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NTA Statement: Railway (MetroLink – Estuary to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order 2022 Oral Hearing

Introduction

The NTA would like to take the opportunity presented by this Oral Hearing to update An Bord Pleanála on progress on a number of strategic transport planning matters which has occurred since our written submission on the Railway Order was lodged in January 2023, namely the approval of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-42.

Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area

The NTA published a Preliminary Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (the “Transport Strategy”) in November 2021 for public consultation. After reviewing the submissions received during the consultation period, an updated Draft Transport Strategy was submitted to the Minister for Transport in May 2022, in accordance with Section 12(9) of the Dublin Transport Authority Act (the “DTA Act”). Following consultation between the Minister and the NTA, the Transport Strategy was approved by the Minister with modifications, in accordance with Section 12 (13) (b) of the DTA Act, in January 2023. Notice of this decision was sent to the NTA on the 20th January 2023.

Provision for MetroLink

As set out above, the Transport Strategy was finalised and approved after the application for a Railway Order was lodged by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, and after the NTA made a submission on same. The NTA submission referred to Measure LRT1 of the Transport Strategy which provided for the delivery of the MetroLink project. As outlined in Section 12.3.2, the current Metrolink project has been identified as the most advantageous way to serve the critical levels of transport demand on this corridor. The Preferred Route for MetroLink, which runs from Estuary in North Dublin to its south city terminus at Charlemont was determined following the completion of a comprehensive route options assessment study, which was also informed by the outcome from two rounds of non-statutory public consultation. MetroLink will provide key interchange with other transport modes at several locations including Dublin Airport, Glasnevin, Tara Street and Charlemont.

The approved Transport Strategy contained an additional measure of relevance to MetroLink, as follows:

Measure LRT2 – Further Metro Development

In reviewing and updating the Transport Strategy, which takes place every 6 years, the NTA will assess the requirement to provide additional Metro lines in the GDA based on updated forecast demand for travel and on emerging significant changes in land use and spatial policy, including previously considered options to extend Metrolink southwards towards UCD, or along the existing Luas Green Line, or towards South West Dublin.

Demand Management

Section 71 of the DTA Act requires that the NTA produce a demand management scheme. Demand management measures are defined in the Act as measures which promote a reduction in the total amount of travel or reduced growth in the total amount of travel. This definition includes, *inter alia*,

measures to reduce the use of mechanically propelled vehicles and particularly private cars, and measures to increase travel by public transport, bicycle or on foot as an alternative to the private car.

Measure CLIMATE2 of the Transport Strategy states that “to ensure full compliance with the 50% carbon emissions reductions targets by 2030, the NTA will develop, and secure the implementation of, appropriate demand management measures to achieve the required emission reductions”.

The Transport Strategy also sets out a number of measures that are likely to be included in such a scheme as follows - additional roadspace reallocation to sustainable modes (e.g., converting general traffic lanes and / or parking to public transport lanes and / or cycle lanes – including lanes on the main radial routes approaching urban centres; pedestrianising streets; removing motorised traffic from streets; redesigning junctions to provide greater capacity for cyclists; urban design and placemaking schemes, etc.), parking restraint, zonal charging, additional tolling / road pricing and/or further vehicle electrification plus changes in freight arrangements.

The 2023 Climate Action Plan was published by Government in December 2022 and sets out that the Transport sector’s emissions ceiling equates to a 50% abatement on 2018 levels. The plan contains an action to publish the GDA Demand Management Scheme, which would in turn form part of the suite of actions required to meet the following key metrics /performance indicators to deliver the sectoral abatement:

- 20% reduction in total vehicle kms;
- 20% reduction in total car kms;
- 20% reduction in ‘commuting’ car kms;
- 50% reduction in fuel usage; and
- 130% increase in daily public transport journeys.

The NTA has commenced the preparation of the GDA Demand Management Scheme and work will continue in 2024 on the development of the draft scheme.

Charlemont

The 2016 Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (the statutory predecessor to the 2022 Transport Strategy), provided for the following schemes:

- New Metro North from Swords to the City Centre; and
- Metro South from the City Centre to Bride’s Glen.

New Metro North was defined as a modified version of the original Metro North proposal. Metro South was defined as the extension of new Metro North southwards, via a tunnel to join the Green Line in the Ranelagh area.

In taking forward these schemes for implementation, a number of studies were undertaken by TII, as follows:

- Alignment Options Study;
- Green Line Tie-in Study; and
- Green Line Metro Upgrade

The outcome of these studies is reflected in the MetroLink scheme before the Board.

The development of the Transport Strategy has taken account of the outcomes of the detailed analysis of the options considered to inform the measures proposed for the overall integrated transport system. It states in Section 12.3.2: *"Charlemont offers the optimal location for the primary interchange with the Green Line in response to growing demand in the longer term and is an appropriate location to facilitate any potential future metro extensions to serve the south west, south or south east of the city region should sufficient demand arise."*

Additionally, the strategy recognises the need to serve demand for travel to and from the Charlemont area. The area within 400m of Charlemont, in particular to the north, forms part of Dublin's Central Business District with significant numbers of jobs and associated economic activity on Charlemont Street, Harcourt Road, and along the Grand Canal. Major redevelopment opportunities which have been planned for a number of years, such as the former Garda headquarters and the site at the junction of Charlemont Street and Harcourt Road, would also be served by Charlemont Metro station.

If the Inspector is of the view that it would be of benefit to the hearing, the NTA would be happy to clarify any of the above matters and would be available to attend further sessions of the hearing if requested.