



Questionnaire to NTA from Ranelagh and Rathmines Community

September 2018

Introduction

The purpose of this list of questions to the NTA is to assist the Ranelagh and Rathmines community in better understanding the key elements of the Metrolink project given the profound impact that the project, as currently envisaged, will have on the community from a social, economic and “quality of life” perspective.

Specifically, it seeks to engage the NTA on issues that the community raised in its May response to the earlier MetroLink consultation. Despite specific requests for meetings with the community to discuss these issues, neither the NTA nor TII has responded.

The questions are of such relevance to the public policy aspects of the project (particularly in terms of the best value for taxpayers’ money) and to the key implementation impacts of the project, we believe that they need to be answered in advance of the publication of the next NTA consultation on the final preferred Metrolink route.

We have grouped the questions under the headings of Macroeconomic and value-for-money, Transport Strategy and Implementation, Routing and Coverage, Luas Green Line Demand and finally the wider Community and Consultation issues.

A. Macroeconomic/ Value for Money issues

Adding a single urban rail project at an initial estimated cost of €3billion to the Public Capital Programme demands the closest possible scrutiny to ensure value for taxpayers’ money. We are at a critical point in the economic cycle. Ireland has recently emerged from a prolonged financial crisis with reasonable prospects of another global downturn; national debt is facing crisis levels and with the prospect of long-term uncertainty that Brexit will bring, the demands on the public purse for investment in economic and social infrastructure are greater than ever e.g. housing, hospitals, upgrading and repair of water infrastructure etc. While this is a matter for overall Government policy on public expenditure, there is an imperative that all public bodies demonstrate in advance of any large-scale project that the taxpayer is getting maximum value for money. Preparation of a business case after the final decision is made on the scale and scope of the project would be nonsense and a failure to deliver on NTA’s accountability obligations to the taxpayer.

1. To what extent has the NTA measured the economic and social cost of dismantling the Luas light-rail network in the south of Dublin City just 14 years after construction given that all NTA studies prior to that had concluded that light-rail was the preferred option for meeting the future transport needs of the Dublin metropolitan area?

2. What asset-lives assumptions underpinned the original business plan for the Luas Green Line and what effect has the current proposal to dismantle the network had on the original cost-benefit analysis of the Luas project?
3. Will the decision on the final preferred route (to be signalled in the forthcoming consultation) be supported by a business case as required by the Government Public Spending Code to ensure that the Government and taxpayer gets the best possible value from the resources at its disposal?
4. As the NTA is a public body, at what stage will the overall project in particular the capital cost be discussed and approved by the Oireachtas or will this approval be delegated to the Minister for Transport?
5. It has been publicly stated that €170M has been spent on the project to date. Can the NTA provide a breakdown of this expenditure?
6. The current estimated cost of the overall Metrolink project is €3 Billion. How much of the €3 Billion has been estimated for each major component of the project - Estuary to O'Connell, O'Connell to Charlemont and Charlemont to Sandyford?
7. Have cost-benefit analyses for the individual components of the project been completed by NTA and is there a significant difference in the outcome for the different components?
8. Given the objectives in Project Ireland 2040 and the Transport Strategy for Greater Dublin Area, how does the €3billion investment in one rail line contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the Greater Dublin Area?
9. To improve our understanding of such large-scale projects it would be helpful to know much did the original Green Line cost? Was it delivered on budget? How long did it take to build? How much did the Cross-City Luas connection cost? Was it delivered on budget? What was the source of funds for these projects? Is there a balance of capital still owing on these projects?
10. In the interest of transparency, can the NTA indicate the date of the NTA Board Minute which formally approved the current Emerging Preferred Route?

B. Overall Strategic Transport Policy and Implementation issue

The proposed Metrolink is funded by the exchequer under the NDP and Project Ireland 2040. There is no evidence that the proposed “emerging preferred route” and its design support the Project Ireland 2040 specific commitment to “emphasise social outcomes and values ahead of economic targets. Project Ireland 2040 prioritises “the wellbeing of all of our people, wherever they live and whatever their background..... Wellbeing, equality and opportunity represent the core, interdependent themes of Project Ireland 2040”

The NTA has not explained how the Metrolink project as currently proposed aligns with Dublin Regional Transport Strategy and with Project Ireland 2040. In particular, given the objectives in Project Ireland 2040 and the Transport Strategy for Greater Dublin Area, it has not explained how the €3billion investment in one rail line contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Greater Dublin Area.

There are two large transport infrastructure projects currently being considered for Dublin - Metrolink and Bus Connects. While it seems that both projects will run concurrently with significant disruption to Dublin transportation, neither project seems to consider the other project or other transportation modes. It's as if both projects have been developed in isolation, as evidenced by the fact that the Bus Connects proposal will divert additional traffic into Ranelagh thereby compounding the negative impact of Metrolink on the area.

11. How will the proposed MetroLink integrate with the currently proposed Bus Connects transport network? Are the construction and project timelines for both projects aligned to ensure optimum benefit?
12. There is a risk that both projects running concurrently will create significant disruption to Dublin transportation. Has the impact of both projects being undertaken concurrently been considered in the construction and project timelines?
13. The NTA estimate a MetroLink build-time of 6 years. How much of the Build time has been allocated to each of the 3 major blocks and has the sequence of construction been decided or will there be simultaneous works? Are there project review milestones planned during construction to consider contingencies?
14. For the MetroLink/Green LUAS integration the NTA has given a LUAS closure time of 9 months (six months for build and 3 months for commissioning). Has the NTA quantified the economic and social impact on the city arising from the traffic and work disruption during the construction phase and included it in the overall cost/benefit analysis of the project?

15. Staying with the closure period arising from Metrolink construction, can the NTA provide a breakout of the build-time for each month of the 6 months?
16. The NTA has stated that the Metrolink project will have 25 stations, 15 new and 10 upgraded on the Green Line. Can this be taken as an NTA commitment that none of the existing stations will be closed and each will remain at its existing location?
17. Can NTA provide reassurance that the crossing points on the current system including Albany Road will be accessible under any new proposal?
18. NTA has stressed that Safety is a key feature in determining separation and permeability. Which European /National ISO standard is being applied? Can you state what are the key design requirements to meet the standard in terms of perimeter heights and distances?
19. What remedies is NTA considering for the dislocation and permeability issues, raised in responses to the earlier consultation, arising from the replacement of the Luas Green Line with a segregated high-speed rail network?
20. Does the NTA accept that this community dislocation cannot be addressed at one pinch-point alone e.g. Dunville Avenue but needs to be resolved throughout the inner suburbs at least as far as Milltown?
21. Experience to date indicates that the NTA has not adequately informed the public about the full impact of project at individual existing Luas stops. (A case in point being Charlemont i.e. the arbitrary reversal of the original TII plan to tunnel on the Aquaduct side of the Carroll site to facilitate the later arrival of Hines, resulting in the enforced CPO of Dartmouth Square residents' gardens) Will the NTA fully engage with residents at each station to comprehensively explore all issues of impact?
22. Will the NTA publish the main implications/closure consequences etc of its current plan at each station to inform the widest range of users?

C. Optimum Route to meet Passenger Demand in Greater Dublin Area

Passenger demand is the rationale the NTA states as the primary reason to upgrade LUAS Green line to Metro specification. In its presentation to the Oireachtas members it refers to:

- The build-out of Cherrywood – a town of 18,000 population and 12000 jobs
- Increase in Sandyford with 'much larger numbers of jobs and residents'

- The planned extension southwards to Bray / Fassaroe
- The increased level of interchange with the bus system which will be provided under BusConnects

However, the NTA in its strategy position state that residential density is the primary indicator of transport demand. From the City Centre / St Stephen's Green underground station a number of alternative routes are available to NTA (and Government) to fulfil this mandate, will give a better economic return, will not involve the writing -off of recently invested capital assets and will extend a transport service to large cohorts of citizens who currently are not served, and provide a guaranteed income stream

The population of Dublin South West is 280,000, larger than the population of Limerick, Galway and Waterford combined at 227,000. (The Red Line services the central Tallaght hub with links onward to City West i.e. a highly developed commercial location that the NTA accepts can be adequately serviced through a light-rail network). The positive impact of routing a Luas line westwards would be to provide service to the large currently un-serviced areas of Terenure, Rathfarnham, Firhouse, Knocklyon, Ballyboden and onwards through Jobstown and Fettercarne to Tallaght: thereafter further links can be made to Clondalkin (46,000) and Lucan (49,000). Major BusConnects opportunities for linkages to a Metrolink also exist here for this expanding population zone.

It is important to note that according to the planning for Cherrywood it is to be built as a town where residents will live and work rather than commute and, in any event, the current NTA Metrolink proposal is to terminate at Sandyford: *thereafter Cherrywood and Brides Glen will be serviced by a Luas link.*

Turning East at Stephens Green, the Metro can route to UCD, the largest University campus and the only one not serviced by a railway link. UCD has a current population mix, including residents, of 28,000 and it continues to expand on a campus roughly the size that Cherrywood will ultimately achieve over a decade. The Metro can then proceed to Sandyford and create a technology corridor linking UCD with the new generation businesses at Sandyford: a Luas link would continue to Cherrywood and Fassaroe.

23. Has consideration been given to these potential route options and if so can the relevant studies be made available for public information?

D. Luas Green Line Passenger Demand

The Metrolink Consultation Document says that there will be a need to service peak hour passenger levels of approximately 11,000 per hour northbound over the next two decades,

reaching 13,000 by 2057.

24. Could the NTA publish or make available the Key Assumptions and Model underpinning these projections?

The 55 metre trams have a carrying capacity of 379 passengers: if the all trams are 55 metres (6 at present) and run at a two-minute frequency, a capacity of 11,370 passengers per hour is achieved: The Upgrade document says that trams can run at a maximum interval of 2 and a half minutes but currently trams run at an average of 4 minutes at peak times, sometimes every two minutes (or less).

25. Since the 20-year projected demand could be met as above, at very little cost, could the NTA say exactly why this is not a viable solution?

There is clear evidence that a substantial volume of commuters use a mix of private cars and the Luas Green line to access the city centre on a daily basis. The congestion inside the Canals is avoided by driving and parking at Luas stations located outside of the controlled parking zones. This is rational consumer behaviour driven entirely by the deficit of public transport services particularly in the southern and western suburban areas.

26. Has the DTA completed an origination/destination study of passengers who currently use the Green Luas service? If so, could the details and results of this study be made available to the public?

Luas train seating arrangements are different to other major cities where, as in Dublin, substantial crowding can occur at peak hours.

27. Has the NTA considered reviewing the seating configuration (specifically the mix between standing and seating passenger accommodation) of the Luas trams to ensure that optimum passenger loads are achieved? Has Luas explored whether additional capacity would be achievable by installing seating on the Luas trams which runs parallel to the windows (as in the London Underground) rather than the current format. If so what were the results?

28. Is it the case that by virtue of planning to put the Metro on the Green line, it isn't possible to put larger trains into the Metro system? If so, is the additional capacity provided by the Metro limited by the proposal to build it over the Green line foundations? Has this limiting factor been considered in assessing the cost benefit analysis of the planned expenditure? Has this factor been considered in assessing the length of time for which the Metro might provide sufficient additional capacity?

E. Sustainable communities and success of Green Luas Line

The communities along the Green Luas Line have thrived with its implementation. The neighbourhoods and communities are permeable; they allow people to walk, cycle and drive to access services on both sides of the Luas track. The Luas track is viewed as a success from both providing sustainable and efficient transport services but also on its integration into the community. The proposed Metrolink consists of fenced off rail line with driverless trains built adjacent to nursing homes, schools, community centres, parks, homes and businesses. How is the impact during construction of such a massive rail line going to impact on adjacent communities in particular:

29. How is the impact on primary and secondary school children been assessed? (air pollution, noise, access, travelling each day, exams, disruption).
30. Has a traffic assessment being carried out in the wider Ranelagh/Canal/Milltown areas, as the project will divert significant number of vehicles onto main roads?
31. How will the safety of the cyclists be ensured on these roads which are used by large trucks and buses?

F. Consultation Process

The Ranelagh and Rathmines community has sought engagement with the NTA since May 2018 with regard to local concerns about MetroLink. No meeting has taken place.

32. Will the NTA agree to meet the residents represented in this submission in advance of the publication of the next NTA consultation document on the MetroLink?
33. Can the NTA identify the name and contact points for an individual in the NTA organisation who is accountable for liaising with local communities with regard to MetroLink issues?
34. As a public body, in the interests of equity and transparency can the NTA indicate the precise information channels it is using to promote the Metrolink project including specifically any Social Media initiatives that it is supporting either directly or indirectly?

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