
Chapter 2

Policy Context and Need for the Project

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2. POLICY CONTEXT & NEED FOR THE PROJECT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) outlines the relevant policy which underpins the proposed DART+ Coastal North project at European Union (EU), national, regional, and local level. It also outlines the need for the DART+ Coastal North project (“the Proposed Development”).

The DART+ Programme, and more specifically the DART+ Coastal North project, is a continuation of railway improvements that commenced from the year 2000 onwards. The underlying rationale was that integration of land-use and transportation can help reduce the need to travel and thereby facilitate sustainable urban development. These objectives have consistently featured in strategic investment and land use plans published over the last 20 years; as have the specific improvements required to deliver these objectives.

Among the matters which An Bord Pleanála (‘the Board’) is required to consider when an application is made for a Railway Order, in this case for the DART+ Coastal North project, are the matters referred to in Section 143 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) by virtue of Section 43(1)(h) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (as amended and substituted).

Accordingly, the Board, in the performance of its functions is required to have regard inter alia to (a) the policies and objectives for the time being of the Government, a State authority, the Minister, planning authorities and any other body which is a public authority whose functions have, or may have, a bearing on the proper planning and sustainable development of cities, towns or other areas, whether urban or rural; (b) the national interest and any effect the performance of the Board’s functions may have on issues of strategic economic or social importance to the State, and (c) the National Planning Framework and any regional spatial and economic strategy for the time being in force.

In this regard Project Ireland 2040 (Building Ireland’s Future) presents the overarching policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all. Project Ireland 2040 is made up of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan.

By 2040 it is expected that an additional 1 million people will live in Ireland, with an additional 667,000 people working. This will place a huge increase in demand for travelling to work, education and services. Whilst the National Planning Framework sets out the sustainable spatial development strategy for Ireland, it is the National Development Plan that sets out the infrastructural investment programme to support implementation of this spatial strategy.

The National Development Plan involves investment of approximately €116 billion in infrastructure to support the ten strategic outcomes of Project Ireland 2040. The DART+ Programme is a cornerstone infrastructural investment that enables a number of the Strategic Outcomes, namely:

- Enabling compact growth along public transport corridors (NSO1);
- Proving sustainable mobility (NSO4); and
- Facilitating a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society (NSO8).

The National Development Plan commits exchequer funding to public investment projects that have sufficiently matured through the planning and technical evaluation process.

The National Development Plan states that the DART+ Programme is the cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040 and represents the single biggest investment in the Iarnród Éireann network. The National Development Plan describes the DART+ Programme based on a number of discrete infrastructure delivery projects. These discrete projects are:

- DART+ Fleet – expansion of both battery-electric (BEMUs) and electric multiple units (EMUs);
- DART+ West;
- DART+ South West;
- DART+ Coastal North; and
- DART+ Coastal South.

The Government, in December 2021, approved the Preliminary Business Case (PBC) for the DART+ Programme. The PBC was constructed on the principle of the discreet individual project descriptions. The PBC approval authorised the award of a fleet procurement contract for new electric and battery/electric trains.

The National Development Plan acknowledges the long-term planning necessary to give effect to Project Ireland objectives. Long term funding is allocated to deliver on these requirements and a disaggregated capital profile is determined in accordance with the Department of Transport requirements.

The Transport Strategy and the National Development Plan are fully aligned. The National Transport Authority has prepared and adopted the new Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042. This strategy document also describes the DART+ Programme based on discrete infrastructural delivery projects, which can be delivered sequentially to deliver incremental capacity improvements and ultimately delivering the necessary longer-term capacity necessary across the network. The Strategy also acknowledges that the current DART+ Programme may be further expanded to meet further growth requirements.

As far back as the Strategic Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (1999) and the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006, investment in the rail network was identified as a key requirement to provide a better service for the working and resident population of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA)¹ both plans also promoted the concept of maximising existing transportation corridors along which future development of the GDA would occur.

¹ The NTA define the GDA to cover the counties of Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow.

2.2 Background and Project History

The DART+ Programme is a transformative railway investment programme that will deliver a high quality and integrated public transport system within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The DART+ Programme will both modernise and improve the existing rail services in the GDA, providing a range of benefits for both the residents of the GDA itself, as well as those living in surrounding regions.

The DART+ Programme will play a significant role in contributing to Ireland's transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society by providing a sustainable, electrified, reliable and more frequent rail service with improved capacity to meet current and future demands. This will be achieved through the modernisation of existing railway corridors and by utilising electric powered trains in place of diesel trains.

The existing, electrified DART network extends from Malahide to Greystones (including the Howth Branch) over a length of approximately 50km. The DART+ Programme will seek to increase the length of high capacity and electrified network to 150km across the four main rail corridors within the GDA. See Image 2-1 for a schematic of the overall DART+ Programme.

The modernisation includes the electrification, re-signalling and other specific interventions to remove constraints across the four main rail corridors within the GDA, as follows:

- **DART+ Coastal North (this project)** – circa 50km, extending from Drogheda to Dublin City Centre (north of Connolly Station).
- DART+ Coastal South – circa 30km, extending from Greystones to Dublin City Centre.
- DART+ West – circa 40km, extending from Maynooth and M3 Parkway stations to Dublin City Centre.
- DART+ South West – circa 16km, extending from Hazelhatch & Celbridge Station to Heuston Station and also circa 4km between Heuston Station and Glasnevin, via the Phoenix Park Tunnel Branch Line.

As part of the DART+ Programme, Iarnród Éireann is purchasing a new fleet of trains to enhance the capacity on the DART network. This procurement will allow Iarnród Éireann to choose a fleet made up of Electric Multiple Units (EMUs) and Battery Electric Multiple Units (BEMUs). The provision of BEMUs will allow for running enhanced services on the network between Drogheda and Dublin City Centre in advance of full electrification. Infrastructural works to enable the operation of the BEMU fleet have been consented by Louth County Council and will be implemented in 2024/25 to enable this.

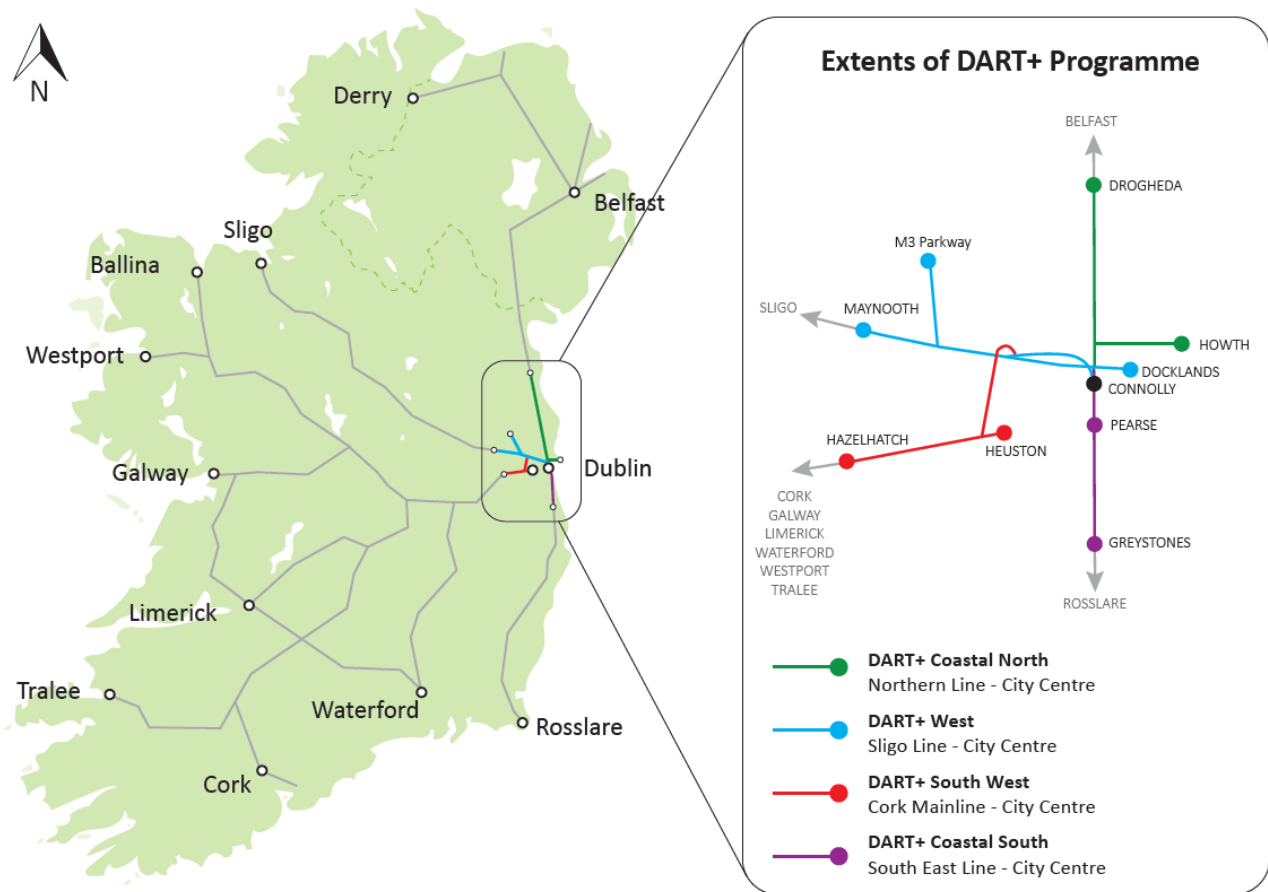


Image 2-1 Schematic of the Overall DART+ Programme

The origins of DART+ Programme date back to the 1970s. The publication of the 'A Platform for Change' in 2001 (Dublin Transportation Office, 2001), formalised the benefit of using heavy rail as the spine of an integrated public transport scheme. Since 2001, Iarnród Éireann has progressed railway improvement projects in accordance with the objectives of DART+ as funding permitted.

Iarnród Éireann's previous priority was to deliver, as early as possible, the DART Underground tunnel link beneath the city centre. This was fundamental to increasing capacity on the radial routes. Design and planning for DART Underground was progressed and a Railway Order was approved by An Bord Pleanála in December 2011 and confirmed by the High Court in March 2014.

However, in September 2015 the Government deferred authorisation for construction of DART Underground and instructed Iarnród Éireann to examine the current design at that point with an objective of delivering a lower cost technical solution, whilst retaining the required rail connectivity for the DART+ Programme. Between September 2015 and the publication of the National Development Plan (NDP) in February 2018, IE & the NTA worked collaboratively in the assessment of lower cost technical solutions.

In 2018, the DART Expansion Programme Options Assessment (Oct 2018) by Jacobs and Systra sought to identify a lower cost alternative to the proposed DART underground tunnel component of the DART Expansion Programme. It considered a range of 'scheme bundles' and recommended that the DART Expansion programme be delivered by enhancing the existing rail network in the short to medium term. Scheme Bundle 6 was recommended as the preferred DART Expansion Scheme Bundle as it:

- makes best use of existing rail infrastructure, is not reliant on the delivery of the DART Underground tunnel and is capable of delivering the DART Expansion Programme at a much reduced cost;
- can be incrementally delivered to gradually unlock benefits as passenger demand levels increase;
- will integrate better with other public transport schemes, will maximise the patronage of MetroLink, BusConnects and Luas and, will therefore, maximise the investment in these schemes;
- will relieve some pressure on the Luas Red line in the peak periods, by reducing the need to interchange from/to Luas at Heuston for some journeys; and
- should act as an interim measure while the DART Underground Project is redesigned to accommodate recent developments in the rail network.

A number of other studies were also undertaken including transport assessments. These include the Maynooth Line Transport Study (NTA 2019), the DART Expansion Rail Electrification Assessment (Iarnród Éireann 2019), the DART Underground Western Tie-In Study (NTA 2017) and the Tunnel Configuration Study for new Metro North and DART Underground (NTA/IE/TII 2017).

The outcome of these studies influenced the formulation of the NDP and the decision to proceed with DART Expansion (now DART+ Programme) with non-tunnel elements and to maximise the use of the Phoenix Park Tunnel branch line.

2.3 Policy Context

This section presents a summary of the policy context at international, European, national, regional and local level for the DART+ Coastal North project. The planning and policy documents discussed in the following sections are listed in Table 2-1. The reader is also directed to the Options Selection Report (OSR) – Volume 4.2: Policy Context (available on www.dartplus.ie) which expands on the strategic fit for the DART+ Programme and DART+ Coastal North project, having regard for its strategic context and relevant plans, projects and studies undertaken in recent years.

Table 2-1 Planning and Policy Documents

International Policy
United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015)
European Policy
EU White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system
Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)
Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy
European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019
National Policy
Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework
National Development Plan 2021-2030
National Sustainable Mobility Policy
National Investment Framework for Transport Planning in Ireland 2021
Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2023-2025
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021
Climate Action Plan 2024
The White Paper, Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030
Regional Policy
Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031
Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042
Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024
Local Policy
Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028
Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029
Baldoyle-Stapolin Local Area Plan 2013 (recently expired)
Portmarnock South Local Area Plan 2013 (recently expired)
Donabate Local Area Plan 2016 (extended to March 2026)
Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027
Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

2.3.1 International policy

2.3.1.1 United Nations 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015)

In September 2015, Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations (UN). The 2030 Agenda aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous, and peaceful future for the entire world, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. This framework is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which cover the social, economic, and environmental requirements for a sustainable future.



Image 2-2 Sustainable Development Goals, (Source: un.org)

Sustainable Development Goals 9 and 11 are the most directly relevant to the Proposed Development:

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Target 9.1: *Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human wellbeing, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.*

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Target 11.2: *By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.*

The DART+ Programme including the DART+ Coastal North project (Proposed Development) is supported by the goals and targets set out in the relevant SDGs. It will enable more efficient, safe and integrated sustainable transport movement. In Ireland, the SDGs are being implemented through the National Implementation Plan 2022-2024, which is in direct response to the 2030 Agenda. It provides a whole-of-government approach to implement the 17 SDGs.

2.3.2 European policy

2.3.2.1 *EU White Paper on Transport: Roadmap to a single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system*

In 2011, the European Commission adopted the White Paper Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system in the context of the Union's 2020 growth strategy. The vision of the White Paper spans four decades, up to 2050, but also sets earlier goals for 2020 and 2030. The Commission's vision for a competitive and sustainable transport system involves transport that uses cleaner energy, better exploitation of modern infrastructure and a reduction in its negative impact on the environment.

The White Paper defines ten goals designed to guide actions and measure progress to achieve a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions and a comparable reduction in oil dependency. Goals to which the DART+ Programme is aligned:

- Goal 1: Halve the use of 'conventionally fuelled' cars in urban transport by 2030; phase them out in cities by 2050; achieve essentially CO₂ free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030.
- Goal 4: By 2050, complete a European high-speed rail network. Triple the length of the existing highspeed rail network by 2030 and maintain a dense railway network in all Member States. By 2050 the majority of medium-distance passenger transport should go by rail.

The proposed DART+ Coastal North project supports the goals of the EU White Paper to improve resource efficiency of the transport system by electrifying the rail line between Malahide and Drogheda. The Proposed Development will also enable the increase in frequency and capacity of rail services which will increase the competitiveness of the rail network as a mode of travel within urban and inter-urban areas.

2.3.2.2 *Trans-European Transport Network*

The Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) is a European Union policy directed towards the implementation and development of a Europe-wide network of roads, railway lines, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and rail-road terminals. The network consists of two layers:

- **The Comprehensive Network:** Covering all EU regions.
- **The Core Network:** A subset of the Comprehensive Network. This consists of the strategically most important connections, linking the most important nodes.

The objective of TEN-T is to close gaps, remove bottlenecks and eliminate technical barriers that exist between transport networks of EU Member States, strengthening the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contributing to the creation of a single European transport area.

Under the TEN-T Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013, the Core Network is due to be completed by 31 December 2030, while the Comprehensive Network is due to be completed by 31 December 2050.

The aim of the EU's Transport Policy is to promote a mobility that is efficient, safe, secure and environmentally friendly. Congestion is not just a nuisance for road users, it also results in an enormous waste of fuel and reduces productivity. Many manufacturing processes depend on just-in-time deliveries and free flow transport for efficient production. Congestion costs the EU economy more than 1% of GDP – in other words, more than the EU budget. To reduce this, the EU needs more efficient transport and logistics, better infrastructure and the ability to optimise capacity use. The EU Commission also recognises that Europe needs transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil. Moving towards low-carbon and more energy efficient transport, as well as developing more efficient urban and intermodal transport solutions are essential alternatives to developing a more environmentally friendly transport policy.

Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 sets out the requirements for rail infrastructure that form part of the TEN-T infrastructure network, both Core (2030) and Comprehensive (2050), and states under Article 12(2)(d), the following:

“Member States shall ensure that the railway infrastructure:

(d) save in the case of isolated networks, is fully electrified as regards line tracks and, to the extent necessary for electric train operations, as regards sidings;”

The DART+ Programme including the DART+ Coastal North project is consistent with the objectives of the Trans-European Transport Network. It will involve the creation of a rail mode transport which is cleaner and less dependent on oil, and more energy efficient. It will allow for more efficient transportation along the east coast of Ireland, and encourage greater use of public transportation, reducing the dependency on car-based commuting.

2.3.2.3 Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (European Commission 2020) sets out a number of goals as to how people will move within and between cities in the future. It has identified 82 initiatives which have been categorised into 10 ‘flagships’.

The flagship relevant to the DART+ Coastal North project is ‘*Flagship 3 – Making interurban and urban mobility more sustainable and healthy - for instance by doubling high-speed rail traffic and developing extra cycling infrastructure over the next 10 years.*’

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with this strategy as it ensures sustainable alignment in urban areas for planned growth with investment in infrastructure and the provision of employment, together with supporting amenities and services.

2.3.2.4 European Union (EU) Green Deal 2019

The EU Green Deal (European Commission 2019) sets out key policies aimed at cutting emissions and preserving the natural environment.

It commits the EU to become climate neutral by 2050, with a reduction of between 50 to 55% by 2030 when compared to 1990 levels. By focusing on transport, buildings, and energy, the EGD is setting out a process to help everybody work together and try and move in the same direction.

A key component of the EU's Green Deal roadmap to transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future is 'accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility'. It seeks to reduce the transport sectors greenhouse gas emissions by 90% by 2050.

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with this policy, in particular by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions produced by transport through the transition away from private cars to more sustainable public transport options.

2.3.3 National policy

2.3.3.1 Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country by 2040. It is a framework to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities to protect and enhance the environment.



Image 2-3 National Strategic Outcomes (Source: Project Ireland 2040)

There are 10 “National Strategic Outcomes” several of which are relevant to the Proposed Development (see Image 2-3):

“Compact Growth

Carefully managing the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. All our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services, but which need a streamlined and co-ordinated approach to their development, with investment in enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. Activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development, is a top priority.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will, by providing a more efficient public transport infrastructure, make urban areas and zoned lands along the route, more attractive areas in which to live and work in.

“Sustainable Mobility

In line with Ireland’s Climate Change mitigation plan, we need to progressively electrify our mobility systems moving away from polluting and carbon intensive propulsion systems to new technologies such as electric vehicles and the introduction of electric and hybrid traction systems for public transport fleets, such that by 2040 our cities and towns will enjoy a cleaner, quieter environment free of combustion engine driven transport systems.”

The DART+ Coastal North project is entirely consistent with this Strategic Outcome in terms of the provision of the electrification of part of a busy public transportation route along the east coast of Ireland.

“Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society:

The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will encourage less car-based travel and will comply with the objective to reduce carbon emissions in the country.

One of the key growth enablers for the Dublin Region is identified as:

“Delivering the key rail projects set out in the Transport Strategy for the GDA including Metro Link, DART expansion and the Luas green line link to Metro Link.”

The DART+ Coastal North project will contribute to the achievement of these outcomes and objectives. As outlined above, it will lead to more compact, railway-based growth along the railway line. It will encourage more sustainable commuting and contribute to a lower carbon environment. It will enhance the growth of the GDA in a more sustainable approach than one based on car transport. It is likely to alleviate pressure on Dublin City and create additional areas in the GDA along the route in which people can live and work.

2.3.3.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

The current National Development Plan (NDP) sets out the ten-year capital investment ceilings which will support economic, social, environmental and cultural development across Ireland, incorporating a total public investment of €165 billion from 2021-2030. It takes account of the Covid-19 crisis and related recovery plans, to ensure alignment with the new Programme for Government, to strengthen the alignment with the NPF and to enhance the link with the new Climate Action Plan and other sectoral policies.

To deliver the National Strategic Outcomes set out in the NPF, the NDP identifies the following relevant Strategic Investment Priorities and actions. Note that 'DART+ Expansion Programme' refers to the DART+ Programme.

Table 2-2 NDP Strategic Investment Priorities and actions

National Planning Framework NSO	NDP Strategic Investment Priority	NDP reference to DART+ Programme
NSO 2: Enhanced Regional Accessibility	Public Transport	<i>"Investment in the DART+ programme will address some of the constraints on the Dublin City Centre rail network and provide for additional services for intercity rail services."</i>
NSO 4: Sustainable Mobility	DART+ Programme	<i>"The DART+ programme will be a cornerstone of rail investment within the lifetime of Project Ireland 2040 and represents the single biggest investment in the Irish rail network."</i>
NSO 8: Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society	An additional 500,000 sustainable mobility journeys per day by 2030. Comprehensive integrated public transport network for Ireland's cities connecting more people to more places.	<i>"Delivering priority public transport programmes including BusConnects, DART+ Expansion Programme and MetroLink so that increased transport demand is met by greener public transport."</i>

Strategic Investment Priorities have been influenced by the national objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive, low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy and society. As identified above, the DART+ Coastal North project will contribute to achieving these objectives.

2.3.3.3 National Sustainable Mobility Policy

The Department of Transport's National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP) sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade, targeting at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030.

The NSMP has been developed to align with and complement other international, European and national policies and frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement, European Green Deal, EU Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and National Planning Framework.

The policy is guided by three key principles, which are underpinned by 10 high level goals as detailed in Table 2-3 below.

Table 2-3 NSMP Principles and Goals

Principles	Goals
Safe and Green Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve mobility safety. 2. Decarbonise public transport. 3. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas. 4. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas. 5. Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car.
People Focused Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all. 7. Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model. 8. Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement.
Better Integrated Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels. 10. Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.

The DART+ Programme is highlighted within the NSMP as being an important element for supporting Safe and Green Mobility. A key focus is the expansion of electrification and additional electric and battery-electric fleet for services to Drogheda.

The DART+ Coastal North project is in compliance with the NSMP and supports the goals through expansion of the electrified network to Drogheda. The DART+ Coastal North project will decarbonise public transport, promote the use of and expand the availability of sustainable mobility.

2.3.3.4 National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (December 2021)

The Department of Transport has prepared and finalised the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI). NIFTI is the Department of Transport's high-level strategic framework to support the consideration and prioritisation of future investment in land transport.

It represents the Department's contribution to Project Ireland 2040, Government's long-term, overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all and to build a more sustainable future. NIFTI has been developed to ensure sectoral investment is aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and supports the delivery of the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs).

As part of NIFTI, a wide range of supporting analysis has been conducted to identify key transport challenges, needs and constraints, both today and in the future. This analysis can be divided into three broad categories: context and background, the existing land transport network, and the future land transport network.

The NIFTI states:

“The right transport investment helps to deliver high-quality travel and supports positive outcomes for society, the environment and the economy. However, these outcomes do not happen by chance. It is important to have in place a framework to guide transport investment and deliver the infrastructure and services we need. That is the purpose of NIFTI.

New transport investments will have to demonstrate their alignment with NIFTI. By extension, this will ensure that investment is aligned with the NPF and its National Strategic Outcomes, resulting in a consistent approach to investment across Government, with transport supporting our growth and development goals. In this way, NIFTI will ensure that transport enables the NPF.”

The NIFTI notes that the NDP identifies DART+ as one of the infrastructure projects required in the next decade.

In order to address the challenges identified in the supporting analysis, NIFTI establishes four Investment Priorities: Decarbonisation, Protection and Renewal, Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas, and Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity. Future transport projects must align with these priorities to be considered for funding. Moreover, as the National Strategic Outcomes are embedded in NIFTI, future investment made in accordance with the priorities will support the delivery of the National Planning Framework over the coming decades.

The DART+ Coastal North project will comply with the Investment Priorities. It will assist in the decarbonisation of the transport system. It will help in the protection of the environment. It will improve the mobility of people in a sustainable manner. Finally, it will improve regional connectivity between Dublin, Meath and Louth counties.

2.3.3.5 Department of Transport: Statement of Strategy 2023-2025

This Statement of Strategy is the Department of Transport's primary strategic plan and sets out key priorities for the period 2023-2025. The high-level goals of the Department are:

- Connectivity
- Sustainability: Economy, Environment and Society
- Safety, Security and Accessibility
- Effective Regulation
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Organisational Excellence and Innovation

The Statement of Strategy specifically identifies the DART+ Coastal North project as a key strategic project for delivering “Strategic Goal 2: Sustainability: Economy, Environment and Society”:

“Ensuring that our transport system is integrated, resilient and decarbonised in a manner that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable:

We will... Accelerate modal shift to public transport, improving the transport choices available to people

By... Continued progression of BusConnects, DART+ and MetroLink programmes”

2.3.3.6 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (Government of Ireland 2021) sets out the central objective relating to emission reductions. It legally binds Ireland to have net-zero emissions no later than 2050 and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of the decade (2030), against a base of 2018 emissions. The Act sets out the following:

‘The first two carbon budgets proposed by the Advisory Council shall provide for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions such that the total amount of annual greenhouse gas emissions in the year ending on 31 December 2030 is 51 per cent less than the annual greenhouse gas emissions reported for the year ending on 31 December 2018, as set out in the national greenhouse gas emissions inventory prepared by the Agency.’

The DART+ Coastal North project would deliver infrastructure which will support a shift towards sustainable transport options that will in turn support the targets set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

2.3.3.7 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019. A draft of the Plan was agreed by the Government in December 2023 and, following the completion of Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, and a six-week public consultation, the finalised version of the CAP24 was approved by the Government on 21 May 2024. The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government.

The Plan sets out a detailed sectoral roadmap designed to deliver a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. CAP24 builds upon the previous CAP23 targets by outlining how Ireland will accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development. To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 the Plan sets out a number of targets and measures, several of which are relevant to enabling increased sustainable transport behaviours:

“Prioritise and accelerate delivery of NTA Connecting Ireland and new town services, via demand responsive transport pilot initiatives, conventional and nonconventional modes of public transport services.”

“Expansion of electrified rail service”

“Review financial and taxation incentives to further the transition of energy efficient vehicle fleets, considering actions to support and deliver a just and equitable EV transition”

CAP24 places more focus on high impact actions. A new Annex of Actions within CAP 24 includes the following high impact action with specific relevance to DART+ Coastal North:

TR/24/12(TF) Advance DART+ Programme - Progressing appraisal and planning for DART+ Programme, including lodgement of railway order for DART+ Coastal North.

The DART+ Coastal North project will be in compliance with, and will contribute towards, the targets identified in the Climate Action Plan. It will help reduce GHG emissions by:

- The provision of a more efficient public transport route, thereby encouraging a modal shift towards public transportation; and
- It will become part of the electrified rail network in Ireland.

The DART+ Coastal North project is part of the DART+ Programme which is identified as a specific action in the plan.

2.3.3.8 The White Paper, Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030

The White Paper, Ireland’s Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 is a statement of Government policy in the energy sector. It sets out an energy policy framework up to 2030 and outlines a transition to a low carbon energy system for Ireland by 2050. The White Paper comprises of an energy policy update and provides the framework to guide national policy. The Paper considers European and International climate change objectives and agreements. The actions that support the Proposed Development are, inter alia:

“To support energy efficient and renewable transport, we will: ...

- ...support transport modal shift through better alignment of land use and transport planning and a continuation of smarter travel programmes administered by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport....
- ...support the introduction of a suite of initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of the rail network...
- ...support further rail electrification...”

The DART+ Coastal North project will support and facilitate the shift to support energy efficient and renewable transport through encouraging modal shift towards lower energy intensive public transport, to support Ireland’s climate ambitions and increase resilience to future climate change.

2.3.4 Regional policy

2.3.4.1 Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

A Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan which identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development throughout the Region.

The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to address employment, retail, housing, transport, water services, energy and communications, waste management, education, health, sports and community facilities, environment and heritage, landscape, sustainable development and climate change.

The RSES sets out sixteen Regional Strategic Outcomes, three of which are relevant to the DART + Coastal North project:

“Sustainable Settlement Patterns

Better manage the sustainable and compact growth of Dublin as a city of international scale and develop Athlone, Dundalk, Drogheda and a number of key complementary growth settlements of sufficient scale to be drivers of regional growth. (NSO 1, 7, 10)

The DART+ Coastal North project will assist in the development of urban settlements along the Northern Line rail network, and also Drogheda as a destination in which to live and work in.

“Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration

Promote the regeneration of our cities, towns and villages by making better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region’s citizens. (NSO 1)”

The DART+ Coastal North project will encourage the development of underutilised zoned lands along the Northern Line rail network via provision of a more efficient public transport route.

“Integrated Transport and Land Use

Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning. (NSO 2, 6, 8,9)”

The DART+ Coastal North project will assist in achieving a more balanced approach to the integration of transportation and development, both in terms of employment and residential locations. It will make locations along the Northern Line rail network more favourable for both employers and residents.

The ‘DART Expansion’ – the previous name for the DART+ Programme - is heavily referenced and supported in the document, including in relation to the development of the Dublin Metropolitan Area, and Drogheda.

Regional Policy Objective 5.2 states:

“Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including Metrolink, DART and LUAS expansion programmes, BusConnects and the Greater Dublin Metropolitan Cycle Network and ensure that future development maximises the efficiency and protects the strategic capacity of the metropolitan area transport network, existing and planned.”

Regional Policy Objective 8.8: supports delivery of the rail projects set out in Table 8.2, subject to the outcome of appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

One of the projects set out in Table 8.2 is:

“DART Expansion Programme – new infrastructure and electrification of existing lines, including provision of electrified services to Drogheda or further north on the Northern Line, Celbridge – Hazelhatch or further south on the Kildare Line, Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/Sligo Line, while continuing to provide DART services on the South-Eastern Line as far south as Greystones.”



Image 2-4 Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (Source: Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031)²

² Note that the of DART+ Coastal North project is part of the north-south corridor indicated in blue on this graphic.

2.3.4.2 Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042, developed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2021 was published in January 2023 and replaces the previous framework, titled the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016- 2035, which was approved by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2016. The Strategy addresses the transportation requirements to support the continued co-ordinated development within the counties of Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. Major projects provided for in the Strategy include:

- Luas Cross City;
- The reopening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel Rail Line;
- The on-going roll out of cycle tracks and greenways;
- Metrolink;
- DART+ Programme;
- Investment in bus priority and bus service improvements – BusConnects Dublin; and
- M7 Naas to Newbridge widening, Osberstown Interchange and Sallins Bypass.

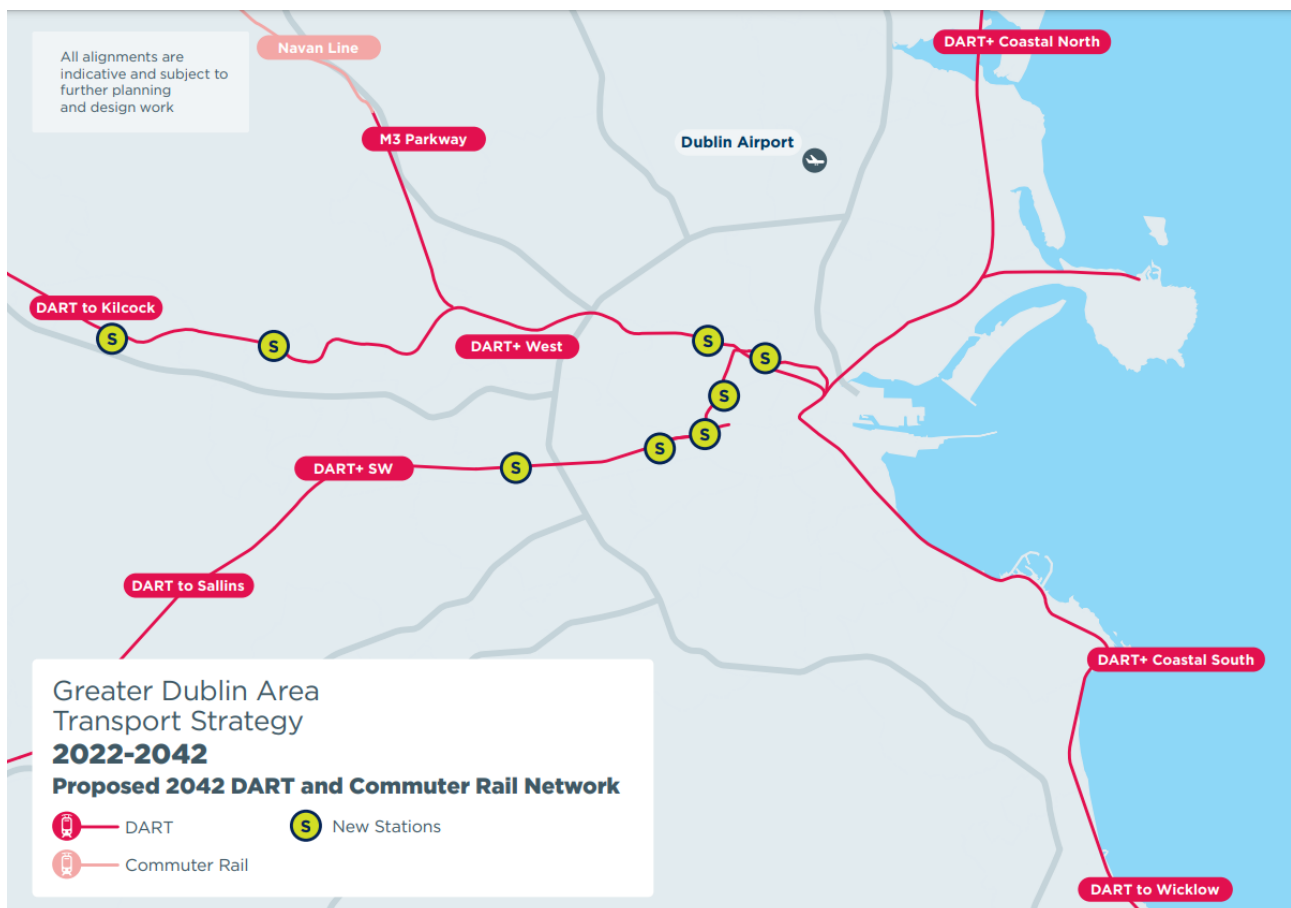


Image 2-5 Proposed 2042 DART and Commuter Rail Network, Source: Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042

With regards to the DART+ Programme, the Strategy includes the following measures:

“Measure RAIL1 – DART+ The DART+ Programme will be implemented, providing electrified services to Drogheda in the north and Maynooth plus Celbridge in the west, in addition to an enhanced level of service to Greystones. The programme will include additional fleet, aligned with higher passenger demand, and a higher frequency of service on all lines.

Measure RAIL – Regional and Intercity Services The NTA will continue to work with Irish Rail to improve regional and intercity services which will benefit connectivity within and to the GDA.

Measure RAIL7 – Station Upgrades The NTA, in conjunction with Irish Rail, will upgrade, refurbish and maintain train stations across the GDA to ensure that they are of an appropriate standard and provide a good quality experience for passengers.

The DART+ Coastal North project is in accordance with all objectives of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area and will support the achievement of various measures including those identified above.

2.3.4.3 Integrated Implementation Plan 2019-2024

Following the approval of a transport strategy for the region by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport an integrated implementation plan is prepared, covering a six-year period. The Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 was approved in February 2016. The preparation of the Integrated Implementation Plan was aligned with the Government’s review of capital spending which commenced in 2016 and culminated with the publication of the National Development Plan 2018-2027 in February 2018.

The NTA’s Integrated Implementation Plan (IIP) 2019-2024 supports the delivery of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 and is aligned with the objectives of the NDP (both now updated). It sets out the central infrastructure investment programme and overall funding provision over the six-year period. It identifies the key investment areas with respect to bus, light rail, heavy rail and integration and sustainable transport investment.

The IIP provides further detail on the sequencing and allocation of the €4.6bn available to the NTA across Bus, Light Rail, Metro and Heavy Rail projects up to 2024. It also notes that the...

“Integrated rail network will provide a core, high-capacity transit system for the region and will deliver a very substantial increase in peak-hour capacity on all lines from Drogheda, Maynooth, Celbridge/Hazelhatch and Greystones”.

The objectives for rail investment in the IIP are to:

- Implement key elements of the DART+ Programme.
- Eliminate the current signalling restrictions in the city centre through the completion of the City Centre Re-signalling project.
- Protect the safety and reliability of the GDA railway system through investment in upgrading of train control and monitoring systems.
- Continue investment in a level crossing closure programme.
- Enhance customer information systems and ticketing systems.

- Continue the upgrading and enhancement, including accessibility, of train stations in the GDA.

The investment programme and overall funding provision of the Implementation Plan align with and support the DART+ Coastal North project, particularly in implementing the DART+ Programme, and improving safety and reliability.

2.3.5 Local policy

2.3.5.1 Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

The Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted by Dublin City Council on 2nd December 2022 and came in to effect on 14th December 2022. The Plan sets out how the city will develop to meet the needs of all residents, workers and visitors. The policies and objectives:

- guide growth and development,
- provide a strategy to achieve proper planning, and
- show how sustainable development will be achieved, meeting our needs now without compromise to future generation's needs.

The main policies and objectives relevant to the DART+ Programme are as follows:

Policy QHSN11: 15-Minute City *To promote the realisation of the 15-minute city which provides for liveable, sustainable urban neighbourhoods and villages throughout the city that deliver healthy placemaking, high quality housing and well designed, intergenerational and accessible, safe and inclusive public spaces served by local services, amenities, sports facilities and sustainable modes of public and accessible transport where feasible.*

Policy QHSN12: Neighbourhood Development *To encourage neighbourhood development which protects and enhances the quality of our built environment and supports public health and community wellbeing. Promote developments which:*

- encourage sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes and 'walkable communities' whereby a range of facilities and services will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance;

Policy SMT1: Modal Shift and Compact Growth *To continue to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as active mobility and public transport, and to work with the National Transport Authority (NTA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and other transport agencies in progressing an integrated set of transport objectives to achieve compact growth.*

Objective SMT01: Transition to More Sustainable Travel Modes *To achieve and monitor a transition to more sustainable travel modes including walking, cycling and public transport over the lifetime of the development plan, in line with the city mode share targets of 26% walking/cycling/micro mobility; 57% public transport (bus/rail/LUAS); and 17% private (car/ van/HGV/motorcycle).*

Policy SMT13: Urban Villages and the 15-Minute City To support the role of the urban villages in contributing to the 15-minute city through improvement of connectivity in particular for active travel and facilitating the delivery of public transport infrastructure and services, and public realm enhancement.

Policy SMT14: City Centre Road Space To manage city centre road-space to best address the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, public transport, shared modes and the private car, in particular, where there are intersections between DART, LUAS and Metrolink and with the existing and proposed bus network.

Policy SMT22: Key Sustainable Transport Projects To support the expeditious delivery of key sustainable transport projects so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes, serving the existing and future needs of the city and region and to support the integration of existing public transport infrastructure with other transport modes. In particular the following projects subject to environmental requirements and appropriate planning consents being obtained:

- DART+;
- Metrolink from Charlemont to Swords;
- BusConnects Core Bus Corridor projects;
- Delivery of Luas to Finglas; and
- Progress and delivery of Luas to Poolbeg and Lucan.

Policy SMT23: The Rail Network and Freight Transport (i) To work with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail, the NTA, TII and other operators to progress a coordinated approach to improving the rail network, integrated with other public transport modes to ensure maximum public benefit and promoting sustainable transport and improved connectivity. (ii) To facilitate and support the needs of freight transport in accordance with the NTA's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022 – 2042 and enhance the capacity on existing rail lines and services to provide improved facilities promoting the principles of sustainable transport to cater for the movement of freight by rail. (iii) To support the outcomes of the Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail Freight 2040 Strategy.

Zoning Objectives

The railway and stations are unzoned lands (technically known as “white land”).

The railway line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- Z1 - Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods
- Z2 - Residential Neighbourhoods (Conservation Areas)
- Z3 - Neighbourhood Centres
- Z4 - District Centres (incorporating Key District Centres)
- Z6 - Employment/Enterprise
- Z9 - Amenity/Open Space Lands/Green Network
- Z14 - Strategic Development and Regeneration Areas (SDRAs)
- Z15 – Community and Social Infrastructure.

The DART+ Coastal North project does not contravene any of these zoning objectives. Careful design has been considered in relation to the more sensitive zoning objectives such as High Amenity lands.

Protected Structures

There is only one protected structure identified in Dublin City Council jurisdiction along the DART+ Coastal North route:

- Ref: 880; Railway Bridge, Clontarf Road, Dublin 3: “twin-arch cutstone railway bridge inclusive of stone embankment walls”.

Any works associated with the DART + North Coastal project that may affect this bridge have been carefully assessed. It is worth noting, however, that development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a railway order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

Amenity Designations

There are designated conservation areas associated with the Tolka River, Santry River and a parkland area north of the St. Donagh Road in Kilbarrack. The DART+ Coastal North project either adjoins or oversails these conservation areas, however, works associated with the project are unlikely to affect these designations.

Strategic Development Regeneration Area

SDRA 1 – Clongriffin/Belmayne and Environs

The long term vision for Clongriffin – Belmayne was first set out in the North Fringe Area Action Plan in 2000. A Local Area Plan was made in 2012 and subsequently extended in 2017 for a further 5 years so that its objectives could be fully realised, following the slowdown in construction from 2008. The overall vision of the lands is to facilitate a highly sustainable, mixed use neighbourhood, centred on key public transport interchanges, with a distinct identity and sense of place.

The recently adopted Dublin City Development Plan designates Clongriffin-Belmayne as a Strategic Development and Regeneration Area (SDRA) to provide a strategic spatial and urban design framework, so that the objectives of the City Development Plan can guide future development; and to ensure that the phasing and implementation strategy envisaged in the LAP can be delivered as part of the future build-out of the lands, after the expiry of the LAP.

The main guiding principles of the SDRA that are closely connected to the railway corridor and the DART+ Coastal North project are:

“Completion of Clongriffin KUV centre to include the development of key sites adjacent to the train station, east of Father Collins Park...”

Enhance and improve connections between Clongriffin and Baldoyle/Stapolin lands across the railway line at Clongriffin Train Station and at the River Mayne, in coordination with Fingal County Council...

Residential densities shall be highest within the two KUV centres and along Main Street, in proximity to the train station at Clongriffin and along the proposed Core Bus Corridor."

The main goal of the plan in relation to movement and transport is:

"To promote ease of movement within and access to the area by incorporating a high quality, integrated transport network through improvements to the existing road, rail and public transport network, together with improved cycling and pedestrian facilities within the local area."

Clongriffin Railway Station is recognised as a key development node with additional height and densities permitted in proximity to the station.

The DART+ Coastal North project, including the rail enhancements at Clongriffin Railway Station, complements the aims and objectives of the SDRA enabling the development of a sustainable, mixed use urban quarter adjoining a high-quality public transport node.

There are no objectives or designated areas within the SDRA that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

2.3.5.2 Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029

The Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 sets out the spatial framework to guide future development within the County with a focus on the places people live, work, visit and do business, and how people interact and move between these places while protecting the environment. The Plan is underpinned by a strategic vision intended to guide the sustainable future growth of Fingal. At the core of the vision is healthy placemaking, building cohesive and sustainable communities, where cultural, natural and built environment is protected.

The Strategic Vision for the plan contains a number of strategic objectives, the following of which are relevant:

"9. Reduce car dependency and promote and facilitate sustainable modes of transport. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, while supporting an efficient and effective transport system.

10. Protect, enhance and ensure the sustainable use of Fingal's key infrastructure, including water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities, energy supply including renewables, broadband and transportation."

The following policies and objectives relating to connectivity and movement are specifically relevant:

"Policy CMP18 – Public Transport.

Support the provision of a high-quality public transportation system that is accessible to all to serve the needs of the County and to enable a significant shift from car-based travel to public transport.

Objective CMO23 – Enabling Public Transport Projects.

Support the delivery of key sustainable transport projects including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART+ and LUAS expansion programme so as to provide an integrated public transport network with efficient interchange between transport modes to serve needs of the County and the mid-east region in collaboration with the NTA, TII and Irish Rail and other relevant stakeholders.

Objective CMO24 – NTA Strategy.

Support NTA and other stakeholders in implementing the NTA Strategy including MetroLink, BusConnects, DART +, LUAS and the GDA Cycle Network.”

On reflecting upon the impacts of Brexit and Covid-19, the following employment and economic opportunities are identified:

“Infrastructure provision will be a key factor for the economic development of the County and the prospective MetroLink, BusConnects and DART+ projects will bring significant economic benefits to Fingal. Transport and infrastructure interventions are expected to facilitate the modal shift in alignment with the policy hierarchy and national, regional and local objectives such that they encourage sustainable ways of improving Fingal’s integration, connectivity and the movement of workers.”

Strategic employment aims also highlight the following:

“North Fringe – Baldoyle-Stapolin – The DART Expansion Programme will support ongoing large-scale urban expansion of the North Fringe lands. Employment generators in these areas include mixed-use districts with retail and service provision.”

Zoning Objectives

The railway and stations are unzoned (technically known as “white land”). The rail line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- CI - Community Infrastructure
- GB - Greenbelt
- GE - General Employment
- HA - High Amenity
- LC - Local Centre
- MC – Major Town Centre
- MRE - Metro and Rail Economic Corridor
- OS - Open Space
- RA - Residential Area
- RS - Residential
- RU - Rural
- TC - Town And District Centre

The DART+ Coastal North project does not contravene any of these zoning objectives. Careful design has been considered in relation to the more sensitive zoning objectives such as High Amenity lands and Greenbelt areas.

Protected Structures

There are a significant number of protected structures on or adjoining the railway and stations. These are detailed in Chapter 21 (Architectural Heritage) in Volume 2 of this EIAR. Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures have been carefully assessed.

As noted above, however, development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a Railway Order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

Site Specific Objectives

There are a number of Indicative Cycle/Pedestrian Routes adjoining the existing railway line including:

- Howth Junction north to Grange Road.
- Sutton Station east to Howth Station.
- Malahide Estuary north across Malahide Railway Viaduct.
- From Donabate north across the Rogerstown Viaduct.
- Baldoyle to Portmarnock Greenway.

Local Objectives

- 2: *Promote and facilitate a pedestrian over-bridge as part of an attractive walkway along Tanner's Water Lane to the proposed coastal path linking to the town centre.*
- 34: *Completion of the Broadmeadow Way between Malahide and Donabate to be prioritised during the lifetime of this Development Plan.*
- 51: *Provide for a walkway and cycleway across the rail line to Malahide Community School.*
- 88: *Promote the improvement of access to Howth Junction Rail Station.*

The design of the DART+ Coastal North project has taken these objectives into account.

Area Specific Plans

2.3.5.2.1 Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP

Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP was adopted in 2013 and extended to May 2023. Although the LAP has recently expired, with lands now being guided by the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029, work done to date on the DART+ Coastal North project has been aligned with the objectives set out in the LAP.

The LAP lands are located on the southern boundary of Fingal County Council where they meet the administrative area of Dublin City Council along the Dublin – Belfast railway. To the west of the railway lies the developing mixed-use area of Clongriffin within Dublin City Council's wider North Fringe Area encompassing Northern Cross / Clare Hall / Belmayne to Clongriffin. This, along with Baldoyle-Stapolin, is one of Dublin's larger new development areas and, when completed, is envisaged to have up to 10,000 new homes as well as new retail and commercial areas.

It is envisaged that Baldoyle-Stapolin will develop as a sustainable community comprised of new homes, community, leisure and educational facilities based around an identifiable and accessible new village centre which will form the heart of the area. With integrated amenities and excellent public transport, this will be a fledgling neighbourhood with a varied social mix and will embody the principles of sustainability, sustainable communities and inclusiveness.

The DART+ Coastal North project will help realise the visions and objectives of the Plan. It will provide a better service to the area, thereby supporting the full development of the village and greater usage of the DART, leading to a more sustainable community.

2.3.5.2.2 Portmarnock South Local Area Plan 2013

The Portmarnock South Local Area Plan 2013 was adopted by the Council in July 2013 and was extended up to July 2023. As with the Baldoyle-Stapolin LAP, the Portmarnock South LAP has recently expired, and the lands are now guided by the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029. Similarly, work done to date on the DART+ Coastal North project has been aligned with the vision and objectives set out in the LAP.

The Portmarnock South LAP comprises a land area of circa 86 hectares of which 40.36 hectares are zoned as residential. The majority of the remainder of the lands are zoned off for open space and amenities. The lands are directly to the south-east of Portmarnock DART station. The vision for Portmarnock South is to develop a high-quality urban environment with a unique sense of place, maximising and respecting the opportunities presented by the area's natural assets and coastal location adjoining Baldoyle Bay and recognising its high level of accessibility to Portmarnock DART Station.

The DART+ Coastal North project will continue to contribute to the sustainable development of these lands through improved public transport provision.

2.3.5.2.3 Donabate LAP 2016

The Donabate LAP 2013 was adopted by the Council in March 2016 and was extended up to July 2026. The LAP comprises approx. 138 hectares (340 acres) of land in four separate parcels. The LAP seeks to establish a framework for the planned, co-ordinated and sustainable development of these lands supported by an overriding Vision Statement and supported by four Strategic Aims. The adopted Vision Statement seeks, inter alia, to:

“Provide for the structured development of the identified new residential areas of Donabate such that they integrate into the established village and support the continued growth of a vibrant and attractive town for existing and future residents. New development will be accompanied by the required community, educational, transport, drainage and recreational infrastructure to ensure the protection and enhancement of local amenities and the continued growth of local services in Donabate”.

The LAP notes that the NTA has requested that Irish Rail progress the planning for the extension of the DART rail service along the northern rail line, to include Donabate.

Objective 3.2 is relevant in this regard.

“Support the NTA’s proposed electrification of the Northern Line from Malahide to Balbriggan to allow an extension of DART services to Balbriggan.”

The majority of the lands zoned in the LAP are within 1000m of Donabate railway station. The DART+ Coastal North project will help to facilitate the development of these lands in a sustainable manner.

A DART+ Coastal North project compound and substation are proposed on site located within the southwest portion of the LAP. This land is designated within the LAP as being not suitable for residential development due to potential flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out for this purpose and found the site not to be a flood risk.

There are no other policies, objectives or designated areas related to the natural or built environment that would be impacted by the DART+ Coastal North project.

2.3.5.3 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 22nd September 2021 and came into effect on 3rd November 2021.

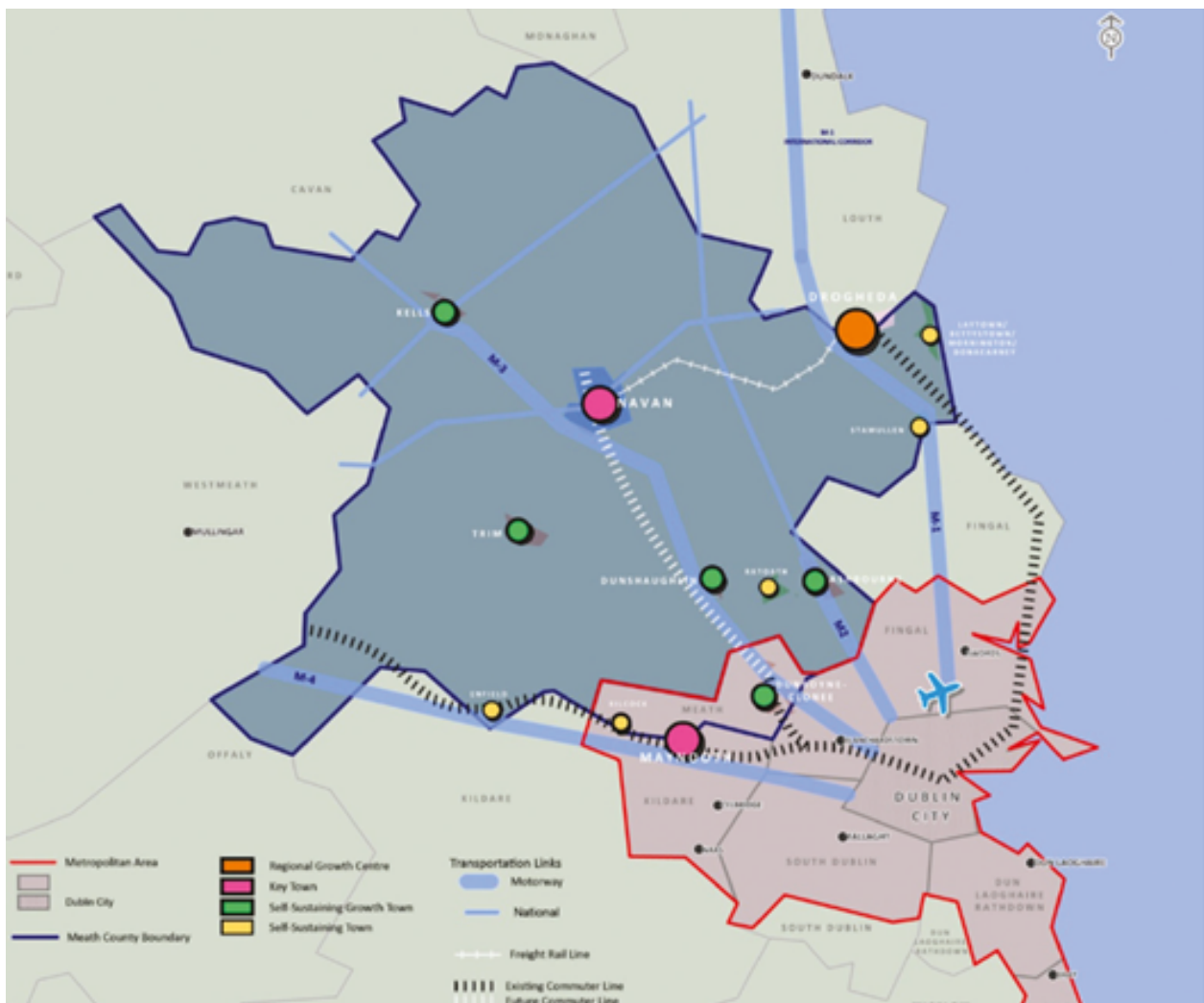


Image 2-6 Meath Core Strategy Map (Source: Meath Development Plan 2021-2027)

It is a strategic aim of the Development Plan to create attractive efficient compact settlements which reduce the need to travel and improve the quality of life for inhabitants.

The following policies and objectives in the Development Plan of specific relevance to the DART+ Coastal North project include:

“MOV POL 1: To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport, in line with the guiding principles outlined in RPO 8.1 of the EMRA RSES 2019-2031

MOV POL 3: To promote sustainable land use planning measures which facilitate transportation efficiency, economic returns on transport investment, minimisation of environmental impacts and a general shift towards the greater use of public transportation throughout the County.

The DART+ Coastal North project complies with the strategic vision and the specific policies of the Development Plan.

Zoning Objectives

The railway line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- A1 – Existing Residential
- A2 – New Residential
- B1 – Commercial Town or Village Centre
- E1/E2 – Strategic Employment Zones (High Technology Uses) / General Enterprise & Employment
- F1 – Open Space
- G1 – Community Infrastructure
- RA – Rural Area
- TU – Transport and Utilities
- WL – White Lands (To protect strategic lands from inappropriate forms of development which would impede the orderly expansion of a strategic urban centre).

Protected Structures

There are a number of protected structures on or adjoining the railway and stations as detailed in Chapter 21 (Architectural Heritage) in Volume 2 of this EIAR. Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures have been carefully assessed.

As noted above, however, development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a Railway Order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

2.3.5.4 Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 30th September 2021. The Plan came into effect on 11th November 2021. The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 has superseded the Drogheda Borough Council Development Plan 2011-2017 and the North Drogheda and Environs Local Area Plan.

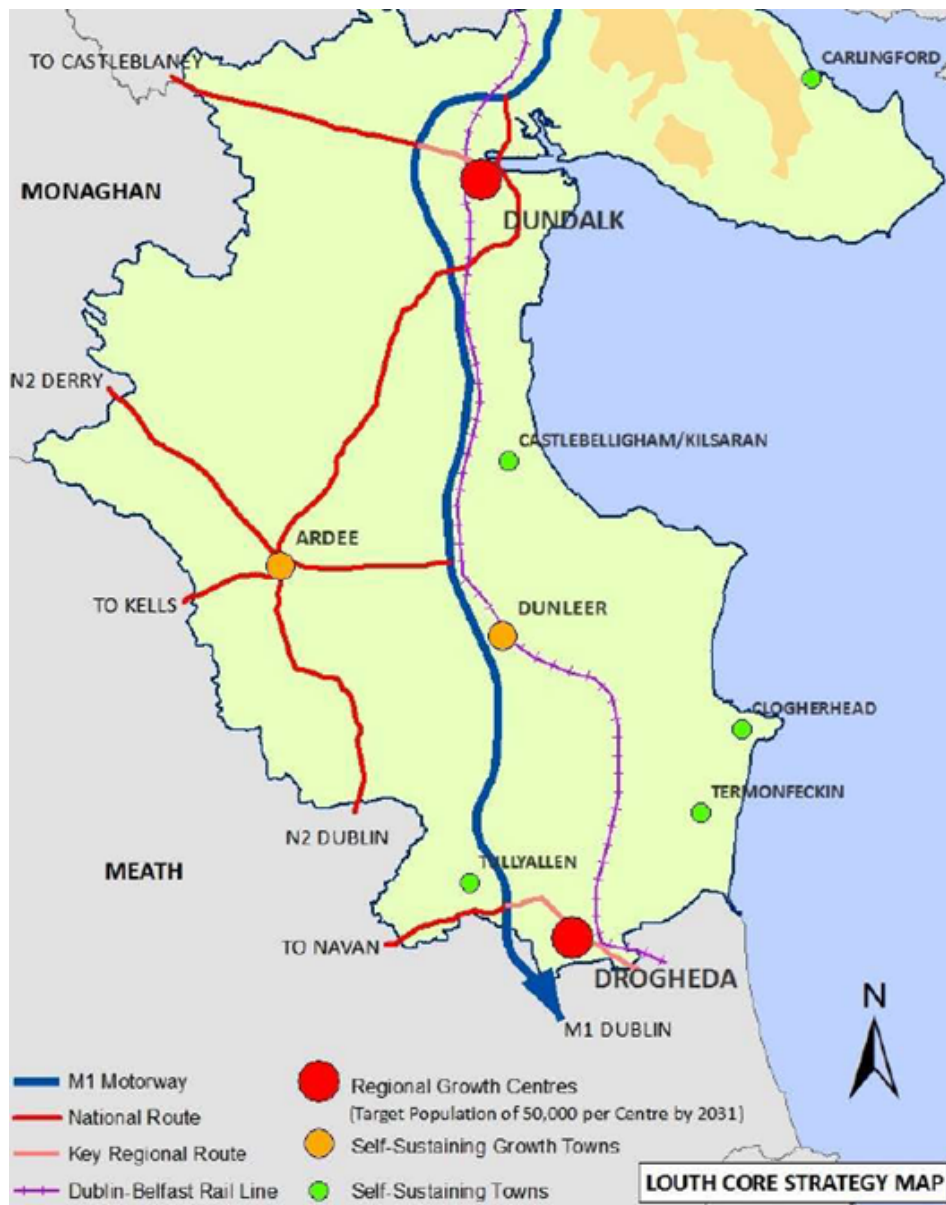


Image 2-7 Louth Core Strategy Map, Source: Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

A key priority of the plan is to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of the town as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031. This will be supported by objectives to regenerate the town centre, promote compact growth in the town's hinterlands and enhance the role of Drogheda as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

The Plan states the following in relation to Drogheda:

“The goal of achieving compact growth will require improved accessibility, sustainable mobility and the requisite infrastructure to enable Drogheda to grow as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC). The town will benefit from the extension of the DART service and improvements will be required to MacBride station relating to accessibility.”

The plan recognises that the “DART Expansion Programme” is an important growth enabler for Drogheda as it would improve the connectivity to Dublin due to the increased frequency of services, making the town more accessible and attractive for economic investment and employment generating development.

The following policies and objectives in the plan are relevant:

“SS13: To support investment in public and sustainable transport infrastructure and services in Drogheda including the progression of the DART Expansion Programme which includes the electrification of the rail line and the extension of DART services to Drogheda.

MOV 2: To facilitate the integration of land use with sustainable transportation infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of RPO 8.1 in the RSES by supporting the creation of a critical mass of population and employment related development that would maximise investment in public transport infrastructure and create compact, sustainable settlements.

MOV 12: To support the DART Expansion Programme including new infrastructure and the electrification of existing lines along the northern rail line to Drogheda.”

The DART+ Coastal North project supports the overall vision in the Plan, particularly in relation to the development of Drogheda as a Regional Growth Centre.

Zoning Objectives

The rail line goes through or is adjacent to the following zoning objectives:

- A1 – Existing Residential
- A2 – New Residential
- J1 – Transportation Development Hub

The DART+ Coastal North project does not contravene any of these zoning objectives.

Protected Structures

There are a number of protected structures in or adjoining the Drogheda railway station. Any works associated with the DART+ Coastal North project that may affect protected structures have been carefully assessed (this is further discussed in Chapter 21 (Architectural Heritage) in Volume 2 of this EIAR).

As noted above, however, development consisting of the carrying out of railway works, authorised by a Railway Order or of any incidental or temporary works connected with the railway works is not subject to Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, which relates to architectural heritage and protected structures, by virtue of section 38(2) of the 2001 Act.

2.4 Need for Project

The section sets out the need for the DART+ Programme and, specifically, the DART+ Coastal North project.

To Facilitate Growth in Demand

At the end of 2019, the existing heavy rail network within the GDA was operating at, or near, full capacity. Passenger numbers are expected to return to pre-Covid levels and there is a continuous growth in demand for a higher frequency, higher capacity, rail service. This is fuelled by an increase in the population along public transportation corridors in line with current government policy. The increase in demand is expected to continue in the coming years as the populations in towns and suburbs such as Drogheda, Bettystown, Malahide, Portmarnock, and Clongriffin continue to expand. The delivery of the DART+ Programme is required to meet and cater for this projected growth in demand.
















Limited frequency and capacity not only affects the viability of the DART service as a genuine transport option in the eyes of local communities but also limits the potential growth of new communities along the corridor.

To promote a modal shift from unsustainable private car usage to public transport, higher frequency and higher capacity services must be provided to ensure convenient and viable alternatives are available for road users. The DART+ Coastal North project will increase train frequency as shown in Image 2-8.

Planned increase in train frequency and passenger capacity for the 3-hour AM peak period for inbound/southbound services to Dublin City Centre.

*** Note:**

- Enterprise & Commuter Services, originating in Belfast and Dundalk respectively, are expected to continue with current stopping patterns.
- DART Services to have potential to stop at all stations.

 Increase from 12,500 to 26,600 passengers (per 3hr peak)	 Increase from 11 to 24 services (per 3hr peak)	 1 Enterprise Service per hour 2 Commuter Services per hour 5 DART Services per hour * All services originating in Drogheda
 Increase from 23,300 to 33,800 passengers (per 3hr peak)	 Increase from 20 to 30 services (per 3hr peak)	 1 Enterprise Service per hour 2 Commuter Services per hour 7 DART Services per hour * 2 services originating in Malahide
 Increase from 23,300 to 33,800 passengers (per 3hr peak)	 Increase from 20 to 36 services (per 3hr peak)	 1 Enterprise Service per hour 2 Commuter Services per hour 9 DART Services per hour * 2 services originating in Clongriffin
 Increase from 10,800 to 21,600 passengers (per 3hr peak)	 Increase from 9 to 18 services (per 3hr peak)	 0 Enterprise Service per hour 0 Commuter Services per hour 6 DART Services per hour
 Increase from 35,100 to 41,000 passengers (per 3hr peak)	 Increase from 29 to 36 services (per 3hr peak)	 1 Enterprise Service per hour 2 Commuter Services per hour 9 DART Services per hour

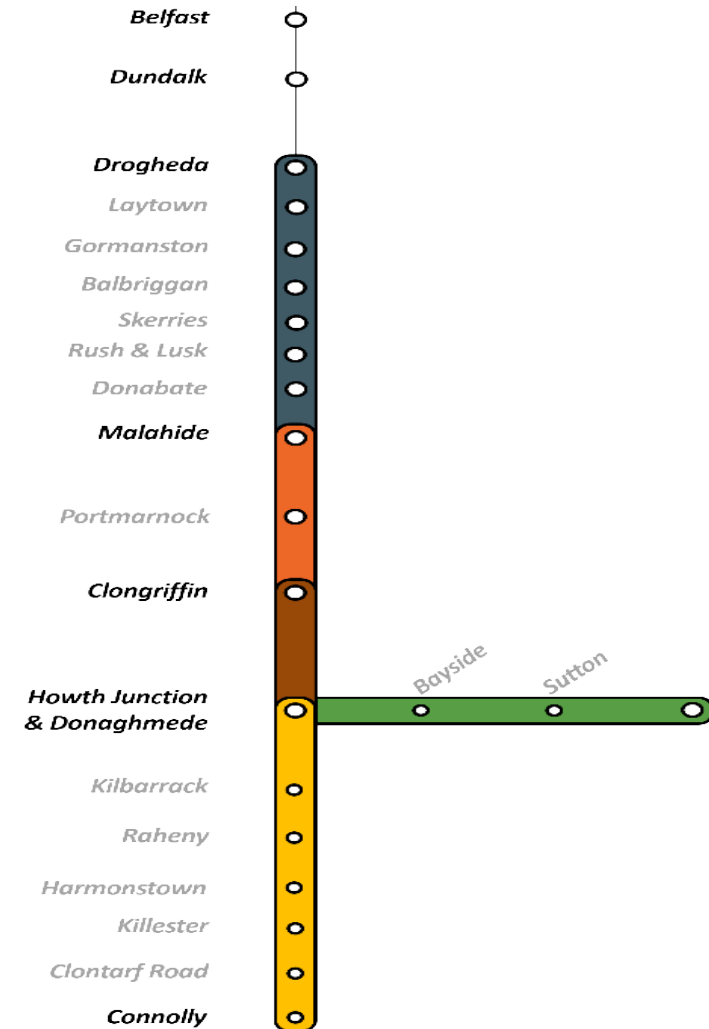


Image 2-8 Service Capacity Increases During Peak AM Services

To Play an Important Part in Achieving Environmental Targets

In 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), reported that the transport sector was responsible for 17.7% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to this, private passenger cars were responsible for 59% of all road transport emissions. The recently published Climate Action Plan 2023 calls for a significant cut in transport emissions by 2030 through measures including:

- Prioritise and accelerate delivery of NTA Connecting Ireland and new town services, via conventional and non-conventional modes of public transport services;
- Identify pathway to appropriate decarbonisation of interurban rail services, informed by Strategic Rail Review; and
- Advance DART+ Programme.

The delivery of the DART+ Programme will help to achieve national decarbonisation targets by providing a highly efficient mass transit system with relatively low emissions that can encourage a modal shift away from the private car and towards greener public transport.

Investment in a more modern DART fleet and in an improved and extended electrified rail network will also reduce the current dependency on diesel trains, reducing associated greenhouse gas emissions and assisting in the decarbonisation of the transport sector, enabling an overall reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2050 in line with Government targets.

To Support Economic and Population Growth

The GDA is expected to see a significant growth in population based on the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) Regional Population Projections 2017-2036, which predicts that the population of Dublin could potentially increase by 31.9% by 2036. This, coupled with the expectation that the need for people to travel into Dublin City for employment will continue to grow, has led to Project Ireland 2040 promoting the development of higher density developments along transport corridors to promote a sustainable compact urban form.

The DART+ Programme will support land use policy allowing for these high-density developments along the railway corridors, as well as delivering high quality and efficient transport required to reduce congestion along commuter routes and support the wider movement of the workforce within the GDA.

The DART+ Programme will bring fast, frequent, reliable, and sustainable transport to existing communities along existing rail corridors, making it easier to travel for work, education, or leisure purposes. It will also facilitate the development of new communities that will greatly benefit from the connectivity that the DART+ Programme will deliver.

To Encourage and Enable a Modal Shift

Within the GDA, the highest levels of car dependency are evident around the outer edge of the Metropolitan area and in peri-urban fringe locations, where more than 7 in 10 people drive to work. Without the provision of public transport, this dependency on private car usage is expected to increase year on year with knock on negative effects on society, the environment, and the economy.

Through the creation of an attractive and well-integrated transport system, the DART+ Programme will encourage and enable a modal shift in people's choice of travel. The provision of trains with higher frequency and capacity, greater reliability, improved customer experience, and improved integration with public transport services within the wider network will aim to appeal to those commuters who currently sit in some of the heaviest congestion in the country during peak travel times.

To Modernise the Railway

The upgrade of the Northern Line to include for additional turnback facilities at Drogheda MacBride, Malahide, Clongriffin and Howth Junction & Donaghmede Stations will greatly improve the operational capacity of the railway line between Drogheda and Dublin City Centre by allowing the DART services to be terminated at the turnback facilities and allowing for the Intercity and Regional rail services to pass uninterrupted.

The modernisation of the DART fleet to allow for a significant reduction in the number of diesel fuelled trains in the eastern region will be a significant step towards modernising the existing rail network and a positive step towards a reduction in our CO₂ emissions.

The DART+ Coastal North project will play a significant part in allowing the rail network within the GDA to both realise and maximise the potential that exists within the existing rail system to the benefit of the GDA.

To Enable Compact Growth

Compact growth is identified as a National Strategic Outcome in the National Development Plan. For compact growth to be effective within the GDA, it will be necessary to provide support for the ambition and policy for long term concentrated developments along established population centres dependent on the provision of attractive public transport facilities. The DART+ Programme will form a key component in this development and will help to ensure the impact of land-use planning is maximised.

It is evident that focusing development along railway corridors and providing higher densities at key transport nodes to create a compact urban form will increase the viability of public transport facilities, combat unnecessary urban sprawl, and reduce the unsustainable reliance on private car transportation. However, the public transport systems, as well as active travel links, must be in place for this to happen. The DART+ Programme will ensure a high capacity, integrated network is provided, enabling a more plan-led transport-oriented development (TOD) approach which is fully aligned with Ireland's international and national policy positions, and with recent institutional developments in relation to active land management by the State, as set out in Transport-Oriented Development: Assessing the Opportunity for Ireland (No. 148 June 2019).

Population growth and planned developments of significance along the extents of the Northern Line will benefit from the increased train frequency and greater train capacity provided by the DART+ Coastal North project. Road traffic congestion will be reduced as a result of the modal shift from these development areas, from private cars to public transport. The DART+ Coastal North project will allow for a greater volume of commuters to travel to Dublin City Centre in a more efficient and reliable way.

2.5 DART+ Programme Objectives

DART+ Programme is a transformative programme of projects that aims to modernise and improve existing rail services in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). It will see the DART network grow from its current 50 km in length to over 150 km.

DART+ Programme's primary objective is to support urban compact growth and contribute to reducing transport congestion and emissions in the Dublin region by enhancing the heavy rail network between Dublin City Centre and the areas of Drogheda, Maynooth, Dunboyne, Celbridge and Greystones, providing a sustainable, safe, efficient, integrated and accessible public transport service along these corridors.

Sub-objectives of the DART+ Programme include:

- Cater for existing heavy rail travel demand and support long-term patronage growth along established rail corridors in the Greater Dublin Area through the provision of a higher frequency, higher capacity, electrified heavy rail service which supports sustainable economic development and population growth;
- Improve accessibility to jobs, education and other social and economic opportunities through the provision of improved inter-rail and inter-modal connectivity and integration with other public transport services;
- Enable further urban compact growth along existing rail corridors, unlock regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in the Greater Dublin Area, for present and future generations, through the provision of a higher capacity heavy rail network;
- Deliver an efficient, sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient heavy rail network, which contributes to a reduction in congestion on the road network in the Greater Dublin Area and which supports the advancement of Ireland's transition to a low emissions transport system and delivery of Ireland's emission reduction targets; and
- Provide a higher standard of customer experience including provision of clean, safe, modern vehicles and a reliable and punctual service with regulated and integrated fares.

2.6 DART+ Coastal North Project Objectives

The primary objective of the DART+ Coastal North project is to deliver a higher frequency, higher capacity electrified rail service between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda and to support the rapid transition required to deliver on a low carbon climate resilient transport system.

Below are the sub-objectives for the DART+ Coastal North project:

- To deliver a higher frequency, higher capacity, reliable, electrified route to enable an increased DART service frequency between Drogheda and Dublin City Centre;
- To deliver solutions which improve the passenger experience where passenger infrastructure interventions are required to meet the Train Service Specification;
- To deliver a sustainable, low carbon and climate resilient design solution including making use of existing infrastructure where possible with targeted improvement works;
- To identify cost-effective solutions from a capital, operations, and maintenance perspective;
- To minimise adverse impacts on the natural and built environment associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the project;

- To minimise adverse impacts on existing rail services, road users and landowners associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the project; and
- To provide efficient and cost-effective integration of systems with the other DART+ Programme projects.

Delivery of the DART+ Coastal North project will support existing communities along the railway and support future sustainable development. The project will serve all existing stations along the railway corridor between Dublin City Centre and Drogheda MacBride Station, including those located on the Howth Branch, with electric powered trains that have a lower carbon footprint than the existing diesel trains. The frequency and quality of service will provide a viable transport alternative to communities along the route and help encourage people to migrate from private car use. This will assist Ireland in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport and help combat climate change.

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