



Fares

Determination

**Dublin Commuter Child zonal products and
Cash and Leap fares for all Operators
providing contracted public transport bus
services in Cork City & Suburbs**

July 2025

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1. Introduction

Background

The National Transport Authority (the Authority) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public transport services as outlined in the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008. The Act gives the Authority responsibility for setting public transport fares on contracted services.

November 2021 saw the implementation of the TFI 90 minute and “short” fares structure for Leap on bus, rail and Luas light rail services in the Dublin area. The TFI 90 minute fare is a vital element of the Dublin public transport network, eliminating penalties for transferring between public transport services across the Dublin network for those making a multi leg journey.

The shift in the economic landscape following the pandemic, led to a sharp increase in price inflation in Ireland, and led to the inclusion of a package of measures in the Government’s budget in late 2021 to mitigate the impacts of increasing cost of living expenses. Part of the package saw the implementation under the 2022 fares determination of the 20% cost of living fares reduction on all PSO services as well as the roll out of the Young Adult Leap Card Scheme which provides young people with an average 50% discount of equivalent Adult fares. These fare changes remain in place. Due to the complexity and urgency surrounding the introduction of these measures, other structural changes to PSO fares were deferred.

In 2023, the Authority published its National Fares Strategy. A key objective of the Strategy is to move to a more equitable and consistent structure for all PSO public transport across Ireland. The Fares Strategy requires that PSO bus and rail fares should increase in line with distance travelled in a relatively uniform manner regardless of route used or geographic location.

The 2024 determination included the implementation of the first phase of the new National Fare Strategy in the Dublin region. This formalised a new ‘Dublin City Zone’, extending to approximately 23 km from the centre of Dublin, encompassing the current area of validity of TFI 90 Leap Card travel (illustrated in Figure 1-1). It also introduced a new ‘Dublin Commuter Zone’ (extending from the outer edge of the Dublin City Zone to approximately 50 km from the centre of Dublin). New Leap daily, weekly, monthly and annual products were introduced facilitating travel across the Dublin commuter area and multi-modal travel within the ‘Dublin City Zone’. More recently in April 2025, the TFI-90 minute benefit was broadened so that the rail passengers commuting into Dublin from Commuter Zones can interchange to Dublin City Bus, Luas and eligible rail services within 90 minutes of tag on.

The implementation of the National Fare Strategy is ongoing with the Authority currently working towards the creation of ‘City Zones’ for each of the Regional Cities, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.



Figure 1-1 Dublin City and Commuter Zones

This Determination of Fares

This determination will introduce discounted child fares for the recently implemented Dublin Commuter Leap daily, weekly and monthly products. It will also address the price and structure of cash and Leap bus tickets and fares in Cork City & Suburbs. It will focus on the implementation of a new 90 minute fare supporting transfer between city bus services within Cork City & Suburbs which is expected to come into effect later in 2025. Further details are provided in the following sections of this report, including:

- **Chapter 2 Dublin Commuter Zone Child Fares:** outlines the determined child fares for the Dublin Commuter Leap zonal products;
- **Chapter 3 Cork City Bus:** outlines the fares for Cork City bus services along with details on the implementation of a new 90 minute ticket;
- **Chapter 4 National Fares Strategy:** provides an overview of the new National Fare Strategy and what it means for Cork.

2. Dublin Commuter Zone Child Fares

As outlined in Chapter 1, new multi-modal 1-day, 7-day, monthly and annual tickets were introduced in April and June of this year for bus and rail passengers in the 'Dublin Commuter Zone'. These products allow unlimited multi-modal travel within the zone purchased along with zones closer to the city centre (Figure 1-1 illustrates the Dublin Commuter Zones). They also include unlimited onward multi-modal travel within the 'Dublin City Zone'. As such, passengers on these products can also avail of Dublin City Bus, Luas and Rail services to travel across the 'Dublin City Zone' opening up a wider array of destinations than currently offered by existing products.

On implementation, these products were priced the same for both Young Adults and Children at 50% of the Adult fare. This determination sees the introduction of reduced Child fares for the 1-day, 7-day and monthly Leap zonal products. The new Child fares are outlined in Table 2-1 and Table 2-2 below for Bus & Rail and Bus only products, and have been set at approximately 33% the equivalent adult fare. This aligns with existing child discounts provided on 'Dublin City Zone' Leap fares and capping levels. The introduction of these reduced child fares will provide better value for regular travellers whilst also improving flexibility by facilitating onward travel across operators in the Dublin City Zone at no extra cost.

Table 2-1 Dublin Commuter Bus & Rail Zonal Products Child Fares

Zone	Child Daily	Child Weekly	Child Monthly
Zone 2 to Dublin City	€3.30	€10.60*	€46.20
Zone 3 to Dublin City	€4.60	€13.00**	€64.70
Zone 4 to Dublin City	€5.50	€22.20	€77.60

** For an interim period, the Zone 2 Child weekly Leap Bus & Rail product will be charged at €10.60. It is the Authority's intention that these fares will revert to the standard value of €13.20 in a future determination.*

*** It is the Authority's intention to deliver products for travel between the various Dublin Commuter Zones in a future determination. Once implemented, the price for this Child weekly product including travel within Dublin City (Zone 1) will increase to €18.50.*

Table 2-2 Dublin Commuter Bus Zonal Products Child Fares

Zone	Child Daily	Child Weekly	Child Monthly
Dublin City Zone	€1.95	€7.80	€31.70
Zone 2 to Dublin City	€3.05	€10.25*	€42.75
Zone 3 to Dublin City	€4.15	€10.25**	€57.75
Zone 4 to Dublin City	€4.90	€19.45	€68.25

** For an interim period, the Zone 2 Child weekly Commuter Bus Leap product will be charged at €10.25. It is the Authority's intention that these fares will revert to the standard value of €12.20 in a future determination.*

*** It is the Authority's intention to deliver products for travel between the various Dublin Commuter Zones in a future determination. Once implemented, the price for this Child weekly product including travel within Dublin City (Zone 1) will increase to €16.50.*

Due to technical limitations, this determination focuses on the introduction of reduced child fares on Dublin Commuter Leap zonal products. However, it is the Authority's intention to roll-out equivalent Leap single child fares (priced at 33% the equivalent adult fare) across the 'Dublin Commuter Zone' as part of future Fare Determinations and the wider implementation of the National Fare Strategy.

3. Cork City Bus Services

Introduction

The Authority in recent years set out their plans in relation to the rollout of the BusConnects programme across the country. This includes a redesign of the bus network in each of the major cities to provide an enhanced public transport service along with an advanced ticketing system and simplified fare structure.

The Authority has already begun the rollout of the BusConnects network in Dublin city. This has included the implementation of a 90 minute fare which allows travel on bus, Luas or DART or any combination of those three within 90 minutes of initial tag-on.

The Authority has launched the new bus network for Cork as part of the wider BusConnects programme, with the initial phases due for implementation during 2026, continuing into 2027. Dates are subject to operational readiness and funding. This determination focuses on the implementation of a simplified fare structure on Cork City buses, along with the introduction of a 90 minute fare, to support the BusConnects Cork network and encourage public transport usage.

Cork City Bus Leap Fares

Currently, there are two fare bands in operation within the regional cities. This includes a €1.35 Adult Leap single fare for shorter distance trips, and a higher €1.55 fare for longer distance trips on city services. These regional city fares have not experienced an increase since 2018, and in 2022, a 20% cost of living fares reduction was applied.

To simplify the ticket offering, and support the implementation of BusConnects, the Authority is rationalising the fares in Cork City to a flat fare for travel. The new Adult Single Leap flat fare is set at €1.70 and will be a 90 minute bus ticket. This will allow passengers to travel extensively across the Cork City bus network, with the added benefit of free onward transfer to Cork City bus services within 90 minutes of initial tag on. Due to technical limitations, initially the 90 minute fare will only apply for transfers on the Cork City bus network¹ with the intention to extend to the Cork commuter rail network as soon as possible.

Following the Government's announcement in Budget 2022, a new Young Adult fare came into effect at 50% of the equivalent adult fare. This discount will be retained in this determination, and as a result, the Young Adult Leap single flat fare is set at €0.85. This will also be a 90 minute fare allowing free onward travel on Cork City bus services.

The Authority recognises the need to encourage the uptake and regular use of sustainable forms of transport amongst our younger generations. There is currently a single Child Leap flat fare for travel within the Regional Cities. For Cork, the Child flat fare will be set at €0.55 with the added benefit of free onward travel on Cork City bus services within 90 minutes of initial tag on. This provides excellent value for children and aligns with the pricing of child products in the 'Dublin City Zone' (i.e. approximately 33% of the Adult fare). Budget 2025 contains a measure to provide free access to public transport services (PSO) for children aged five to eight years old which is scheduled for implementation in the second half of 2025.

Cork City Bus Cash Fares

Similar to Leap, this determination will introduce a single flat cash fare on Cork City buses for adults and children. The existing discount between cash and Leap will be retained. In general, Leap fares are 30% cheaper than the cash equivalent within Cork city. The Adult cash single flat fare is determined at €2.40 with

¹ The full list of bus routes where the 90 minute fare will apply is provided in Appendix A.

the child fare set at a price of €0.80. The cash products will not be able to avail of the 90 minute offer that is available on Leap.

Cork City Bus Prepaid Tickets

Zonal period tickets will continue to be made available for travel on Cork City bus services. At present prepaid 1-day, 7-day, monthly and annual products are available on Leap in the Cork City Red Zone offering better value for regular passengers. There is no proposed change to period tickets in this determination.

The Authority does intend to implement a revised zonal structure for public transport tickets and fares in the Cork City, Suburbs and Commuter area in the future. The new zonal structure will be consistent with the National Fares Strategy and there is the intention to provide an integrated multi-modal ticket. This is expected to result in the introduction of two zonal areas for period tickets, a Cork City Zone and Cork Commuter Area (further details are provided in Chapter 4).

Cork Commuter Stage Carriage Leap and Cash Fares

With the introduction of the flat 90 minute fare on Cork City bus services at €1.70, some adjustments are required to fares on Stage Carriage routes entering Cork City. This is to avoid instances where passengers can travel on Stage Carriage services within Cork City for cheaper than on City bus services. As a result, fares on Stage Carriage services entering Cork City will be capped at a minimum of the '9-10' stage band fare i.e. Adult Leap Single of €1.82². This essentially means that €1.82 is the minimum Adult Leap Single fare that a passenger can avail of if travelling within Cork City on Stage Carriage routes. The equivalent '9-10' stage band fares will also apply for existing cash products². Fares on Stage Carriage routes in Cork will be reviewed as part of the wider roll-out of the National Fare Strategy in future Fare Determinations.

² Full details on the Stage Carriage fares are provided in Appendix F of the 2024 Fares Determination Report (<https://www.nationaltransport.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2023-Fares-determination-v4.6.pdf>)

4. National Fares Strategy

Introduction

Following the development and implementation of a new and simplified fares structure for Dublin, which combines elements of distance and equitability between routes, the Authority have developed an approach for the rest of Ireland that will deliver to both political and commercial aspirations around better value, greater transparency and equality in respect of journey distance.

Reason for Change

The existing fare structures in operation on Public Service Obligation (PSO) services are not always equitable, consistent or easy to understand for passengers. Key issues include:

- The fare charged for similar distance trips can vary considerably depending on the journey and location in Ireland.
- Fares are often calculated by route travelled, or corridor used instead of crow fly distance, penalising people who have to take indirect routes to reach their destination.
- There are no obvious rules for how bus fares are generated in many areas. For example, PSO bus fares are frequently lower where alternative commercial bus services are available.
- Intercity Rail fares currently vary by route, which can be difficult for passengers to understand. There are also large variations in fare at the boundary between Intercity and Commuter services.

This lack of understanding and consistency can lead to passenger frustration, particularly where someone feels they are being overcharged for their journey.

Fare Strategy Objectives

In order to resolve these issues, the Authority have developed a National Fare Strategy for Ireland with the following key objectives:

- **Equitable** - the cost of travel shouldn't vary unduly depending on the route taken, or location in the country.
- **Consistent** – the cost per km travelled shouldn't vary unduly, and should be related to straight line distance between the origin and destination of the journey, rather than the route taken.
- **Easy to understand** – related to consistency, customers should be able to understand the fare they are being charged and how it relates to the journey they are making.

This, in principle would not only alleviate worries about the discrepancies in fares, it could also encourage passengers/non-users to use public transport more, by implementing a fairer and easier to understand structure.

National Fare Structure

The guiding principle of the National Fares Structure is that your fare will comprise two elements, a boarding charge plus an incremental fare based on the distance of the journey:

$$\text{Fare} = \text{Boarding Charge} + \text{Distance Based Fare}$$

What is a boarding charge?

The boarding charge represents a fixed fee which is applied to your journey regardless of the distance. It is a common element in fare structures across the world and allows for flexibility in ticket pricing and variation by service or mode if required. It represents the cost elements such as labour and vehicles which are not variable.

Other transport modes take a similar approach, such as taxis, where a flat fare is charged once you get in and then the fare increases based on the distance travelled.

What is a Distance Based Fare?

In addition to the fixed boarding charge, an incremental fare will be applied based on the distance travelled. This will be graduated into 10km distance bands for ease of implementation in the existing ticketing environment.

The calculated distance for the journey will be based on the straight line distance (or ‘as the crow flies’) between origin and destination stops/ stations regardless of the route taken.

What does this mean for me?

For journeys by rail or by bus under the National Fare Structure, you may be charged a different fare compared with what you’re currently paying. This fare will be calculated depending on how far you’re travelling, but this is ‘as the crow flies’, so you won’t be punished if your train or bus takes a longer route to get to your destination. As the fare is also based on distance travelled, you will be charged a comparable fare to other journeys of a similar distance across the network. It will also allow us to look at how we can better price journeys that require interchange.

Benefits of the National Fare Structure

The implementation of the National Fare Structure is intended to bring many benefits, including:

- Fairer structure with consistency for journeys of a similar distance;
- Significantly reduce the variability in fares charged and anomalies across the network;
- Clear structure that is easy to understand and allows passengers to work out their fare;
- Simplified fare structure for implementing fare determinations and changes;
- Significantly reduces existing boundary issues between national and commuter fare structures; and
- Flexible fare structure which can be tweaked to support a growing public transport network and demand, or adjusted to reflect changes in wider policy.

Future Cork Commuter Fare Structure

The Authority is working towards the implementation of the National Fare Structure to all trips across Ireland outside of the cities and main towns. In order to reduce fare inconsistencies when transitioning to city fares, a variation of the National Fare Structure will be applied for identified commuter areas. Work is ongoing to prepare for the implementation of the National Fare Structure within the Cork Commuter Area.

It is expected that two zones of travel will apply across the Cork City, Suburbs and Commuter areas. An indicative map of these zones is illustrated in Figure 4-1 and they are described as:

- It is expected that the Cork City Zone ticket will apply to all Cork City bus services, including routes that extend slightly beyond the 'Cork City Zone'. A list of all current Cork City bus services is included in Appendix A. The implementation of the National Fares Structure will result in changes in public transport tickets and fares on Public Service Obligation (PSO) services operating in the Cork City, Suburbs and Commuter Area, on both bus and rail.

Further information on future changes to public transport tickets and fares will be included in subsequent Fare Determination Reports.

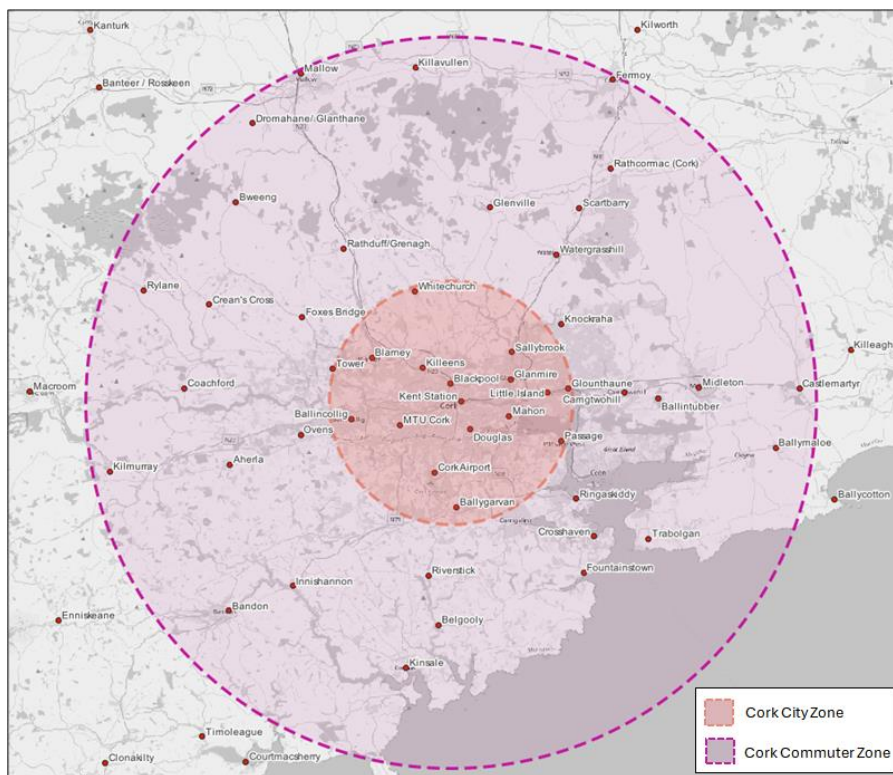


Figure 4-1 Map of Cork City and Commuter Zones

Appendix A – Cork City Bus Services

Table A-2 lists the Cork City bus services for which the new fare structure will apply. The new Leap fares will allow passengers to travel extensively across the Cork City bus network, with the added benefit of free onward transfer to any of the listed Cork City bus services within 90 minutes of initial tag on. Due to technical limitations, initially the 90 minute fare will only apply for transfers on the Cork City bus network with the intention to extend to the Cork commuter rail network as soon as possible. The cash products will not be able to avail of the 90 minute offer that is available on Leap. As and when Cork Bus Connects Network Redesign route changes are implemented, 90 minute fares will apply to the city based bus services in that network.

Table A-1 2025 Fare determination Cork City bus services fare tables

Cork City Bus Services – Leap fare						
Passenger Type	Ticket Type	Fare / Product Type	Current Fare	NTA Approved Product	NTA Approved Fare	NTA Approved % Change
Adult	Standard Zone	Leap	€1.35	90 minute	€1.70	25.9%
Adult	Higher Zone	Leap	€1.55			9.7%
Young Adult	Standard Zone	Leap	€0.65	90 minute	€0.85	30.8%
Young Adult	Higer Zone	Leap	€0.80			6.2%
Child	Flat fare	Leap	€0.65	90 minute	€0.55	-15.4%

Cork City Bus Services – Cash single						
Passenger Type	Ticket Type	Fare / Product Type	Current Fare	NTA Approved Product	NTA Approved Fare	NTA Approved % Change
Adult	Standard Zone	Cash	€1.90	Cash single	€2.40	26.3%
Adult	Higher Zone	Cash	€2.20			9.1%
Child	Flat fare	Cash	€0.90	Cash single	€0.80	-11.1%

Table A-2 List of Cork City bus services operated by Bus Éireann under Public Service Obligation (PSO) contract with the National Transport Authority

Route Number	Route Description
31	Parnell Place – Knockraha
201	Cork University Hospital (CUH) – Boherboy Road
202	Hollyhill – Mahon Point
202A	Hollyhill – Mahon Point
203	Manor Farm – Parklands
205	Munster Technological University (MTU) – Kent Station
206	Grange – South Mall
207	Donnybrook – Glenheights
207A	Glenthorn – Merchants Quay
208	Ashmount – Curraheen
209	Lotamore – St. Patrick Street
209A	Connolly Road – City Centre
212	Kent Station – Mahon Point
213	Black Ash – St. Patrick Street
214	Cork University Hospital (CUH) – Glyntown
215	Mahon Point – Cloghroe
215A	Mahon Point – South Mall
216	Cork University Hospital (CUH) – Monkstown
219	Munster Technological University (MTU) – Mahon Point
220	Ovens – Fort Camden
220A	South Mall – Fountainstown via Carrigaline
220X	Ovens – Crosshaven
223	South Mall – Haulbowline
223X	South Mall – Haulbowline
225	Kent Station – Haulbowline
225L	Carrigaline – Haulbowline