**Direct Award of Public Service Obligation Contracts for Bus Services in rest of Ireland (outside Dublin Area) 2024-2029**

**The National Transport Authority** in exercise of the powers conferred on it by the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, as amended, having considered:

* the public submissions received in relation to this proposal, including from users of the services in question;
* the views of Bus Éireann, the operator of the direct award contract in question;
* that it had been previously satisfied (as required by section 52(6) in connection with its entry into the direct award contract with Bus Éireann due to expire in November 2024) in relation to the continued adequacy of the public bus services being provided under such contract being guaranteed in the general economic interest by such entry;
* section 52(5), Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 and the power conferred on the Authority to make alterations to elements of the direct award contract relating to the provision of services, following consultations with the relevant operator;
* the general objectives of the Authority which it is obliged to seek to achieve (in accordance with section 10 of the Act), including but not limited to:
* the development of an integrated transport system which contributes to environmental sustainability and social cohesion and promotes economic progress,
* the provision of a well-functioning, attractive, integrated and safe public transport system for all users,
* improved access to the transport system and, in particular, to public passenger transport services by persons with disabilities,
* increased use of the public transport system,
* regulated competition in the provision of licensed public bus passenger services in the public interest,
* value for money,
* the strategic importance of the public bus system for both regional and national economic performance and social cohesion and the role of the Direct Award contracts in protecting the continued adequacy of the public bus passenger services in the general economic interest, has decided and determined that:
1. it is satisfied that that the continued adequacy of the public bus services to which the direct award contract relates can only be guaranteed in the general economic interest by entering into a subsequent direct award contract; for the following reasons:
	1. The need for the Authority to retain assurance that depot space in the ownership and control of the incumbent operator and CIÉ (as parent company) remains available for operation of essential PSO services outside Dublin.
	2. To maintain a gradual opening of the PSO bus market outside Dublin that does not undermine the financial stability of the incumbent operator and that adequately protects the public good in the transition to competitively tendered contracts.
2. the Authority shall enter into a direct award contract (the “**2024 direct award contract**”) in accordance with section 52(6) of the Act to Bus Éireann;
3. the 2024 direct award contract to Bus Éireann will consist of two elements:
	1. the direct award of certain routes the five year period up to 30th November 2029; and
	2. allowance for the modification or removal during the contract lifetime of certain routes and/or replacement with other routes as the bus network evolves evolves such that the services are capped at mid-July 2023 levels based on service kms operated or vehicles operated.

The services in this direct award contract can be amended by the Authority at any time and these changes are not restricted by this decision.