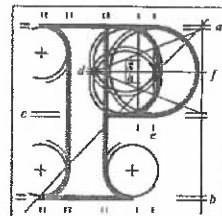


Our Case Number: ABP-314724-22

Planning Authority Reference Number:



An
Bord
Pleanála

Duncan Smith
Labour Party
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Date: 18 January 2023

Re: Railway (Metrolink - Estuary to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order [2022]
Metrolink. Estuary through Swords, Dublin Airport, Ballymun, Glasnevin and City Centre to
Charlemont, Co. Dublin

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission (including your fee of €50) in relation to the above-mentioned proposed Railway Order and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

The Board will revert to you in due course with regard to the matter.

Please be advised that copies of all submissions/observations received in relation to the application will be made available for public inspection at the offices of the relevant County Council(s) and at the offices of An Bord Pleanála when they have been processed by the Board.

More detailed information in relation to strategic infrastructure development can be viewed on the Board's website: www.pleanala.ie.

If you have any queries in the meantime, please contact the undersigned. Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

Niamh Thornton
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737247

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Submission on the Railway (MetroLink to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order [2022]

Case reference: NA29N.314724

I make this submission in my capacity as Labour Party TD for the Dublin Fingal Constituency and as Labour Party spokesperson on Transport.

I preface this submission by clearly stating I welcome the plans for MetroLink and the fact it has been submitted to An Bord Pleanála for the granting of a Railway Order. The torturous amount of time it has taken to get this far has been most keenly felt by all those communities who live along the M1 corridor, from Swords into Dublin City Centre. For too long they have been bereft of a high speed, green, high-capacity method of public transport. This has unfairly marginalised these communities into relying too heavily on private vehicles or on an overburdened and unavoidably slow bus service.

The current alignment as submitted to An Bord Pleanála is ambitious and has the capacity to reshape transport in Dublin for decades to come, with multiple connections to bus, rail and tram services.

It is an absolute necessity that this project proceeds without further delay.

The Necessity of MetroLink

The Labour Party welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation of the Railway (MetroLink to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order [2022]. It's important to ensure we deliver long-term investment in environmentally sound transport projects such as MetroLink. This is vital for not only the transport in the Greater Dublin Area but for sustaining high-quality jobs across region. MetroLink is going to be a game-changer for those who live and work near Dublin Airport and along the M1 corridor. This corridor links the two largest cities on the island as well as having huge towns such as Dundalk and Drogheda along it. The choking of the

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M1 corridor as it reaches Swords and into Dublin is an environmental hazard and unsustainable.

At the head of the alignment is the town of Swords with a current population approaching 60,000 people. It is, at this moment, the most populated town in Ireland by a long way, without a rail link. It is also projected to grow to over 100,000 people over the course of the next 20 years due to current zonings, many of which were agreed contingent on the delivery of Metrolink.

In 2019 four masterplans, Fosterstown, Barrysparks, Estuair West and Crowcastle were passed by the local Councillors. These are the so called Metrolink plans, passed in good faith to deliver the housing that will be needed to help tackling the housing crisis, but contingent on the delivery of Metrolink. Swords is already crippled with poor road infrastructure and huge delays in transiting out of the town. This has a further impact on the bus service which must share the road with the thousands of cars which are clogging it daily. For the people of Swords, many work in the Airport study in Dublin City University, attend appointments in Beaumont Hospital (which will be connected to Metrolink by Bus) and work and socialise in Dublin City Centre. If Swords is to develop the housing that is currently zoned to deliver without the delivery of Metrolink, the transport functioning of the town will collapse.

The people of North County Dublin have waited long enough for MetroLink to commence. People who live on the M1 Corridor and in and around Dublin Airport need an alternative to road-traffic. There is a massive infrastructure deficit on the M1 Corridor, and we see it every day with log jammed roads and traffic. This has a knock-on impact on all bus routes, including express services which can't but avoid the congestion. On a bad morning, if there is a breakdown or an accident everything on the M1 just grinds to a halt. The Metrolink is the best solution to this problem because it will reduce traffic on the roads, while also quickly moving more people to the airport, Mater Hospital, and Dublin City Centre.

The worst area for air quality due to transport emissions in the country is the Dublin Port Tunnel which connects to the M1. This is due to the high volumes of static traffic which are delayed into and out of the tunnel. Transport emissions only marginally decreased by 0.3% during the lockdowns when people were encouraged

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to work from home. We are still far too dependent on private cars as a principal mode of transport in many parts of the city, particularly in my own constituency of Dublin Fingal where public transport options can be limited. Metrolink is an environmental necessity.

International Connectivity

The need for greater connectivity between the airport and the city centre has been a national embarrassment for years. Of significant concern is the lack of, or poor rail links to our air and seaports. The MetroLink project will help to address this in Dublin. Over 8 million passengers used Dublin Airport in 2021, a year in which travel was widely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the links between Dublin Airport and Dublin City Centre, and the main Dublin transport hubs of Heuston Station, Connolly Station and Busaras, are poor and travellers into Ireland must contend with a varying selection of bus services that do not specifically serve Dublin Airport or taxis. The MetroLink project is a vital addition to the public transport options for those coming through Ireland's main airport. In this regard, the MetroLink project will have benefits for tourists coming to Ireland via Dublin and continuing their travel into other cities and towns in Ireland North and South without the necessity of expensive car rental. In addition, it will provide more public transport opportunities for Irish residents when travelling abroad, to ensure the private car can be left at home and passengers have direct public transport links from most cities and towns to Dublin Airport via Dublin's main transport hubs.

Local Connectivity

MetroLink proposes to link the third largest town in Ireland by population, Swords, with our capital city, our international airport, Dublin Airport, and Dublin City University through Phibsboro and into the city centre. It is vital infrastructure.

When this is delivered, we must make sure that people will not have to get into their cars to travel from one side of Swords to the other. They should be able to travel quickly, efficiently and in an environmentally friendly way to the MetroLink. This will benefit all the Greater Dublin Area, particularly those living in the rural villages and rural areas who will be able to get to Swords relatively quickly and then on into

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Dublin City. It is not just a service for Swords, or Fingal, or the airport; it is infrastructure that will benefit the whole of the Greater Dublin Area.

In Swords the key concern is transport for residents. There is a great need for improved paths and cycle lanes for people to be able to cycle, walk and use electric scooters throughout Swords. The Metrolink project must be delivered but in tandem with the delivery of accessibility and sustainable methods of accessing Metrolink stations throughout the proposed MetroLink route.

MetroLink & Sustainable Transport

It is vital that all transport policy and strategy planning in the Greater Dublin Area is carried out with a focus on the climate emergency, the need to reduce emissions and to meet our climate targets, and the need to create a sustainable transport network for all those living in and visiting the Greater Dublin area. Transport is the second highest source of emissions in Ireland. Investment in active travel and public transport measures is key to fighting this issue by reducing our dependence on private and single occupancy cars. MetroLink will reduce the dominance of the private car and to encourage greater use of public transport. Measures taken with this goal in mind will make the MetroLink a greatly more attractive network in which to travel for work, tourism and all residents of the Greater Dublin Area.

Greater Dublin Public Transport Network

Ensuring decent and reliable public transport must be at the heart of any serious attempt to reduce carbon emissions. While delays in delivery of MetroLink are regrettable, the appetite for the project has not waned. Prior to making this submission, I have been glad to meet with and hear from individuals and commuter representative groups, along with residents and groups representing residents in a range of different communities across Fingal and the Greater Dublin Area.

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We must be always striving to deliver better rail links throughout Dublin and indeed our country

Conclusion

As a resident of Swords, I am acutely aware of the need for sustainable eco-friendly modes of transport for North County Dublin. As a citizen of Dublin, I believe Metrolink is vital and cannot be delayed any longer. There are a myriad of potential routes and alignments which any plan can take. This alignment meets the fundamental requirement for MetroLink and the region. We cannot, as a city and county, delay any longer. It is vital this plan proceeds and the Railway Order is granted.



Deputy Duncan Smith TD

Labour Party Spokesperson on Transport

Dublin Fingal