

An Bord Pleanála Oral Hearing : ABP-314724-22

**Railway (MetroLink – Estuary to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order
Application**

Monday 19th February to Thursday 28th March 2024

Submission by

Michael Boyle, B.E.(Chem), MIE

Wednesday 27th March 2024

Introduction

My name is Michael Boyle. I have a Degree in Chemical Engineering and a Master's Degree in Industrial Engineering, both from University College Dublin.

I was employed by Bord Gáis Eireann (now Gas Networks Ireland) for twenty five years and was part of the team that oversaw the project that brought natural gas from Cork to Dublin in 1982.

I have been following closely the protracted evolution of MetroLink, and am looking forward to travelling on it, in due course, and seeing its beneficial effect on Dublin's now traffic-clogged streets and the reduction in travel by car to the Airport.

I am not representing anyone else at this Oral Hearing.

In July 2023 I wrote to the National Transport Authority and to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (the Applicant), enclosing a preliminary version of my Submission on the pages below. I got no response from either Body.

I wish to comment on two particular aspects of the project now being submitted by the Applicant to An Bord Pleanála for a Railway Order, namely :

Charlemont, as the Terminal of Phase 1 of the MetroLink project

and

The four proposed underground Stations in the Ballymun area :

Northwood, Ballymun, Collins and Griffith Stations.

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Charlemont Station

The Applicant's proposal includes an underground Station (Charlemont) just south of the Grand Canal, in close proximity to the existing Luas stop, located on the canal bridge. The Station would be the interim terminal of the MetroLink line.

The proposal envisages continued tunnel boring southwards from Charlemont, in order to provide turn-back and overnight stabling of trains, and boring further on, so as to bring the tunnel to a location below the existing Luas tracks. This will facilitate MetroLink's connection to the Luas line, when the latter reaches its maximum capacity, projected to be in twenty years or so.

Charlemont is not an ideal place for an interchange. The existing access to the Luas is a climb up and down two winding metal staircases, one either side of the canal, clearly not intended to cater for large volumes of passengers changing lines. The stairs at the south end of the Luas and the lift to/from the Luas elevated platform connect with the footpath of Grand Parade, a busy street.

The design for the proposed MetroLink Station provides passenger exit/entrances at both ends : Grand Parade and Dartmouth Road. For passengers switching lines, the walk along Grand Parade would be about 80 metres, on a narrow footpath right beside a busy road, a hazard for walkers in both directions, particularly those with luggage, as well as presenting difficulties for wheelchairs.

During the course of the Oral Hearing, it was suggested that a lift down to the MetroLink platform should be provided, with a short lay-by on Grand Parade to allow wheelchair passengers to alight. Space for a lay-by is limited.

In summary, the likelihood of passengers switching lines at Charlemont is low.

The O'Connell and Tara Stations will be within a few minutes' walk of both the Red and Green Luas lines. Is there really a need for a third switching point?

Consideration should be given to deferring construction of the Charlemont Station until there is enough demand to proceed with connecting the southern section of the Luas Line to the MetroLink line.

Switching facilities at Charlemont should then be substantially upgraded.

Meanwhile, St Stephen's Green Station would be the interim terminal.

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Northwood, Ballymun, Collins and Griffith Stations

In November 2021, the National Transport Authority Deputy Chief Executive Hugh Creegan reported on a study of a possible tunnelled Metro extension south-west from Stephen's Green towards Rathfarnham. He said that "The benefits of the project were less than the costs" (Irish Times 11/11/2021), presumably because the revenue generated would not adequately remunerate the required investment.

The catchment area of three of the above four Stations is similar to that of the south-west suburbs – largely one- and two-storey dwellings, with gardens back and front. This implies a low-density catchment area for MetroLink.

The main Metrolink tunnel will start from the TBM launch site at Northwood, beside the proposed Station there, on its way to Glasnevin Station. But will the revenue generated by providing underground Stations at Ballymun, Collins and Griffith adequately remunerate the extra investment over and above the tunnel cost? Will the benefits be more than the costs?

In the public interest, the Applicant should have the economics of these three Stations examined, and if the result is negative, alternatives should be considered.

One alternative could be the provision of a shuttle bus service between Northwood Station and the site for the Griffith Station, passing the Ballymun and Collins Station sites.

The shuttle bus would travel up and down Ballymun Road, mostly a broad dual carriageway with bus lanes on both sides. Judiciously selected bus stops and some extra pedestrian crossings might well generate more revenue than the three underground Stations.

The above-mentioned economic study should of course include the cost of three extra Intervention Shafts (I.Ss). The Oral Hearing has heard opposition to the IS proposed for Albert College Park. Perhaps this issue could be addressed by some concerned residents visiting operational ISs in comparable locations.

Regarding the large and deep pit at Northwood needed to launch the TBM, consideration could be given to providing a multi-storey Park and Ride there, with passenger lifts down to the level of the Northwood Station platforms. This would enable drivers to leave the M50, park, and be in the city centre in just a few minutes, particularly if three underground stations are omitted, as above.

(This completes my Submission)