



20th August 2013

Clarification on the Phoenix Park Tunnel Link included in the National Transport Authority's Draft Integrated Implementation Plan 2013-2018

Having published a Draft Integrated Implementation Plan, the National Transport Authority is seeking submissions from all interested parties including public transport operators and authorities.

Regarding the article in the Irish Times published today 20th August, the Authority wishes to note that the Draft Implementation Plan clearly identifies that the opportunity for delivering the DART Underground is to be protected for the future. In current economic circumstances, however, this project could not proceed during the period of the Plan, given that the overall cost of the full DART Underground programme would exceed €4 billion, although incorporating a significant quotient of private financing.

The DART Underground programme consists not only of a tunnel from Inchicore to the Docklands but also of a series of important individual projects which would aggregate to produce a completely connected commuter rail network for Dublin. The Authority has set out in the Draft Implementation Plan that planning and design work will be progressed on the electrification and re-signalling of the rail line from Malahide to Balbriggan, and of the Maynooth Line. Both these projects form part of the overall Dart Underground programme.

The Phoenix Park Tunnel link can only come into operation when additional train paths become available between Connolly and Grand Canal Dock stations. Currently, one of the key constraints on the rail network is the limitations on train paths through the city centre section. A very significant investment programme is already underway and will continue throughout the period of the Plan to upgrade signalling and turn-back facilities to accommodate an additional 8 train paths per direction per hour (up from 12 at present to 20) in the critical city centre area. To date, in excess of €50m has been invested by the State in signalling systems in Dublin area with substantial further investment included for in the Government's capital programme.

To gain as much benefit as possible from this signalling investment, new services patterns will be developed through Connolly station. Opening up the Phoenix Park Tunnel link provides one such opportunity to offer new and better services to commuters. The estimated cost of the appropriate Phoenix Park Tunnel capital works is in the order of €12m.

In summary, the Implementation Plan presents the Phoenix Park Tunnel link as an opportunity in the short term, at modest cost, to bring commuters from the west and south west to the city centre and the business district in the south of the city, availing of the very significant investment that the Government is making in rail signalling systems.