**Minutes of Special Board Meeting**

**Held in NTA Offices, Smithfield and via Video Conference - Monday 20th July 2026**

**Board Members in attendance**
Mr Peter Strachan (Chairperson), Ms Anne Shaw (CEO), Mr Hugh Creegan (Deputy CEO), Mr Brian McCormick, Mr Richard Shakespeare (CEO of Dublin City Council), Mr Eddie Doyle, Mr Bernard McLoughlin, Mr David Holohan, Mr Iain Docherty, Ms Joyce Loughnan, Ms Eleanor O'Neill.

**Others in attendance**

All Items: Mr Philip L'Estrange, Director of Finance & Corporate Services; Ms Mary Darcy, Head of Metro Investment; Mr Richard Kelly, Higher Executive Officer (Minutes); Mr Gerard Cuddihy, Head of Governance - Chief Risk Officer; Mr Paul Innes, Grant Thornton.

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1. **Declarations of Interest**

a) **Declarations of Interest**

None

2. **MetroLink Approval Gate 2 (Approval to Tender)**

The Chairperson gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting which is consider the advancement of the MetroLink project and provide the NTA's recommendation to the Department of Transport in relation to the granting of Approval Gate 2 (AG2) for MetroLink which permits the scheme to proceed to the tender stage.

Mr. Docherty briefed the Board on the extensive consideration by the Capital Programme Committee of the Detailed Business Case for MetroLink and the assurance process that had been undertaken in respect of the MetroLink AG2 documentation. In addition to documentation reviews and meetings with the relevant people involved in the assurance process, Capital Programme Committee members had also separately engaged directly with senior management members of the company that had been carrying out the assurance work - Grant Thornton – to obtain first-hand feedback of MetroLink's readiness to go to tender. Mr. Docherty had also contacted the chairperson of the Strategic Review Panel, an expert advisory group established for the MetroLink project, to establish the views of the Panel in relation to the status and progression of MetroLink.

Mr. Hines gave an overview of the work carried out by Grant Thornton as part of their assurance task. A comprehensive summary of the assurance process had been provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. The Grant Thornton review team comprised of accredited assurance professionals and subject matter experts, operating to defined Lines of Inquiry across five core areas which were aligned to the Infrastructure Guidelines, Transport Appraisal Framework and the NTA

Project Approval Guidelines. The review examined whether the assertions provided in the AG2 submission were robust, had been effectively challenged and assured, tested for completeness, were justified by supporting evidence and developed in line with industry recognised practice.

The assurance review identified a set of 14 findings, linked to the Lines of Inquiry. In response to the assurance findings, the MetroLink Executive developed a targeted Action Plan to address the 14 findings with a number of the findings already closed out. Grant Thornton informed the Board that, based on the process undertaken, they were satisfied that an approval with conditions could be given in respect of AG2, with the key condition being that the remaining items in the Action Plan be completed prior to the authorisation of issue of the tender documents for the main construction contracts. The Board also noted that this was the recommendation of the NTA Executive.

A separate cost verification process had been carried out by AECOM to independently check the cost estimate for key sample components of the project in addition to benchmarking the top cost drivers on the project. That verification work aligned very closely with the cost estimating work undertaken by the MetroLink team.

The Board discussed the project information provided in the Detailed Business Case, the assurance documentation prepared for this decision point and the assurance findings. Specific areas of discussion included the project's estimated costs, contingency allowances, key risks, contracting strategy, readiness of the MetroLink client team, proposed governance structure, lessons learned on other projects, industry capacity and project schedule.

The Board, in particular, highlighted the need for an appropriate governance structure that could successfully deliver what will be largest transport infrastructure project in the State, and identified that the current proposals would need to be further amended to fulfil that objective.

Following detailed discussion and questions from Board members, the Board resolved to recommend to the Department of Transport that authorisation is granted for the project to proceed to tender (Approval Gate 2) subject to a number of conditions which are sent out below:

- **Condition 1:** *Action Plan arising from Assurance Process:*
  That the MetroLink Executive address, to the satisfaction of the NTA, the outstanding assurance findings in accordance with the defined Action Plan and the associated NTA conditions pertaining to that Action Plan.

- **Condition 2:** *Establishment of Delivery Body:*
  That the Statutory Delivery Body should be fully established with the CEO appointed and in post prior to the award of the first of the main M400/M500 contracts.

- **Condition 3:** *Clear Governance Structure:*
  That the governance arrangements should be strengthened to provide a clear decision-making structure, with a well-defined delineation of responsibilities between the NTA and the Department of Transport. Within the P80 cost and P80 schedule envelopes, the governance structure should provide a simplified, single-tier approval framework above the delivery body.

- **Condition 4:** *Multi Annual Funding Confirmation:*
  That a multi-annual funding arrangement for the programme is in place, including provision for advance/enabling works prior to the commencement of the award of the first of the main contracts at Approval Gateway 3, with such arrangement ensuring sufficient flexibility for large potential funding transfers across years to address expenditure timing issues.

- **<u>Condition 5:</u>** *Staffing Recruitment Confirmation:*
  That staffing resourcing decisions for MetroLink are delegated to the delivery body, enabling the recruitment of the required staff at the relevant market rates, without requiring further central Government approval, and subject to no employee exceeding the MetroLink Programme Director / Chief Executive pay level.

In reaching its decision, the Board also noted the potential implications of the MetroLink project for the wider NTA capital investment programme and the need to consider these impacts in the context of overall investment prioritisation and funding availability.

**3. <u>AOB</u>**

None.

**Next Meeting: Thursday 24th September 2026 at NTA HQ @ 11.30hrs.**

Signed: _____ Date: _____
**Chairperson**