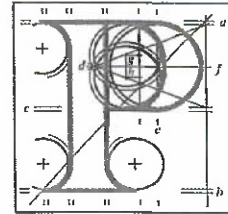


Our Case Number: ABP-314724-22



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

National Transport Authority
Dun Scéine
Harcourt Lane
Dublin 2
D02 WT20

Date: 23 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 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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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
D01 V902	D01 V902

The Secretary,
An Bord Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1

16th January 2023

RE: MetroLink Railway Order



Dún Scéine, Lána Fhearchair
Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 WT20

Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane
Dublin 2, D02 WT20

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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 the National Roads Authority (NRA) – operating as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) – for the reasons and considerations set out below.

1. Government Policy

MetroLink is a specific objective of Government, as expressed by, *inter alia*, the following:

- i. Action 241 of the 2021 Climate Action Plan;
- ii. National Strategic Outcome 4 of the National Development Plan, which provides for MetroLink as a Strategic Investment Priority;
- iii. Measure LRT1 of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042.

The NTA would place great emphasis on the extent to which MetroLink 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; and
- Fingal County Development Plan.

The manner in which MetroLink 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 Transport Strategy. MetroLink, 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; and
- The concept of Compact Growth (incorporating Transport-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. MetroLink 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., Dublin City Centre – including the Docklands Strategic Development Regeneration Area (SDRA) and George’s Quay Local Area Plan area, O’Connell Street, the Ballymun SDRA, and the eastern parts of Swords. Development at these locations has been pursued over time in tandem with the planning and design of MetroLink and its predecessor project.

3. Dublin Airport

While MetroLink is an imperative for the sustainable development of Metropolitan Dublin in general as set out above, its importance is amplified by the fact that it will deliver a high-capacity public transport service to Dublin Airport for the first time. Dublin Airport is the national gateway and a vital economic asset to the State. Its development and the resilience of the transport network serving it are therefore of critical importance.

The manner in which MetroLink achieves this on a dedicated, fully segregated rail corridor should also be emphasised, as the corridor will not be required to accommodate any inter-city, regional or other metropolitan services. This means that as demand increases along the corridor, the necessary increase in frequency and capacity can be more readily achieved.

4. Consideration of Proposed Scheme Details

As the Approving Authority for MetroLink, the NTA has reviewed the scheme in detail with the NRA (TII) throughout its development in advance of the lodgement of this Railway Order. The NTA would like to highlight that the scheme before An Bord Pleanála has been progressed through a number of non-statutory consultation exercises and has been subject to significant changes during this process.

In particular, the concerns raised at earlier phases in the process in relation to the onward extension of MetroLink on the south side of Dublin have been fully addressed by the determination during the design stage to terminate the scheme at Ranelagh. This proposal would readily accommodate the extension of MetroLink to the south west of Dublin; the south east of Dublin; or along the Luas Green Line.

In addition to the above, the proposed development meets a wide range of transport integration objectives via interchange with other transport networks as follows:

- The strategic road network via a Park & Ride facility at Lissenhall, intended to intercept southbound car traffic on the M1 in advance of it reaching Dublin City, and to transfer people from their cars onto public transport;
- Heavy Rail, DART and future DART+ at Tara Street and Glasnevin providing seamless interchange with commuter rail for those travelling from the north, south and west of the Metropolitan Area;

- Bus services and priority infrastructure to be provided under BusConnects on the Swords and Ballymun Core Bus Corridors;
- Higher-frequency orbital / feeder bus services currently being rolled out as part of Bus Connects – the N4 which will interchange with MetroLink at Collins Avenue; the N6 at Ballymun; and the N8 at Dublin Airport, the frequencies of all of which can be increased to meet demand when MetroLink becomes operational; and
- Active Travel networks under development along the Swords Bypass – the R132 Connectivity Project – and as part of the GDA Cycle Network at several points.

The NTA is therefore satisfied that the Railway order as submitted to An Bord Pleanála has considered the available alternatives and the views expressed during the non-statutory consultations, and therefore represents the appropriate approach to serve the existing and future communities along this corridor, the City Centre and Dublin Airport, with the effective high-capacity public transport solution that is required to meet demand in the long-term.

5. Concluding Remarks

The provision of a rail line along this corridor, including serving Dublin Airport, has been a long-standing objective of transport planning in Metropolitan Dublin. 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 north Dublin. 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 the NRA (TII) to proceed with MetroLink.

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

Yours sincerely,



Michael MacAree,
Head of Strategic Planning and Data Analysis