

**Joe Costello. Labour Party Spokesperson on Urban Regeneration**

**Submission to Transport Infrastructure Ireland**

**Proposed Metrolink**

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Metrolink is an ambitious public transport project connecting Sandyford in South County Dublin with Estuary in North County Dublin and linking up through interchanges with the Mainline rail at Phibsborough, with the Luas at O'Connell St and the DART at Tara St. The route is 26 kilometres in length and the cost is estimated at €3 billion over a period of some ten years construction. Undoubtedly, the project has many difficulties to surmount as the Emerging Preferred Route(EPR) runs through the heart of some of the most densely populated areas of the City.

I propose to confine my remarks to the section of the Metrolink which traverses my constituency of Dublin Central from Griffith Avenue to the River Liffey. Thanks to Transport Infrastructure Ireland(TII) I have had the opportunity of putting the relevant sections of the EPR on display in my office in Phibsborough for two days on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May and of listening to a wide variety of opinion from constituents who came to view and make submissions.

### **Griffith Park**

The location of the Tunnel Boring Machine(TBM) in the playing fields of Na Fianna GAA club for six to seven years of the tunnel boring and construction works has hit the whole of Drumcondra like a bombshell. It would deny thousands of children and young people access to the playing pitches of the club. It would have a similar effect on the footballers of the adjacent Home Farm soccer club. The local schools of Scoil Caitriona and Scoil Mobhi would be hugely discommoded.

Mobhi Road, a rather narrow and extremely busy arterial road, would be clogged up for many years with heavy trucks carrying spoil from the tunnelling at Na Fianna grounds out to the M50. Drumcondra and Glasnevin would become a traffic nightmare for commuters.

The TII has not demonstrated why all the spoil from Ranelagh/Charlemont on the Southside should be tunnelled out to Na Fianna grounds on the Northside and then transported through this densely populated area of the City centre to landfill on the outskirts of the city.

TII must go back to the drawing board on this proposal as it is unworkable and would destroy the local club and local community if insisted upon.

There are green field sites much closer to the M50 which would be ideally suited to being converted into a launch site for the Tunnel Boring Machines and the collection and dispatch of the resultant spoil. One of these must be availed of instead.

Mobhi Road is part of the Emerging Preferred Route and is an ideal location for an underground Metrolink station. It need not encroach on the grounds of Na Fianna or of Home Farm. It would provide quality public transport to the playing fields, the schools and to the residents of the area.

### **Glasnevin**

The station proposed at Phibsborough is an interchange station which links the mainline rail with the Metrolink. It is an important interchange as it also connects with the luas which is only a single stop away on the mainline at Broomebridge.

However, it also gives rise to many problems. Because of the size of the interchange and the length of the carriages a number of significant buildings are proposed to be demolished. These include the historic Brian Boru public house, Des Kelly Carpets and a number of houses on Phibsborough Rd and Dalcassian Court in the Dalcassian Downs housing estate.

It should be possible to reduce the proposed footprint of the Glasnevin station. Moreover, the station footprint reaches under the railway lines but not under the Royal Canal which is quite wide at that point. If it were extended further south some of the proposed demolition could be avoided including Dalcassian Court and even the Brian Boru pub. I understand that the original proposal was to locate the Station on the other side of the Phibsborough Rd at its junction with Whitworth Rd. That is also a feasible solution and would avoid the damage that will result if the present proposed location is maintained.

The proposal for a bus terminal and taxi rank at the station while desirable will require a lot of space in a very confined area with limited access to the main road. Moreover, there is no obvious provision of cycling and pedestrian facilities. The Royal Canal, towpath and environs are a wonderful amenity for young and old. The local community engage in monthly clean-ups and take pride in maintaining the Canal area.

Dublin City Council are promoting the Royal Canal Greenway as a major amenity. Work is being carried out along the length of the Royal Canal in the City at present to facilitate pedestrian, cycling, boating kayaking, picnicking and sporting activities particularly along the Cross Guns and Shandon part of the Canal. Every step must be made to ensure that the

proposed Glasnevin station does not interfere in any way with the vision and plans for the Royal Canal Greenway.

### **The Mater**

The Mater Hospital is an important location for a station as it will cater for a large working population and a densely populated residential hinterland. The original Metro North had a station excavated in the grounds of the hospital close to Leo St which I understand is still there. However, the new Emerging Preferred Route does not include this station but proposes the construction of a new station on Berkeley Rd. The residents in Leo St are delighted but it begs the question why so much work was carried out and so much money was spent on the old Preferred Route and none of that Route is now being utilised?

The present proposal involves taking possession of the entirety of the Four Masters Park located between Eccles St and Berkeley Rd and bounded by Berkeley Road Church and using it as a working base for a number of years during the construction. It also requires the demolition of some houses at the junction of Berkeley Rd and St Vincent St North and the closure of Berkeley Rd from Geraldine St to St Vincent St North as part of the construction zone.

Closure of part of Berkeley Rd will be very disruptive to traffic particularly as it is a valuable public transport route for the 46A and the 120 bus service to the city centre. Local residents and churchgoers will be seriously discommoded for many years. Closure of the road and demolition of homes seem unnecessary and must be fully justified before any work is carried.. Obviously the Park should be restored when the Station is complete and the works are finished.

### **O'Connell St**

A station is proposed at the top of O 'Connell St close to the junction with Parnell St. This is an interchange station with the existing Green Luas Line and will facilitate the transport of commuters across city.

Once again O'Connell St will be subjected to a long period of digging and disruption. The original Metro North proposal envisaged a station much farther down the street at the

interchange with the Red Luas line at Abbey St. The statue of Jim Larkin was to be removed and replaced again before the Centenary commemoration of the 1913 Lock out began! Once again much time and money was expended on a project that never started.

## **Tunnelling**

The entire Emerging Preferred Route for the Metrolink from Griffith Avenue to O'Connell St traverses heavily populated residential parts of the city and is subject to underground tunnelling underneath people's homes or very close to them. Very many constituents have expressed alarm at the prospect of Tunnel Boring Machines digging beneath their homes or in close proximity. They are principally concerned that the foundations of the many period houses in the area are poor or non-existent and that the drilling and tunnelling would cause permanent damage to the structures.

It is essential that all homes and property that may be negatively affected by the tunnelling be examined by a an engineer before the works start, during the works, and after the works have been completed. Transport Infrastructure Ireland should pay for the services of an engineering firm but the communities affected by the Metrolink project should be entitled to select the company to ensure transparency and independence.

Areas of Architectural Conservation (ACAs) like Prospect Square, De Courcey Square and environs must be treated with great care and sensitivity and the residents and the Local Authority consulted at every stage of development.

## **A Liaison Structure**

The Metrolink is the single largest project in the history of the State. It will take at least ten years to complete. It will have a major effect on the lives of people who are living close to the Route.

It is absolutely essential that a Liaison Committee be established before the works start and that it consist of representatives from local Residents' Associations, the Local Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland who would meet regularly and iron out any difficulties that might arise from time to time.

## **Station Names**

It appears to me that many of the Metrolink station names are inappropriate. Griffith Park is not widely known and perhaps might be better renamed Mobhi Rd station. Glasnevin is well-

known but it is located farther north and a more appropriate name for the Glasnevin station is Cross Guns or Phibsborough. Similarly, the Mater station is no longer located in the grounds of the Mater Hospital but along Berkeley Rd and the grounds of the Four Masters' public park. It would be better renamed Berkeley Rd station.

In conclusion the Metrolink can bring substantial public transport benefits to the Northside of Dublin which are sorely needed. It should be given a fair wind but it can only progress to completion if the TII addresses to the satisfaction of the community affected, the many issues which present along the Emerging Preferred Route.

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