



Dublin Commuter Coalition
5 Abbeyfield
Killester
Dublin 5

ABP case ref: 314232

DART+ WEST ELECTRIFIED RAILWAY ORDER 2022

Introduction

Dublin Commuter Coalition was established in 2018 as a voluntary advocacy group for public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians in Dublin and surrounding counties. The Coalition acts as a unifying voice for commuters in these areas so that they may express their concerns, their hopes and their vision of a Dublin that works for all users of sustainable transport.

Dublin Commuter Coalition is extremely excited to see this long overdue project commence. The DART system has been an integral part of Dublin's public transport system for nearly 40 years. In that time we have seen little in the way of modernisation.

We look forward to not merely just seeing the DART network expand to cover other areas of the Greater Dublin Area, but to see an increased level of care and pride in Dublin's train stations and the level of welcome they offer to passengers. To provide access to pedestrians from all directions surrounding stations, to provide the highest quality cycling infrastructure and parking and to provide 100% reliable accessibility features to people with reduced mobility or sight.

This project is uniquely placed to show just how much Ireland respects the people who choose to use sustainable methods of travel by providing them with not merely just a functional method of travelling but a joyful way of getting around the capital.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Future Planning

In this railway order application, as it frequently the case in Irish transport design, the bare minimum is being proposed and is being implemented over an excessively long and delayed timeframe.

Little thought appears to have been given to building an integrated transport system. Instead the aim appears to simply be to facilitate people getting in and out of the city, but not facilitating people being able to navigate the city using public transport.

Despite the significant need for improved transport links within the city, aside from Spencer Dock no new stations are being built as part of the DART+ West programme. New stations should be built now as part of the creation of DART+ West rather than delaying this and creating future problems when new stations will need to be built.

Accessibility

Access for the mobility or visually impaired

Accessibility on the current DART network is extremely poor and requires the use of multiple lifts that are often out of service and temporary ramps being deployed to allow users access to the trains. We would like also to see provision to be made for step free access from platform to train. This can be achieved at one designated spot on the platform or along the entire stretch, but people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids should be able to board IÉ's trains without assistance.

There are several stations proposed in this scheme which currently have no lifts. While ramps are proposed, working lifts are vital for accessibility. There should not be an expectation of people with reduced mobility to push themselves up ramps for hundreds of metres to access platforms. It's inexcusable that IÉ would propose to leave these stations without modern lift facilities after a massive upgrade project such as this.

Audio & Visuals

It is not uncommon on the current network for the audio and visual notices to be out of order or inaccurate. The current AV system needs to be entirely replaced in line

with the Real Time Passenger information system due to be rolled out across the bus network, informing passengers of the availability of a wheelchair space.

Walking & Cycling

The provision of cycling parking and protection of cyclist at many current DART stations can be at best be described as sub-par. Dublin Commuter would like to see IE must ensure proper, dry, safe and secure bicycle parking is provided at all stations in sufficient numbers. It would appear from this railway order application that this is not being done.

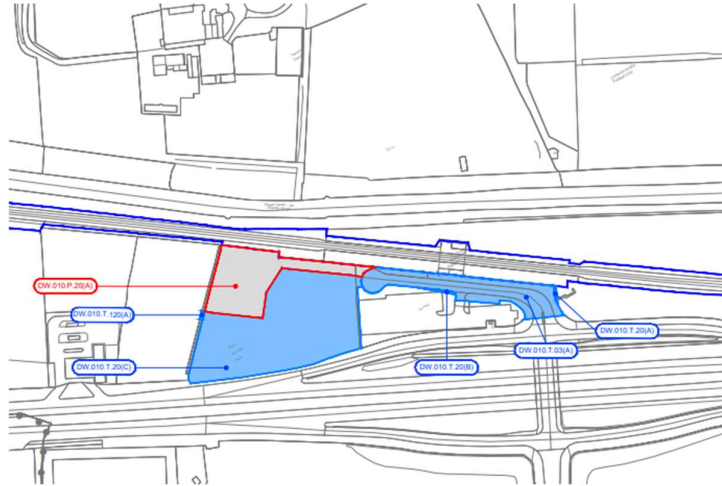
The provision of walking infrastructure and protection of pedestrians at many current DART stations can be at best be described as sub-par. IE must ensure proper, tactile paving, safe crossings and dished paving is provided at all stations.

IE must ensure that cycling infrastructure provided is fully segregated from both pedestrians and other vehicles for the safety and comfort of all road users. Shared spaces are entirely unsuitable for busy urban areas and cause unnecessary conflicts.

Dublin Commuter Coalition call on IE to ensure that all works carried out deliver the highest possible quality safe walking and cycling infrastructure up to and including the roads/car parks leading into the stations

Permeability of Royal Canal

The Royal Canal acts as a physical barrier to access to a number of proposed stations. Stations that are only a short walk away in a straight line are often long walks on a dark canal. For example, Coolmine RFC is less than 250 metres away from Navan Road parkway but nearly a 2km walk. As can be seen in the drawing below, it appears this will remain the case after the completion of DART+ West.



We would like to see the Royal Canal Greenway to be completed, fully lit, secure and with increase permeability to allow greater numbers access DART sustainably.

Aesthetics

Iarnród Éireann must begin to recognise the important role visually and aesthetically pleasing stations and platforms have on creating a welcoming and joyful atmosphere on the railway. Consider the below images, and ask "Is this going to be a safe and pleasant journey?"



We welcome the degree of care being put into design, as can be seen with the design of the new Spencer Dock station and the new footbridge at Ashtown.



However, we are concerned at some other potential changes. For example, at Broombridge the necessary bridge heightening would appear to involve the replacement of a stone bridge in a vernacular style with a modern bridge made of an alternative material. We would object to that and argue the bridge should be rebuilt using stone maintaining the vernacular style.



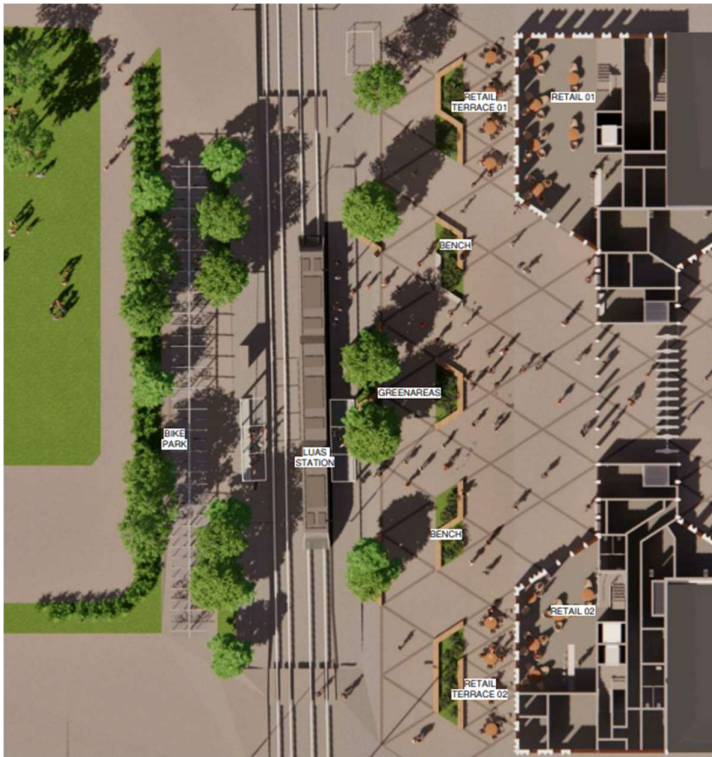
ROUTE AND STATIONS

Spencer Dock

In Dublin Commuter Coalition's October 2020 Emerging Preferred Route Submission, we argued "as one of the few stations being built from scratch in an area with ample space, this new Docklands station is the perfect opportunity to showcase just how serious Iarnród Éireann are about encouraging more people to use their services by providing more ways to reach their stations. The new Docklands station is a great place to build a modern cycle parking garage similar to those found in Dutch cities like Utrecht." We said while, it would not be necessary to build a parking garage on the

scale of the one in Utrecht, a modern cycle parking garage should be built “as it enables people who live or work outside of the immediate area of a station to use the service, which benefits the operator just as much as the user.”

Unfortunately, this argument was not heeded. Instead the bicycle provision at the planned Spencer Dock station is piddling. It would appear the only bike parking provision will be a few bike racks on the other side of the luas line. This is unlikely to be sufficient and does not provide the type of secure bike parking provided in modern cycle parking garages such as the one in Utrecht.

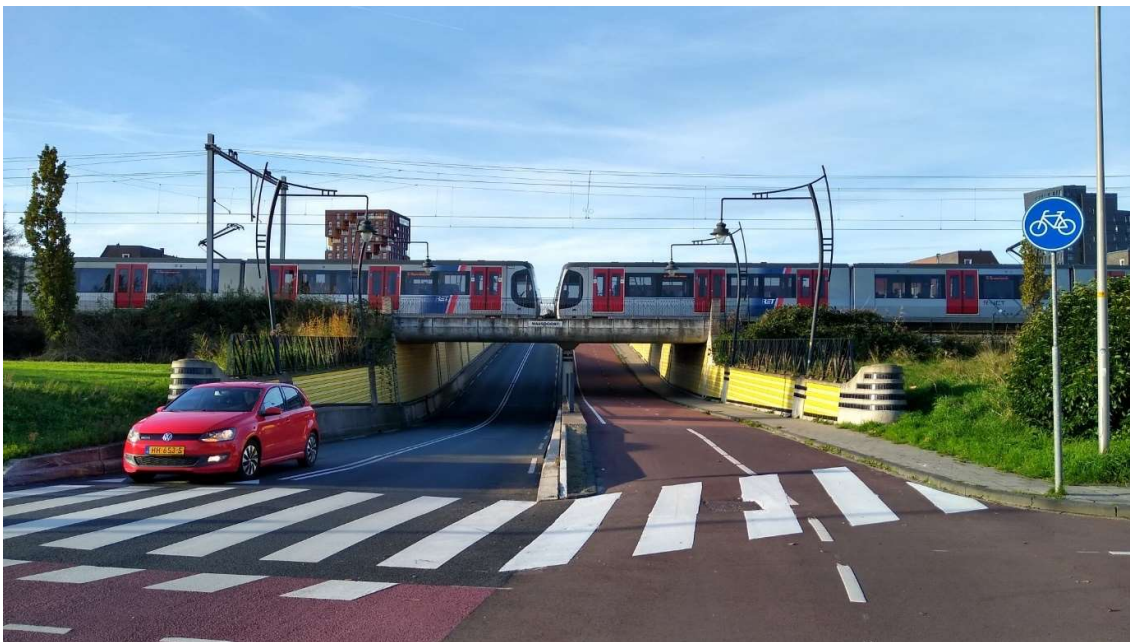


Ashtown underpass

We welcome the provision of an underpass at Ashtown. For underpasses to work, it is essential that they are spacious and well-lit to provide pedestrians and cyclists with a sense of safety and security.



IE are proposing to lower both the road and pedestrian and cycling facility to the same level. This is entirely unnecessary and is against best practice across Europe. The pedestrian and cycling facilities need only be lowered as required since they do not require such a large clearance as trucks and buses on the road. This avoids creating a large unnecessary hill for pedestrians and cyclists at the underpass.



Kilcock

We recognise the announcement Iarnród Éireann and the NTA have made regarding extending the line terminus past Maynooth to Kilcock. We could spend several paragraphs arguing for the inclusion of this station, but it's plainly obvious from the location of the station mere yards away from the DART Depot and the town of Kilcock's inclusion in the NTA's definition of Metropolitan Dublin, that the terminus makes sense to be here.

However, as stated we recognise the restrictions that may not allow that to happen as part of this upgrade programme, however, as part of this programme provision should be made as much as is possible to allow the future upgrade of the station, including the aesthetic upgrade of the station facilities and increased walking and cycling access to the station.

Clonsilla

Clonsilla Station is extremely constrained currently. The placement of the station right next to the level crossing, on a narrow road makes it unattractive to travel to for people on bike and by foot. As Clonsilla will become the junction station between the M3 Parkway (and its possible extension to Navan) and Maynooth branches of the line, we believe it to be acutely important to make the station not just functional as it is currently but to treat it like the interchange it will become. The proposal to close the level crossing at this junction is welcome and will go a long way towards providing some much needed space for people boarding and alighting at the station.

However, beyond providing a cycling and walking over pass, it is not clear it a significant upgrade to the station itself will take place. Clonsilla's importance as a station will only grow as time goes on and to make up for the removal of the level crossing, people who currently drive must be provided with an ease of access to the station that is unparalleled. Furthermore, the current Clonsilla Station building is an unattractive and imposing structure that does nothing to invite any level of enjoyment for users of the new DART. Whether manned or unmanned, station buildings should no longer be function glass and metal boxes provided as a box ticking exercise, but a welcoming entrance to the journey the user is about to take. As, most importantly, if a user does not enjoy travelling on your service they are less likely to do it.

Provision of Additional Stations

In Dublin Commuter Coalition's October 2020 Emerging Preferred Route submission, we observed:

As the DART network expands it's disappointing to see little movement on the provision of more stops in the city core. Croke Park is a massive destination and will be flanked on both sides by DART lines but will only be served by one line at the station in Drumcondra. As Dublin's transport network evolves people travelling from across the Greater Dublin Area will seek to make connected journeys to Dublin's major destinations all via public transport. It's our responsibility to enable those connected journeys. Whilst proximity to Connolly and space at Croke Park may be a legitimate issue, we think additional stations in the North Inner City are not too much to ask considering their prevalence in the South City.

Here we reiterate these points and highlight to places close to the city core where stations could and should be built.

North Inner City Stations

Under the proposal, there will be no station between the new Spencer Dock and Drumcondra. This is a distance of 2.5km. And there will be no station between the new Connolly & Glasnevin. This is a distance of 2.8km.

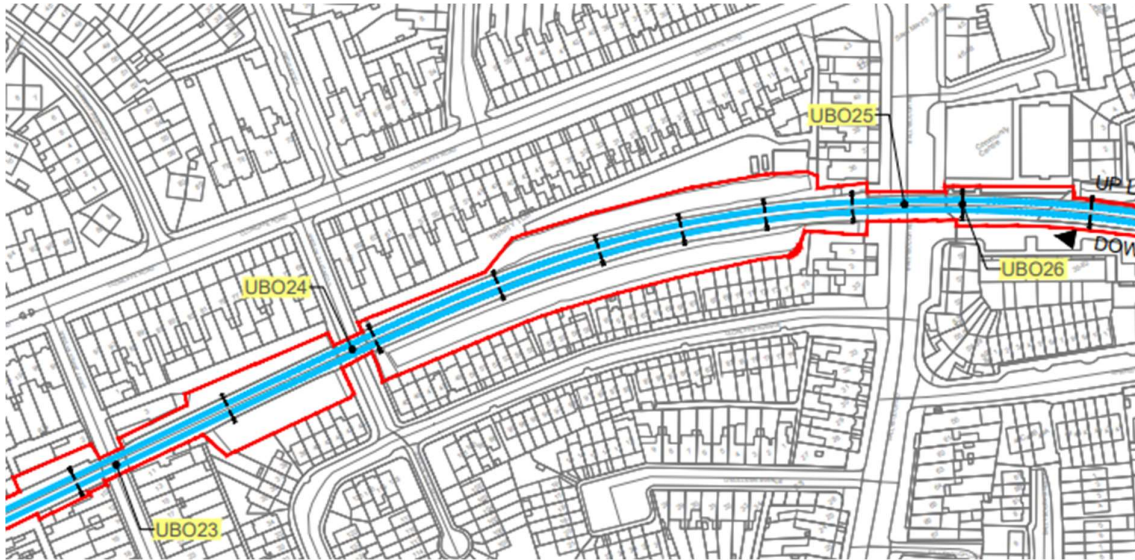
For comparison from Connolly to Tara is roughly 600m, from Tara to Pearse is roughly 550m, from Pearse to Grand Canal Dock is roughly 900m, from Grand Canal Dock to Lansdowne is roughly 850m. From Lansdowne to Connolly is roughly 2.9km not that much more the distance between Spencer Dock and Drumcondra or between Connolly & Glasnevin.

This demonstrates the need for stations on these lines. Obviously building new stations in the city centre is a difficult task as there is little free land by railway lines. However, there are two identifiable potential station locations.

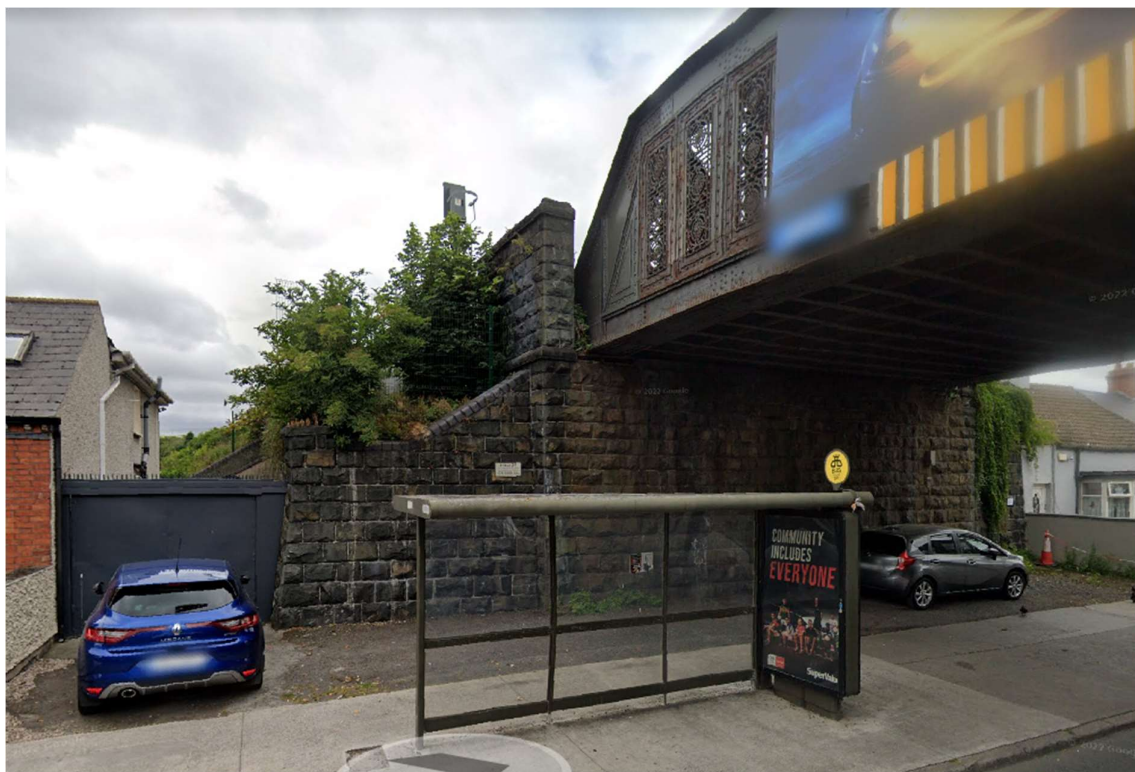
Ballybough

On the line between Spencer Dock and Drumcondra a new station could be created in Ballybough.

Ianród Éireann currently own substantial sidings by the rail track off Ballybough Road. (See map below.) A station could be built here.



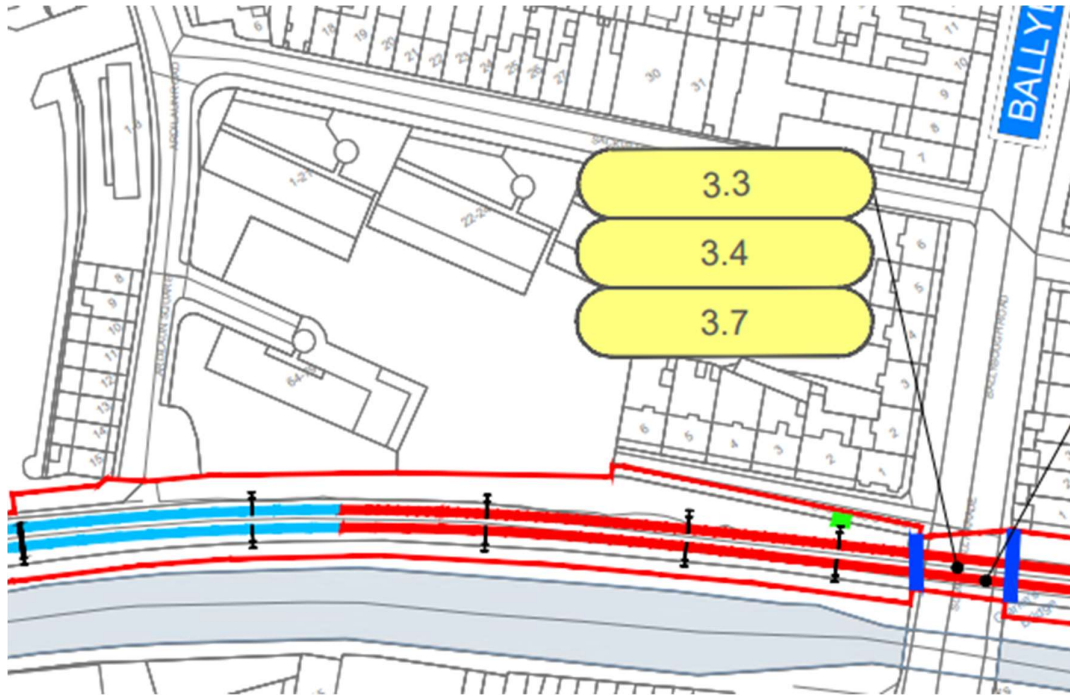
An entrance to the station could relatively easily be created on Ballybough Road here.



This new station would serve the communities of Ballybough, Fairview, North Strand, Drumcondra, Marino and Summerhill.

Croke Park

On the line between Connolly and Glasnevin, a new station could be created by Croke Park. Some land here is owned by Iarnród Éireann, but additional land would need to be purchased.



However as can be seen in the image below, there is a substantial amount of land that is available for a station here. This new station would also serve the communities of Ballybough, Fairview, North Strand, Drumcondra, Marino and Summerhill.



CONCLUSION

DART+ is a hugely welcome program in the provision of more high frequency transport in Dublin. However, we must draw attention to the importance of providing increased and better access to these new routes.

We also urge Iarnród Éireann to place an even greater importance on accessibility and to start putting time and effort into making train stations more visually appealing places to be instead of functional glass and metal boxes.

We urge that the planning application be expanded to include new stations. These should be built now while DART+ is being developed, not at some later more costly and disruptive point in the future.