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**RE: DART+ West Railway Order**

The National Transport Authority (the 'NTA'), as the agency responsible for the strategic planning of transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, has reviewed this Railway Order application and recommends that An Bord Pleanála grant planning consent to Córas Iompair Éireann for the reasons and considerations set out below.

**1. Government Policy**

The DART+ Programme, of which DART+ West is a component, is a specific objective of Government, as expressed by, *inter alia*, the following:

- i. Action 240 of the 2021 Climate Action Plan;
- ii. National Strategic Outcome 4 of the National Development Plan, which provides for DART+ as a Strategic Investment Priority;
- iii. Section 5.2 of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035; and
- iv. Measure RAIL1 of the Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042.

The NTA would place great emphasis on the extent to which DART+ is regarded by Government as a national transport priority. This is reflected by its central place in transport policy, climate action policy and national development policy as set out above. The NTA regard this as a critical consideration for An Bord Pleanála in the assessment of this Railway Order application.

**2. National, Regional and Local Objectives**

In addition to those listed above, the proposed development is central to the achievement of a wide range of national, regional and local objectives which are set out in the following policy documents:

- National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP);
- National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI);
- National Planning Framework (NPF);
- Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP);
- Dublin City Development Plan;
- Fingal County Development Plan;

- Kildare County Development Plan; and
- Meath County Development Plan.

The manner in which DART+ West realises the myriad policy objectives in the above may be summarised as follows:

- The Avoid-Shift-Improve principle is embedded within the NSMP and the Draft Transport Strategy. DART+ West, by providing for a significant uplift in public transport capacity, will facilitate a move towards more environmentally friendly public transport and to the reduction in carbon emissions from transport;
- The concept of Compact Growth (incorporating Transit-Oriented Development) drives land use policy at all levels from the NPF at the national level, to the RSES and Development Plans at the regional and local level. DART+ West provides for this by facilitating the on-going consolidation of development at key locations served by rail stations through significantly increasing their levels of accessibility, e.g., Docklands, Glasnevin, Pelletstown, Hansfield Strategic Development Zone and Confey. Development at these locations has been pursued over time in tandem with the planning and design of DART+ and its predecessor programmes.

### **3. Consideration of Proposed Scheme Details**

As the Approving Authority for DART+, the NTA has reviewed the scheme in detail with Iarnród Éireann throughout its development in advance of the lodgement of this Railway Order. The NTA is satisfied that the Railway order as submitted to the Board has considered the available alternatives, the views expressed during the non-statutory consultations and represents the appropriate approach to serve the existing and future communities along this corridor with the effective high-capacity public transport solution that is required to meet demand in the long-term.

The NTA would emphasise the necessity of the removal of all at-grade level crossings, and associated relief infrastructure, to facilitate the operation of a high-frequency service safely and efficiently. The NTA is of the view that any potential adverse impacts, as identified in the material submitted, should be viewed in the context of the significant positive impacts and benefits that the DART service will bring directly to the local communities in terms of accessibility, in addition to the benefits that will accrue at the metropolitan and regional scale;

### **4. Concluding Remarks**

The electrification of the Maynooth line has been a long-standing objective of transport planning in Metropolitan Dublin, dating back to the original rail rapid transit study of 1975. The lack of progress in this regard has been a major constraint to the delivery of more sustainable forms of development with high-quality public transport services in west Dublin and parts of Kildare and Meath. The proposed development is therefore addressing a persistent legacy deficit in transport infrastructure and services, and in the integration of land use planning and transport planning in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The NTA reiterates strong support for the proposed development as critical in meeting Government objectives related to climate change; sustainable development; economic wellbeing; and the fostering of a sustainable transport culture whereby viable and attractive alternatives to the private car are provided. As such, it is recommended that An Bord Pleanála grant planning consent to Córas Iompair Éireann to proceed with DART+ West.



I trust that the views of the NTA will be taken into account in the assessment of this Railway Order application.

Yours sincerely

*Hugh Creegan*

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Hugh Creegan,  
Deputy Chief Executive.