

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FROM ANNE GRAHAM

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GROWING DEMAND HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR BUS INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Addressing the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport Tourism and Sport, on 'A vision for public transport in the Greater Dublin Area'

The GDA Transport Strategy 2016-2035, approved by the Minister earlier this year, sets out how the vision for greater use of sustainable transport could be delivered by 2035 allowing also for a 29% increase in transport demand over that period.

The strategy outlines the heavy and light rail network, the core bus network as well as a supporting cycling network and other demand management measures that are necessary to ensure that 55% of the trips to work in 2035 are made by sustainable modes (up from 38% in 2011).

The cost of all the measures in the strategy is €10bn, which averages at €500m each year over the 20 year horizon of the strategy. Delivering these projects will accrue an overall benefit to cost ratio of 1.5 to 1. However the current capital funding for improvements to public transport are not at the levels required to meet the GDA Strategy goals. Approximately €350m is provided each year for the next three years for public transport across the state which includes the funding required for steady-state funding of the rail network across the full State. The Authority will shortly publish its statutory Draft Implementation Plan which will set out what can be delivered within the current financial envelope in the next six years.

Growth in Travel

Following a period of reduced transport usage and suppressed transport growth, both in relation to private car use and also public transport patronage, 2014 saw the start of a reversal of these trends. Public transport usage has increased for all modes since then – bus, Luas and commuter rail. Paralleling the changes in public transport, car travel has also increased across the Dublin region since 2014. Demand for travel is now on the increase and patronage on public transport is growing. To date in 2016, passenger numbers continue to grow with an estimated outturn growth of about 5% expected by the end of the year.

This trend of increased overall demand is expected to continue and accelerate with further economic recovery and population growth envisaged over the next 5 years.

It is unlikely that all such demands can be met within existing service provision and capacity, particularly within the City and urban networks where population growth will be highest, and where existing peak capacity is already well used.

What is being delivered now?

Over the next year, the following transport improvements will be delivered:

- Luas Cross City will commence services at the end of 2017;
- Trains services from the Kildare Rail Line linking with the City Centre through the Phoenix Park Tunnel have just commenced;
- A 10 minute DART service will be provided from early 2017; and
- Additional bus fleet will be acquired and additional capacity will be added on busy routes currently experiencing high passenger numbers in peak hours.

What will be delivered as part of the Capital Plan up to 2022?

- Some additional bus fleet and improvements in bus corridors;
- Design and planning for construction of New Metro North;
- Extension of DART to Balbriggan & designs for electrification of commuter sections of Kildare and Maynooth lines
- Redesign of DART Underground; and
- Construction of a new national train control centre.

However, the City region cannot wait for these projects to be delivered. Rail projects have a long lead-in time. Work must commence immediately on improvements to the bus infrastructure across the region in order to meet the growing demand and offer an attractive alternative to car drivers.

What needs to be delivered now?

- Accelerated development of bus lane provision on the Priority Bus Corridors forming the Core Bus Network;
- Further enhancement in terms of bus fleet numbers and bus services;
- Introduction of Bus Rapid Transit services on some high passenger volume bus routes;
- Provision of higher frequency and amended rail services on certain commuter routes into Dublin which requires investment in new rail carriages;
- Measures such as Park & Ride provision and fares initiatives; and
- Accelerated delivery of key elements of the cycling network.

Core Bus Network

There are sixteen bus corridors forming the Core Bus Network within the Dublin Region. These are set out in Fig. 1. These Priority Bus Corridors represent the key arteries of the bus system, with high frequency, multiple bus services using these routes. As such they form the cornerstone of the overall bus network for the region. Outside of the city centre, the overall length of these corridors amounts to about 174 kilometres, or 347 kilometres when each direction is considered separately.

Of these 347 kilometres, less than one third – 102 kilometres - have dedicated bus lanes. The remainder, approximately 70%, require buses to co-run with general traffic.

In order to improve the efficiency of the bus services on these routes, and improve journey time performance and overall competitiveness, it is important to sequentially address the bus lane

deficits on these routes and provide continuous bus lanes, to the extent practicable, along these key corridors.

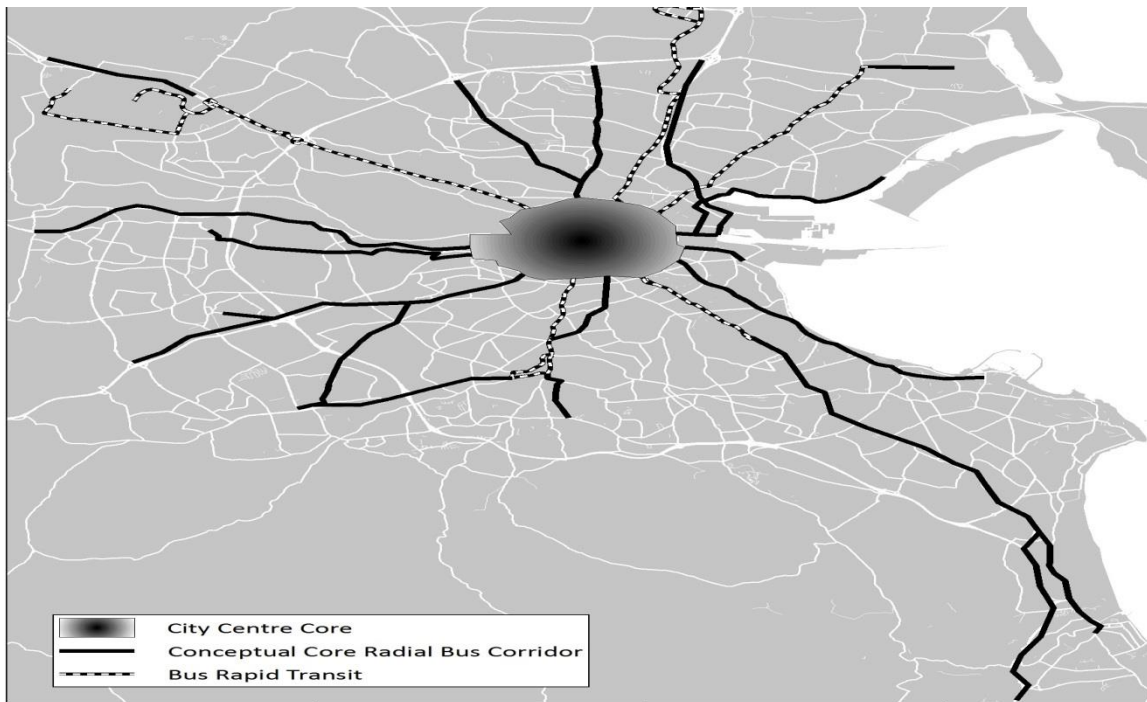


Figure 1: Priority Bus Corridors forming Core Bus Network

While five of these arteries are being designed to accommodate Bus Rapid Transit, the remaining eleven corridors will be addressed as conventional bus routes. Work has commenced on the design of the necessary improvements on all corridors and outline designs will be completed in early 2017. Detailed design and planning work must be carried out and provided for in capital funding so that construction of the improved infrastructure can commence in 2018/2019.

Commercial Bus Services

The licensed commercial bus industry supports 9% of all public transport journeys across the state and therefore plays an important role in meeting the travel demand across the Dublin city region. These services would also benefit from the improved bus corridor infrastructure. The Authority is also funding the provision of a Coach Park facility in Dublin 1 to alleviate the on-street parking of coaches in the city centre. Work is scheduled to commence on that project in early 2017.

In conclusion, demand for travel is growing rapidly and the public transport system must respond to that demand. While the Authority is planning for the infrastructure to meet this demand, the funding is not fully in place for its construction. An increasingly congested city has the potential to undermine the economic recovery that is taking place and stifle the provision of the housing and commercial developments that are required to sustain that growth.