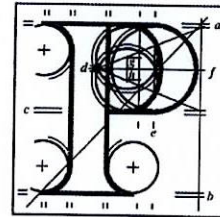


Our Case Number: ABP-314724-22

Planning Authority Reference Number:



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

University College Dublin (UCD)
Belfield House
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin 4

Date: 09 December 2022

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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Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref No: ABP-302010-18

University College Dublin (UCD) welcomes the opportunity to make an observation to An Bord Pleanála in relation to the Railway Order application submitted on 30 September 2022 by the National Roads Authority (operating as Transport Infrastructure Ireland) for the Railway (Metrolink-Estuary to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order [2022].

UCD welcomes the overall aim of MetroLink, which is the single biggest investment in transport infrastructure in the history of the State and is part of an integrated transport system for the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) including Bus Connects and DART+. Together these projects will enhance the provision of a reliable, sustainable, affordable, integrated public transport system that will support the economy, help Ireland meet its climate change targets in line with the Climate Action Plan 2021 and make Dublin a more liveable and sustainable city.

This aligns to the “UCD Strategy 2020 – 2024: Rising to the Future”¹, the continued delivery of UCD’s United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals² and “Delivering Impact: The Economic, Cultural and Social Impact of University College Dublin”³ where UCD will continue to make significant contributions to the social and cultural fabric of modern Ireland whilst simultaneously driving significant economic output.

The delivery of Metrolink will support improved transport access to UCD from people living along the proposed route. The development of enhanced land use and Transit Orientated Developments along the Metrolink route will importantly provide an opportunity for UCD to align its own future growth to these areas along the proposed route – encouraging potential new students and staff to live in close proximity to UCD. Our 2022 Commuter Survey results indicate that currently, only 11.5% of our current campus population live within a 15 minute walking distance of the proposed route. The delivery of Metrolink represents an opportunity for UCD to better serve these areas of the city and support the wider education needs of Dublin as a whole.

While welcoming the Railway Order application for the Metrolink, we are disappointed that the route will not directly serve the UCD campus at Belfield.

UCD Campus Growth

UCD currently generates an annual economic output of €1.3 billion per annum and is the largest Higher Education Institution in Ireland, with a total community of over 36,000 students and employees. The UCD Belfield Campus is also host to circa 50 campus innovation companies and has

¹ [UCD Strategy 2020 – 2024: Rising to the Future](#)

² <https://www.ucd.ie/newsandopinion/news/2021/april/21/ucdplaces22intimeshighereducationimpactrankingforunsustainabilitygoals/>

³ [Delivering Impact: The Economic, Cultural and Social Impact of University College Dublin](#)

continuing significant engagement with industry. It is also a venue for many events and ancillary activities – hosting many sporting events, academic conferences and other related activities on the campus over the calendar year.

Overall, the University population is growing at circa 3% per annum. UCD aims to increase our total student numbers by 25% over the next ten years to over 40,000 national and international students, further delivering on its responsibility to provide a high-quality educational environment that fulfils a national remit. This growth will continue beyond the Metrolink delivery timeframe.

Supporting Sustainable Travel to UCD

UCD is one of the largest single generators of commuting journeys in the State. During a typical year⁴ an estimated 7.5 million journeys are made each to and from the Belfield campus – nearly 21,500 trips being made daily by all modes of transport.

As such and within the context of a growing campus, the implementation and success of a sustainable transport strategy is a key objective for UCD. UCD is fully committed to sustainable travel, with ambitious UCD Travel Plan targets to increase its sustainable commuting mode share to 81% over the lifespan of the Plan, reducing reliance and usage of private vehicles through a range of demand management and behavioural change measures while promoting and encouraging the use of sustainable transport mobility.

Underpinning and supporting these contributions are both the GDA Transport Strategy itself and the “UCD Travel Plan 2016 – 2021 – 2026: Getting There the Sustainable Way”⁵

UCD works in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and local authorities to encourage alternatives to using private vehicles as a primary mode of transport to campus through the UCD Commuting Review Group and the UCD Smarter Travel Group. Excellent progress is being made towards delivering this mode shift target, with the 2019 UCD commuting survey showing that only 22% of campus users travel to campus by car – this has reduced to 19.1% from the Commuter Travel Survey data undertaken in November 2021. As a comparison, we note that the forecast mode share by 2042 in the Metropolitan Dublin area for car is 41.9%.

As our Campus grows up to 2032 and beyond, the travel demand will also grow. It is therefore crucial that we collectively seize this generational opportunity to change the way we view and provide for transport to and from the Campus to enable and support the continued sustainable development of the University.

While fully supporting and welcoming the Railway Order application for the Metrolink, we are disappointed that the route will not directly serve the UCD campus at Belfield.

As the single largest generator of trips within the Greater Dublin Area, we would strongly request consideration of the future potential to extend the proposed Metrolink to UCD in the longer term.

Enhanced Public Transport provision to support sustainable Campus development

While excellent progress has been made in delivering reduced car use to UCD in the context of a growing campus population, targets to further reduce private car use face challenges due to external factors beyond the University’s control. This includes difficulties faced by the University Community

⁴ UCD Cordon Study 2019 Report

⁵ [UCD Travel Plan 2016 – 2021 – 2026: Getting There the Sustainable Way](#)

in securing affordable accommodation in the Dublin area (particularly in the areas surrounding the Belfield campus, which provide a natural catchment for cycling and walking access to the Campus).

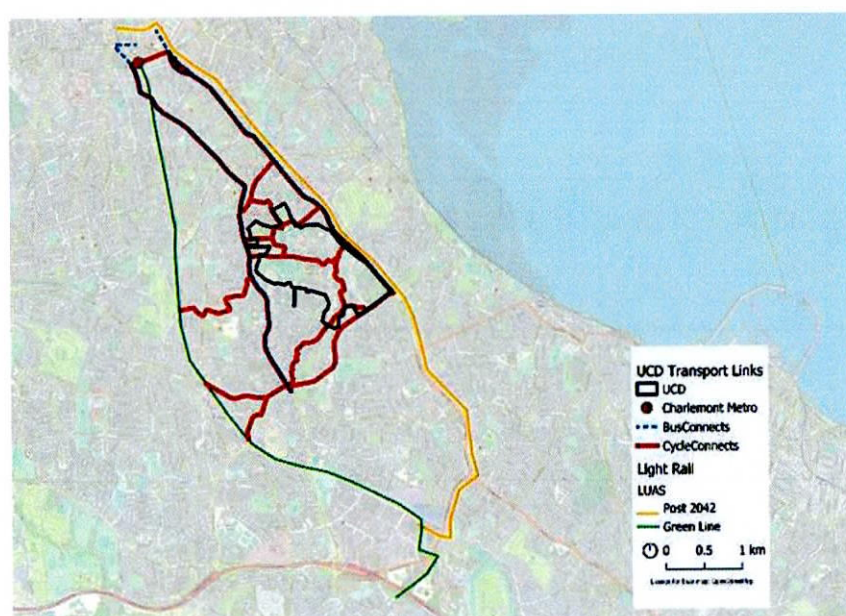
This has resulted in a notable trend of longer commuting distances – and subsequent issues around connectivity of direct public transport services to large areas of the GDA. For example, in 2021, over 28% of students commute over 25km to the Belfield Campus (11.5% travelling over 50km), an increase from circa 21% of students travelling over 25km in 2019.

To fulfil and surpass the Travel Plan targets and continue to meet future demand to enable more people to access the Campus by sustainable means, a step-change in the delivery of public transport frequency, capacity and connectivity to and from the Campus is critical. This is essential to meet future demand for Ireland’s largest and fastest growing University and enhance Campus accessibility across the Greater Dublin Area.

As such, the University’s observation to An Bord Pleanála has been framed in the context of the role that UCD plays in enabling economic, social and cultural progress both within the GDA and at a national level – and to meet the country’s challenges regarding climate change and carbon reduction.

When the proposed Metrolink Station at Charlemont is open, it will be essential to provide integrated and seamless connections between Charlemont and the Belfield Campus.

As illustrated on the figure below, we note and welcome that connections between UCD and the proposed Metrolink Station at Charlemont will be supported by the delivery of the proposed Bus Connects programme and the proposed delivery of the GDA Cycle Network outlined in the draft Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022 – 2042.⁶ We also remain optimistic for the development of future light rail connections between the proposed Metrolink route and UCD.



While welcoming the identification of additional Luas lines as identified in the draft GDA Transport Strategy 2022 – 2042, including the Green Line reconfiguration to provide for a line from the City Centre to Bray via UCD and Sandyford, UCD are disappointed that this is not planned for delivery until “at a point beyond 2042” – particularly given UCD’s position as Ireland’s largest and fastest

⁶ <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/gda/draft-transport-strategy-for-the-greater-dublin-area-2022-2042/>

growing University.

Noting the findings from the Metro UCD to Sandyford Feasibility Report, and as the Campus population grows, we would welcome continued engagement with the NTA and TII to establish the opportunities for the earlier planning and delivery of the additional Luas line serving UCD demand before 2042.

We would also request consideration of the future potential to extend the proposed Metrolink to UCD in the longer term.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PJ Barron', written over a horizontal line.

PJ Barron
Director Of UCD Estate Services