce expenditure required to fund this very large-scale project and any savings could be diverted elsewhere. Overall cost of the proposals were not released yet.

How would a private firm proceed with a project of this scale and would they not examine all of their options to get the best value for their expenditure, without compromising on the desired outcome?

(Schools in this area, - staff and students: Castleknock Community College, St. Patrick's N.S., Luttrellstown Community College, Scoil Choilm Community N.S., St. Moctha's N.S., Scoil Oilibhéir, Coolmine Community School, St. Brigid's Girls N.S., St Brigid's Boys N.S., St. Francis Xavier junior and senior N.S's.)

Appendix 3

From: John Todd
Sent: Sunday 23 October 2022 19:32
To: DARTWest <DARTwest@irishrail.ie>
Cc: micheal.martin@oireachtas.ie <micheal.martin@oireachtas.ie>; leo.varadkar@oireachtas.ie <leo.varadkar@oireachtas.ie>; MINISTER'S OFFICE <minister@transport.gov.ie>; Jack Chambers <Jack.Chambers@oireachtas.ie>; Roderic OGorman <roderic.ogorman@oireachtas.ie>; Paul Donnelly <Paul.Donnelly@oireachtas.ie>; keiran.odonnell@oireachtas.ie <keiran.odonnell@oireachtas.ie>; Emer Currie <Emer.Currie@oireachtas.ie>; Paul Daly <paul.daly@oireachtas.ie>; Pamela.Conroy@cllrs.fingal.ie <Pamela.Conroy@cllrs.fingal.ie>; Ted.Leddy@cllrs.fingal.ie <Ted.Leddy@cllrs.fingal.ie>; Howard Mahony <Howard.Mahony@cllrs.fingal.ie>; Siobhan.Shovlin@cllrs.fingal.ie <Siobhan.Shovlin@cllrs.fingal.ie>; Natalie.Treacy@cllrs.fingal.ie <Natalie.Treacy@cllrs.fingal.ie>; John.Walsh@cllrs.fingal.ie <John.Walsh@cllrs.fingal.ie>; Tania Doyle <Tania.Doyle@cllrs.fingal.ie>
Subject: DARTWest Western Proposals

Dear Madam / Sir,

I have listed near the end of this email, some questions regarding the proposed DARTWest project, that require detailed answers.

Hopefully, our elected representatives have similar and many other questions to be answered, before any approval is granted.
How 5 railway crossings in the Dublin 15 area can be compressed onto 2 bridges, i.e. Granard and Dr. Troy, irrespective of a few junctions in the vicinity being upgraded, needs to be fully detailed, with relevant up-to-date traffic figures.
{Worth noting that the section of Granard Bridge over the canal is said to be a protected structure. The road is about 6.95 metres (22' 10") wide between the narrow footpaths and about 9.14 metres (30' 0") inside the walls. The road over Dr. Troy Bridge is about 7.5 metres (24' 7") between its cycle paths and about 13.5 metres (44' 4") inside the walls.

It is hoped that our Minister for Transport, our T.D's and councillors will seriously encourage a realistic trial closure, to all vehicles only.
This is in order that everyone can be fully informed of the consequences of this long-term proposal.
From those results it is very important that appropriate action is taken by them afterwards.

On my recent and latest email to you on 15/09/'22, I gave an alternative to the full-time closing of the Level-Crossings and I have detailed them below, once again.
In short, upgrade the Signalling System between Connolly and Maynooth Stations, minimise the duration that barriers are lowered for and otherwise keep the vehicles moving across all of the existing Level-Crossings.

At this stage it is worth bringing this alternative to your attention once again because of the all negatives for the overall area, that your very costly proposals would bring, - please see below. (My first email was sent to DARTMaynooth on 05/10/'20)

(Obviously a full upgrade of the Signalling System between Connolly and Maynooth Stations is absolutely necessary so that inwards trains in particular, can access the junctions with the northern lines and also reduce queueing of trains to get into Connolly Station.)

AT ASHTOWN, COOLMINE & CLONSILLA.
Construct new platforms at those 3 stations, on the approach side of the level crossings and use them instead of the existing ones.

For Ashtown and Coolmine it would mean constructing new platforms, say No. 3, on the western side of the level crossings, to replace the existing platform No. 1.

At Ashtown, the new platform would commence just west of an existing dwelling and all commuters could use the existing walkway alongside the canal for access and egress. (The cabin used by the gates operator there could therefore be moved onto the existing inwards platform for closer scrutiny of train movements. Gates there could be upgraded to the raising ones, for remote operation.)

For Clonsilla, a new No. 4 platform, on the eastern side of the level crossing, would replace the existing No. 2 there.

Have the design engineers actually visited every Level-Crossing and every railway station, on the Maynooth line and also the branch through Dunboyne on to the M3 Parkway station? Have they examined every option in minute detail, before recommending the closing all of the Level-Crossings?

What about access for the emergency services, - the ambulances and fire brigades from Coolmine Fire Station and also the gardai from local Blanchardstown Station needing to get to any housing estate, school or industrial estate, etc., close to any level-crossing, in an emergency?
An Post also use the Level-Crossings for many of their vehicles going out with letters and parcels and also returning to their depots.

By fully upgrading the signalling system, constructing new platforms as above, installing new drop-down barriers where gates are installed at present and leaving the level crossings open to vehicles, apart from the few minutes that a train is actually crossing it, there may be a Win/Win/Win/Win, all around.

For Irish Rail: Significantly reduced construction costs (and architects' fees) such as those for a proposed large, long tunnel under the railway lines and canal, at Ashtown and also the proposed pedestrian bridges at Coolmine, Porterstown and Clonsilla.
Rerouting of telephone and electricity cables would not be necessary as they may be for the pedestrian bridges, adding more costs.

It should also greatly reduce the time-scale for this very important upgrade of the western railway service, to Maynooth.
For the new platforms it may be possible to do most of the work without causing much or any inconvenience to the general public and in particularly to vehicle movements.
For Ashtown Stables and other local businesses: It would not be necessary disrupt or to close down any businesses there.
It would also ensure that a unique facility having staff, horses, stables, exercise yards and an arena, that serves riders of all ages, would be left fully intact.
For the Community: There is an ever-increasing population in many, many areas: The overall area would not be divided into two sections, for those using their vehicles, that is, north and south of the railway lines.
Also, commuters on the north side of the tracks would have access to the Coolmine, Irish Rail carpark where there are approximately 200 spaces including 8 wheelchair spaces.
(There would be a loss of habitat and maybe up to 11 mature trees, close to Coolmine Station, would have to be felled if the newly designed proposed pedestrian bridge was constructed there. Animals and birds' shelter there in the habitat.)
For the Taxpayer: It could greatly reduce the scarce expenditure required to fund this very large-scale project and any savings could be diverted elsewhere.
(The overall cost of the proposals has not been released yet but maybe the relative government departments have them.)

How would a cost-conscious, private firm proceed with a project of this scale and would they not examine all of their options thoroughly, in order to get the best value for their expenditure?
That is without compromising on the desired outcome?

To emphasise traffic delays at Coolmine, in advance of a Signalling System upgrade, I'll take Friday, March 21st., as an example:
At 07:03, an outward train was on Coolmine Level-Crossing.
Without the barriers raising another train crossed it inwards, another train crossed it outwards, another train crossed it inwards and yet another crossed it outward at 07:15.
After a short interval the barriers were raised but overall, that gave a duration of 12 minutes between the 1st. train and the 5th. train travelling over the Level-Crossing, without the barriers been raised.
(Because of the expectation that the barriers would be raised after each passing train had crossed, many if not all of the drivers left the engines running wasting fuel and putting exhaust fumes into the atmosphere, to the detriment of the environment)

At 21:22 the Mullingar bound train crossed the Level-Crossing at Coolmine. Barriers were not raised.
At 21:25 an engine heading outwards, towing some type of maintenance vehicle, crossed that L.-C. and there was another period before the barriers at 21:28.
The delays to vehicles were increased by the fact that there was a stop / go system in place over the Level-Closing because there was road-surfacing work taking place on Coolmine Road and on the other side of the Level-Crossing.
(In fact, most of the resurfacing was carried during the 'dark hours', over a few nights, probably because Coolmine Road and its Level-Crossing is now one of the main arteries of

the Dublin 15 roads network. This 'dark hours' work is to be highly commended by all who sanctioned it and all those that carried out the work.

FINALLY, MY QUESTIONS.

How does the new Dart rolling stock compare with the Luas (light rail) and I.R. (heavy rail) in terms of Speed, Braking characteristics and the Signalling system required?

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.....

How well is the new Dart rolling stock equipped in terms of toilets, tables for those working with laptops, bicycle racks, etc?

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Are you confirming that at Coolmine, the train stopping at platform 2, (outwards) can overrun the drivers VDU, by 75 yards or even more?

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.....

How does this compare with the trains that stop at cul-de-sac platforms at Connolly and Heuston stations?

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Do some of the drivers on the Maynooth / M3Parkway services require further training or upskilling?

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After moving away from Castleknock platform, about 0.8 miles from Coolmine platform, what is the maximum speed that can be reached or is recommended for Dart trains?

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Do the barriers at Coolmine drop down before a train actually moves from Castleknock platform that is about 0.8 miles from it?

.....

.....

Do the barriers at Coolmine drop down before a train actually moves from Clonsilla platform that is about 1.4 miles from it?

.....

.....

For the Sligo inter-city trains, what is the recommended minimum distance from a Level-Crossing that a train should be, say travelling at 60 M.P.H., for the barriers to be closed? .....

Is it the objective of DartWest to close all level-crossings on the Maynooth line for off-peak hours, nights, Sundays & bank holidays, irrespective of all the consequences?

.....

...

How is the traffic over 5 railway crossings between and including Granard Bridge and Callaghan Bridge / Clonsilla Level Crossing expected to be compressed over 2 bridges, that is, Granard and Dr. Troy Bridges, if Coolmine, Porterstown and Clonsilla crossings are closed

permanently?
.....
.....
Have traffic counts over the 5 railway crossing points being totalised?.....
Have you considered giving due notice and for a 48 hours or even a 24 hours period, close all of the level-crossings to all vehicles only, - mid-week and during the school term, in order to examine the consequences of doing so? .....
{This is very important so that the Local Council, (Fingal Co. Co.) Ambulances, Fire Brigades, Gardai, an Post, the Shopping centres including Supervalu, Tesco, Spar, Centra and the local residents can evaluate choices for all proposed traffic diversions, tailbacks, time lost, fuel wasted, etc? This should now be a priority now so hopefully our elected public representatives will support it.}
What safety measures will be put in place to safeguard pedestrians, cyclists, school goers, etc., when traffic increases dramatically on the local roads and over the 2 bridges that will have to cope? .....
.....
.....
Has the population growth and the likely increase in traffic in this area, been taken into account for future developments such as the enormous one proposed for Kellystown, including a new cemetery? .....
Have probable delays to buses such as the Nos. 37, 38, 39, 70d, L52 and all of the school / college buses been taken account? .....
.....
.....
Has any consideration been given to a car-park close to Castleknock Station, for commuters, some who park on local narrow roads?
.....
.....
What parking will be provided on the north-side of the tracks in Coolmine because the existing Park at Coolmine Station would be inaccessible if the Level-Crossing was closed, except by a long detour? .....
What is the area of habitat to be destroyed and what is the number of mature trees to be felled at Coolmine Station, for the proposed pedestrian bridge? .....
.....
What is the area of habitat to be destroyed for the proposed pedestrian bridge at Porterstown and how will the nearby St. Mochta's soccer training ground be affected, if at all?
.....
What is the area of habitat to be destroyed and what is the number of mature trees to be felled for the proposed pedestrian bridge in Clonsilla? .....
.....
Will extra shelters be erected at the stations? .....
.....

When and where will the detailed drawings of the proposed pedestrian bridges be available for scrutiny giving the height, length, width, incline and exact location?
.....
.....
(The total length of it will be of major interest to wheelchair users and also to pedestrians pushing buggies, prams, etc.)
Will there be weather protection provided over the very long
ramps? .....
If not, who will be responsible for de-icing, clearing of snow,
etc. .....
For the expected increased use of trains by commuters and being such a large project, what stations between Maynooth and Connolly will get new toilet
facilities? .....
.....
Will there be a large contingency sum or percentage included in the prepared budget?
.....
{For example, look at the escalating costs of the Broadband rollout and also for the Children's Hospital, because at present, according to the press, the completed cost of that hospital, cannot be quantified or even estimated, although it is due to be completed in 2024}

I now look forward to your detailed response and hopefully some action by our elected representatives.
Regards,

John Todd.