**Dublin Bus**

**College Green Public Consultation**

**Submission Document**

**23rd May 2016**

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**Dublin Bus Submission to Public Consultation**

# **Context**

* Dublin Bus believes it is possible to improve our customer experience and facilitate an improved public realm in Dublin city centre. However significant commitment will be required by all stakeholders to achieve this goal.
* In the context of the College Green proposals, an enhanced customer experience for Dublin Bus customers will include an improved civic space, an enhanced urban living environment, an increase in retail and social opportunities and an increase in the use of sustainable means of transport.
* Frequency and reliability are key drivers of our customer experience and must be enhanced and complimented by the use of sustainable vehicles (hybrid/electric), improved stop infrastructure, improved bus journey times and enhanced network integration and access to key trip generators.
* Dublin Bus continues to proactively support the economic and social wellbeing of the city centre, which must continue to thrive for all stakeholders; business and citizen alike. Public transport is a key requirement in achieving this aim and failure to do so will seriously undermine the growth potential of Dublin city centre.
* The current College Green proposals differ significantly from the original Dublin city centre Transport Study proposals for the area. Given the nature of the changes and the potential positive impact if all elements are implemented in a planned and integrated manner, we believe a fully integrated Dublin city centre transport plan should be agreed. This will ensure that full consideration is taken from the outset of the totality of the plan and not be impacted by perhaps necessary but negatively impacting concessions during transition.

# **Summary**

* Dublin Bus is the largest public transport service provider in Ireland, carrying two thirds of all passengers into Dublin city centre. We operate in every community in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).
* With 122 million passengers in 2015, our services move Dublin, helping the city’s workers, visitors, tourists and residents get to where they need to go safely and on time. We are a progressive, modern, flexible and cost-efficient operator delivering value for money to Dublin and its economy.
* College Green is a corridor of strategic importance for public transport and economic activity in Dublin. 82 million of our customers benefit from the College Green bus gate annually.
* We welcome the proposed shift away from private car use towards other more sustainable modes of transport.
* Over the lifetime of the **Dublin city centre Transport Study (2015-2023)** the bus will be the key facilitator if we are to achieve the stated target of an additional 42,000 morning peak journeys taking place on public transport (a 20% increase on 2015 figures) by 2017.
* Significant progress has been made over the past 5 years in achieving real movement in modal shift from private car to sustainable modes of transport. Given the benefits of the College Green bus gate, improved bus operating speeds, use of technology and service delivery, customers crossing the canal cordon at peak commute times by bus has increased by 12.4%. During this time private car use has dropped 10.9%.
* In order to achieve the proposed modal shift, additional public transport infrastructure and on street priority must be made available. Public Transport must be and be seen to be a real alternative to private car use.
* In order to build on the creation of a sustainable city centre and to further enhance the use of public transport, the promotion and use of more environmentally friendly buses using hybrid and electric technology should be pursued.
* Simplifying the road network at the front of Trinity College is a welcome move and will result in a more fluid traffic environment.
* The initial College Green proposals pose some significant challenges for Dublin Bus:
  + Current proposals are likely to have a considerable impact on journey times, predictability of journey times and our ability to provide a reliable and efficient service to customers.
  + Issues such as bus stop capacity (both on road and pavement), the lack of road space along Parliament St. and Capel St. Bridge and the impact of displaced traffic from the city’s quays are all areas of concerns for Dublin Bus.
  + More detailed information, especially modelling, is required to ensure these proposals are viable.
  + There will be an over reliance on the north and south quays for road based public transport with many competing elements.
  + The frequency and reliability of the bus network will be undermined if existing journey speeds and consistency of through travel times in the core city centre are not maintained.

# **Overview**

As Ireland’s largest public transport provider, with 61% of all public transport trips taken into the Dublin city centre on bus. Dublin Bus is a lifeline to the city itself, of crucial importance to the transport network of the city and the GDA.

The City centre Transport Strategy (2015) highlights this fact and cites how the “bus is currently transporting five times more people than travel by Luas, and over twice as many as rail”. Furthermore, the bus is the primary mode of transport to work for those already living in the “core city centre” area.

The results show that the main mode of transport used by shoppers to and from the city centre is the bus**;** with four in ten (42%) travelling by this mode. It also states that bus users account for 39% of spending in the city centre, rail and Luas users account for 20%, and car users account for 18%.

The above demonstrates the importance of the bus as a mode of transport in delivering retail spend into the city centre. It is crucially important that the College Green proposals meet the economic and social needs of a growing city, a growth which will only be achieved through an increases use of public transport.

The next 20 years will see significant economic and infrastructural development in Dublin. The recently approved NTA Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 notes projected growth of 27% in the GDA over the life of the plan and the importance of the bus’ role in delivering this growth.

In addition, the construction of the National Children’s Hospital, the DIT move to Grangegorman, Docklands regeneration, the development of Dublin Port and of outer urban areas; overall growth across Dublin will require a significant modal shift to be achieved in a relatively short space of time. This period will also see significant population growth. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) population forecasts that two thirds of Ireland’s expansion will be centred on the GDA. In real terms, this means that the population of Dublin could increase by 14,000 per year with a greater proportion of people living in the GDA and proportionately fewer living in other regions.

This presents both challenges and opportunities for the GDA. It is vital for Dublin Bus and the city’s economy that strategic transport hubs like College Green, and the city as a whole remain attractive locations for both employment and leisure activities.

One of the key strengths of bus is the proven ability to quickly adapt and accommodate additional customer demand in a way that no other transport mode can. This is due to the ability to be flexible with the addition of extra services and increase of route capacity when necessary. In terms of modal shift, we can facilitate a required increase in journeys and the capital cost of doing so is a fraction of that for other forms of transport.

Dublin Bus recognises this is a unique opportunity to improve a historic space in our city centre. As an integral part of Dublin, we fully support the concept of improving the attractiveness of our city centre.

It is in the context of an improved public realm that Dublin Bus can offer real and significant change to the shared city centre space.

# **College Green Proposals**

The College Green proposals envisage an improved environment and public realm and combined with the objective of changing mobility within the key city centre area. Dublin Bus has a key role to play in this.

The required modal split both on completion of the proposals and over the next 20 years will greatly move in favour of pedestrian, cyclist and public transport, of which bus is and will remain by far the largest. This is a huge shift that can only be achieved by making each mode more attractive than the car. Building on the College Green improvements for pedestrian and cyclist, the proposals must make public transport attractive and viable in the city centre.

The plans do allow clear priority measures for the LUAS XC line and improvements by removing the traffic flow to and from Dame St. in the vicinity of Trinity College, however there is a clear compromise for bus passengers in relation to the redirected flows away from the plaza and in the relocation of bus stops.

Using the percentage breakdown for the 2015 Cordon Count Survey (inbound peak period):

* Cycling 5.4%
* Pedestrian 9.4%
* LUAS 6.3%
* Bus 28.8% (58% of all PT)
* Rail 14.8%
* Other (other inc Car) 35.3%[[1]](#footnote-1)

Despite the vast difference in passenger numbers: between St Stephens Green and Parnell Square, with existing infrastructure provision Dublin Bus routes can only stop 3 times compared to 4 times for the LUAS.

All of this places the bus at a disadvantage compared to the current position, especially when considering the fact that the projected growth and modal shifts will require greater capacity and that bus is the only mode that covers the entire city.

While the priority measures in the proposals go some way to restoring the balance, the following measures will enable the bus to contribute positively to the core city centre:

* **Air Quality:** removing general traffic through College Green will enhance the amenity of the area. As vehicle technology moves towards the provision of electric buses, funding should be committed in the short term to allow trials of the vehicles and infrastructure to ensure that Dublin can leverage the College Green plaza gains to become a leader in green sustainable transport over the coming years. Buses operating in the vicinity of College Green would benefit in the first instance from the new technology.

This is consistent with DCC’s aim of Dublin transitioning to a low carbon sustainable city while improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions and noise pollution. It also assists in the national deficit in greenhouse gas usage.

In relation to diesel emissions it is found that, on average, exhaust emissions from buses increase by 4% per 1kph drop in average speed. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the highest possible route efficiency is attained in the restructuring of routes. Increased idling time within the confines of Parliament Street and the quays are also a concern in terms of emissions and noise.

* **Noise and Vibration:** the current standard for drive by noise for urban buses is 80dBA and all Dublin Bus vehicles are certified to this level. Average sound levels from hybrid electric buses is approximately 4 to 5dB (A) lower than diesel buses i.e. the sound level is more than halved. The increase in buses using Parliament Street may lead to greater vibration levels with the increased congestion and close proximity to shops and restaurants depending on traffic volume.
* **Cycling:** mapping bus stop locations with bike facilities (Dublin Bikes, Storage facilities etc.) will encourage a synergy between the modes that will also assist in addressing the impact of the changes on bus routings.
* **Journey times:** the relative lack of bus stopping locations is a by-product of these changes. We would encourage particular attention to the remaining stop locations with a view to turn this into a positive attribute by increasing journey speeds through the city centre. This will involve more priority measures over time, without which the required reliability to achieve modal shift will not be achieved and congestion will monopolise the capacity gains made in other areas. We feel that a target network speed of 20kmph within the canal cordon should be sought for Dublin Bus services. Current network speeds are in the order of 13kmph at peak times.

Whilst the above may be ambitious, it is no less so than the proposals for College Green and the opportunity now exists to make provisions for the current and future bus facilities arising from the displacement of buses from Dame Street and College Green.

The sheer scale of the proposed changes means compromise is required to develop a plan that benefits the city, its stakeholders and residents. Dublin Bus has fully engaged with DCC and the NTA and we will continue to work with them and other stakeholders to ensure a progressive plan for College Green. It is in the context of a constructive appraisal of the scheme that Dublin Bus makes the following specific observations to the details published.

# **Analysis of the Impact of College Green Proposals on Dublin Bus Services and Customers**

These proposals contain both positives and negatives for Dublin Bus and our customers. College Green is a corridor of crucial importance to Dublin Bus and 82 million of our customers travel to/through the city centre. As such the proposals have a very significant impact on our services requiring the rerouting of 40 bus routes in the core city centre area.

In the context of positive changes, we welcome the proposed changes to the following:

* All northbound bus routes via Dawson St. benefit from a more direct routing returning to their original direct route following a diversion via Westmoreland Street and Pearse Street.
* The reduction of general traffic, specifically in the area of Westmoreland St. and D'Olier Street make this alignment favourable and it is proposed to reintroduce some routes to this alignment from their current Georges Street alignment (Routes 14,15, 140 and 142).
* The simplification of the road network at the front of Trinity College with the removal of access to Dame Street will result in fewer traffic signal delays and improved journey times.
* The additional bus priority measures whilst necessary, should be seen in the overall context of improving public transport in the city centre and encouraging a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of travel.

Equally there are some concerns, the most significant being:

* The rerouting of services that currently serve Dame Street and the proposed alternative bus stop locations associated with these moves will cause significant disruption for our customers.
* The lack of bus stop capacity (both on road and on pavement) on both quays to deal with the increased number of buses, pedestrians and increased dwell times at the stops.
* Potentially increased journey times for our customers due to a more circuitous route across the Liffey and onto O’Connell Street. This will particularly affect Routes 9, 16, 65/b, 83 and 122, which between them carry almost 13million passengers each year and may also have an impact on vehicle emissions on these routes.
* Impact on journey times of existing bus services that currently use the north and south quays.
* Current proposals will also affect Dublin Bus commercial services, which are an important part of Dublin’s tourism sector serving 2 million domestic and international passengers annually across sightseeing and cultural tours and Airlink services.
* Access to our services for customers with disabilities is a key requirement for the Dublin Bus network. Removing a large number of cross city routes from the core Dame Street/Trinity/Westmoreland Street axis will result in many customer journeys being less accessible and must be mitigated as much as possible.

The current proposals will have a significant impact on journey times, bus speeds and our ability to provide a reliable service to our customers unless the specific mitigation measures outlined in the plan are fully implemented.

# **Mitigation Measures**

Dublin Bus has been engaged in discussion with DCC and the NTA on these proposals, and a range of measures has been developed that will mitigate the impact of these changes. These measures include:

* Additional bus lanes on the North and South Quays – to allow space for the increased number of bus stops required to service the route changes.
* Bus Gate at Eden Quay to reduce through traffic on the quays and accommodate the increase in buses routed through the quays under the proposals.
* New bus only traffic movements and bus facilities on Capel Street Bridge and O’Connell Bridge along with changes to Parliament Street to accommodate the rerouted buses.

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# **Modelling**

The proposals are incumbent on the outcomes of detailed modelling and design supporting the assumptions made in the initial proposal. In the absence of this detail Dublin Bus must raise the areas of specific concern that we believe are fundamental to the workability of the scheme:

* Capacity of Parliament Street and Capel Street Bridge and associated signal timings to accommodate the displaced buses from Dame St. We are concerned that the relative lack of road space along this routing will not allow sufficient buses through to meet the service demands. This is important in the context of growth and modal shift referred to earlier. An associated concern is the difficult manoeuvres into and out of Parliament Street for some of the routes involved.
* The impact of displaced traffic from the quays. Whilst some reduction is likely, there will be a significant shift to other routes as a result of the traffic management measures proposed. Our concern is that whilst measures will assist in allowing buses to traverse the city centre, congestion will increase on the outskirts of the core city resulting in as much or more congestion and delays to our services. A reduction in route speeds would lead to increased exhaust emissions from buses.

# **Conclusion**

It is imperative that DCC and the NTA provide the necessary infrastructure and priority measures to ensure that journey times and reliability of the Dublin Bus network are improved.

Any weakening of the current bus network will reduce frequency and reliability, diminishing our existing customer experience and subsequent passenger journey levels. Furthermore, our ability to continue to attract car users to public transport modes will be undermined.

This scheme cannot and should not be considered in isolation, the City centre Transport Strategy has further proposals on traffic restrictions along with increasing bus capacity. In addition, longer term growth and changes to the transport network requires that some flexibility is available to accommodate future changes.

As this proposal goes to public consultation it is necessary to consider that the measures outlined above are fundamental to the success of the scheme, and may need to be strengthened depending on modelling and design predictions. Any dilution of the specific measures, in our view, render the proposals unworkable from a public transport point of view.

Dublin Bus recognises that a vibrant Dublin city centre is important for its citizens and its stakeholders alike. Recent events have highlighted how Dublin City could benefit from increased public transport priority and increased public realm activities. In particular the Easter Commemorations and subsequent activities on Easter Sunday and Monday indicated what is possible within the confines of our city. With limited road infrastructure available, increasing public transport use and providing reasons for travel will only serve to enhance Dublin’s reputation as a modern European capital city.

Finally, we thank Dublin City Council and the National Transport for the opportunity to engage in the process.

1. Dublin City Council/National Transport Authority cordon count survey [↑](#footnote-ref-1)