Thursday April 3rd 2014

Varadkar & Kelly set out 5 year NTA transport plan for Greater Dublin

Full steam ahead on Luas Cross City works – Phoenix Park tunnel set to re-open & new Bus Rapid Transit network gets go-ahead in principle

*Integrated Implementation Plan 2013-2018*

Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and Alan Kelly TD, Minister for Public and Commuter Transport, joined Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive of the National Transport Authority, to launch the Authority’s *Integrated Implementation Plan 2013-2018* at the construction site at the Rosie Hackett Bridge, which will take south-bound trams across the Liffey when the Luas Cross City opens for operations in 2017.

The *Integrated Implementation Plan* sets out the Authority’s programme of investment and development in the Greater Dublin Area (Dublin, Meath, Kildare, and Wicklow) for the next five years. It has been the subject of public consultation and has been statutorily approved by Minister Varadkar and now provides the framework for a capital and operational investment amounting to almost €900 million. Funding up to 2016 is included as part of the Government’s overall capital plan and funding for the remaining years of 2017 and 2018 will be addressed in the next national capital investment plan.

Key priorities in the *Plan* include the re-opening of the Phoenix Park Tunnel link to improve rail access for people travelling between Kildare and the city centre, the annual purchase of new buses to improve the experience of bus passengers, and of course, the delivery of Luas Cross City. Also, within the period of the *Plan* the proposed Bus Rapid Transit Network will be designed in detail and brought through the requisite statutory processes. Construction of Bus Rapid Transport is contingent on funding being made available in the next national capital investment plan.

Minister Varadkar said: “As the economy picks up again and traffic levels rise, it’s vital that we continue to invest in public transport to keep Dublin and the surrounding counties moving. A return to congestion could seriously undermine our recovery and stunt economic and employment growth as well as reducing our quality of life. This important plan shows how the Government will improve public transport through targeted investment, and by making better use of existing infrastructure. The plan shows that there is a lot that we can do, even when resources remain limited.

“I welcome the ongoing work by the NTA and Irish Rail on re-opening the Phoenix Park Tunnel to rail commuters. This has the potential to significantly improve rail commuter services from Kildare and the west and south west of the city. Buses are the most-cost effective way of moving people around the city, and we will do our best to renew and even expand the fleet in the coming years. Construction has started on Luas Cross City and I’m looking forward to seeing the Luas lines being finally joined up.”
Minister Kelly said: “This is the most comprehensive and realistic public transport plan for the Dublin area. It provides an integrated roadmap for public transport and outlines where we will be prioritising our investment. Over time we will see the simplification of fares, greater integration measures between bus, rail, light rail and cycling and significantly improve the public transport experience. It is highly ambitious with the long-term plan to improve rail services with the Phoenix Park tunnel, Bus Rapid Transit as well as comprehensive investment in the bus fleet. The public transport experience has improved significantly with the Leap card and real time passenger information apps – this plan will see us build on all that progress to date.”

Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive of the National Transport Authority said: “The National Transport Authority is very pleased that the Minister has approved a plan out to 2018 that will guide our activities and the targeting of investment funding.”

The Plan is not only about capital projects. It also sets out measures to improve services and charts a course for greater integration of all the modes of transport (bus, rail and light rail) through ticketing and fares, customer information, complementary services and improved accessibility.

It is fundamentally important for this scale of an investment programme that the inter-relationship between land use and transport provision is properly addressed. The Plan sets down key principles to guide the manner in which land is developed for residential and commercial purposes. It is vital that these principles underpin decisions taken by local authorities in relation to the land development expected to materialise on foot of the country’s recent economic stabilising measures.

The Integrated Implementation Plan focuses on four key areas to improve people’s travelling and commuting experiences in the region:

**Bus:**
- Investment in fleet, continuous programme of vehicle replacement
- Bus stop and bus shelter provision – improved and consistent quality of stops and shelters
- Bus network improvements – addressing bus lane deficiencies, traffic signal prioritisation
- Bus Rapid Transit – to move three schemes to planning approval and to commence construction as funds become available
- Local and Rural transport – restructuring and integration with other services.

**Light Rail**
- Luas Cross City – this new line, which will considerably improve the city’s public transport network is already under construction, and will be complete and operational during the timeframe of the Plan
- Fleet and Network enhancements – to improve capacity, integration and accessibility
- Award of new 5 year operating contract for Luas.

**Heavy Rail**
- City Centre re-signalling project – to facilitate more train trips through the central rail bottle-neck at peak periods
- Phoenix Park tunnel link
• Level crossing programme
• Station improvements.

Integration Measures and Sustainable Transport

• Cycle Network – significant investment across the region
• Safety measures for pedestrians and cyclists
• Integration – capital investment in projects such as:
  o Leap Card (enhancements and additional products)
  o Real Time Passenger Information (additional on-street displays, inclusion of commercial operators)
  o Journey Planner (enhancements including integration of cycle planner)
• Simplify fares across all operators, for the benefit of the travelling public. The Authority will maintain a significant differential between Leap Card payments and cash payments – whereby people will always enjoy a much cheaper fare with Leap.

The Authority sought the views of the public on the subject, when it ran a public consultation on the proposals between August 7th and September 4th, 2013. The consultation was advertised in the national media and was publicly accessible on the Authority’s website (www.nationaltransport.ie) and received over 90 submissions, on different aspects of the proposals, all of which were considered by the team before the final Plan was drafted for presentation to the Minister.

Investment Programme €m

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Editor Note:

Click here for the full text of the Integrated Implementation Plan 2013-2018 on the National Transport Authority’s website.
Copies of the associated environmental assessment documents are also available.