



*People Before Profit – Cork Branch
Submission to BusConnects Cork consultation
December 2021*



**SUBMISSION TO NATIONAL TRANSPORT
AUTHORITY**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT NEW
BUS NETWORK**

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1. Introduction

People Before Profit in Cork have prepared this submission in respect of the Cork BusConnects Plan published by the National Transport Authority. We make this submission in relation to the transport crisis evident in Cork City and County, based on concern for the lack of action being taken to increase the provision of affordable and viable transport alternatives to car transport. In the long term, existing political policy (which consists of little to no investment in public transport) will have disastrous effects on communities in Cork City and County. Existing development policies and political attitudes do not lend themselves towards allowing communities to develop and thrive in a sustainable way.

Ireland's public transport infrastructure needs to be expanded with urgency, if Ireland is to tackle climate change. Over two years ago, Dáil Eireann and a number of councils (including Cork City Council) declared climate emergencies. Transport needs to be viewed as a sector in which reducing emissions is both possible and crucial.

Ireland's public transport fares remain prohibitively high and do not encourage people to abandon private cars in favour of public transport journeys. The NTA should take the climate emergency far more seriously and immediately **abolish public transport fares**.

The following submission outlines the items we wish to see included as part of the final Cork BusConnects Plan.

2. Climate change and the need to cut emissions

We wish to see a greater political acknowledgement in the BusConnects plan of the scale of the climate crisis that lies ahead if nothing is done to curb transport emissions, coupled with action on public transport investment to tackle this. Those responsible for Irish public transport have a **direct responsibility to take the action necessary to cut emissions**. A climate emergency was declared in Dáil Eireann in May 2019. **Emergency funding should be made available by the Irish government to finance Light Rail and enhanced bus services** in Cork and other regional cities.

3. Bus Link through N40 Jack Lynch Tunnel

People Before Profit Cork have previously called on on Cork City Council, Bus Éireann and the National Transport Authority to immediately provide a high-frequency public transport link connecting the East Cork rail links at Little Island with communities based in the Cork southern suburbs.



Presently, thousands of commuters who live on the south of Cork City and work east of the city (and vice-versa) have the following options for their journeys to and from work:

- Take a bus from a Cork suburb to the city centre. Then walk across the city centre because bus and rail links do not have sufficient connectivity. Then take a train to East Cork. Overall, this commute takes well over an hour and can be delayed by traffic congestion in the city centre, OR
- Drive along the N40 South Ring Road and through the Jack Lynch tunnel, resulting in thousands of car journeys on the critical N40 South Ring Road which could be replaced by public transport.

We want commuters to have a third option: a public transport link along the N40 which utilises the Jack Lynch tunnel to bring commuters. The introduction of public transport along this corridor is a matter of great urgency. It would improve the quality of life for thousands of people and alleviate the severe traffic congestion issues which occur daily at the Dunkettle Interchange.

We want to see the introduction of a high-frequency bus route which connects with rail services to/from East Cork and provides a viable public transport option for all.

The Jack Lynch Tunnel is an important piece of infrastructure in Cork, and it is long overdue that it is used for a high-frequency public transport route connecting communities around Cork.

4. Private sector outsourcing is unsustainable

We strongly oppose the outsourcing of services within the public transport sector. Public Transport systems should be run by **public bodies and not outsourced to companies on a for-profit basis**. Too often in Irish public discourse, we hear about existing public transport systems 'running at a loss' as though this is justification for them to be neglected or closed down. However, public transport systems can only be loss-making in the same way that a public education or public healthcare system might be considered loss-making if the public benefit is not considered. Public transport services bring huge economic and social benefits to society and, most importantly, reduce the number of cars on the road. Public transport services get people to their place of work or education. City and town centres thrive and benefit because people can access shops and businesses using bus and train networks. To neglect and limit public transport connections in Ireland would damage communities severely.

Too often we hear about whether public transport systems are 'viable' or not, and this is generally a measure of whether they are profitable or not. We wish to see acknowledgement that public transport systems bring a major benefit to



society and that public transport should be safeguarded in Cork, regardless of its profitability.

The fiascos that we have seen around the Children's Hospital, Rural Broadband and the Cork Events Centre are all examples of why **public services and infrastructure should be built and run publicly**.

Transdev, who operate Dublin's LUAS, extract huge profits from what should be run as a public service. There have been record complaints in relation to services run by private operators in Dublin which have operated with poor functionality, or with buses not turning up at all. Unfortunately and disappointingly, the NTA has decided not to issue the fines which private operator Go-Ahead are contractually subjected to after their provision of the service has fallen so below the required standard.

We note with a degree of concern that routes #225 and #226 in Cork have a new livery in recent months, and we call for the operation of these and all routes to remain public and **not be outsourced to a private operator in the future**.

The final BusConnects Cork plan should acknowledge that private sector outsourcing is a failed model and that the focus must be on **public investment in publicly-run transport systems**.

We understand that if people are going to use public transport instead of cars, public transport alternatives need to be made viable. This means that services need to be both more reliable and affordable.

5. Free and Accessible Public Transport

We are calling for public transport to be made free as a greater incentive to use it. Currently, rail fares are not an attractive option for commuters or those who travel irregularly from Cork's suburbs to the City Centre. Free transport systems have been very successfully rolled out in Dunkirk, France.

We have recently seen Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan admit that public transport fees are prohibitively high in many cases, yet then has said that there are no plans to reduce them.

It is disappointing to see that the government and NTA have no plans to reduce or abolish fares. In many cases, this means that car travel is less costly than commuting using public transport.

If people are to be encouraged to use public transport instead of their cars, abolition of transport fares is critical.



6. Summary

Members of People Before Profit in the area addressed by the Cork BusConnects plan would like to see the Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Bus Éireann take more responsibility for fulfilling the transport needs of society. We ask for Cork City and County Councils to utilise one of the many mechanisms available to them to provide adequate and immediate investment in transport.

In the short term, we wish to see the following nine points taken into account:

1. All existing bus routes in Cork to run with a frequency of no less than every 15 minutes from 06:00 to 00:00 and a minimum of every hour from 00:00 to 06:00. Infrequent bus routes do not lend themselves to ease of use to those who live or work along the routes. Public services that do not run on 24-hour timetables present difficulties for workers in Cork's economy. It is for this reason that we wish to see public transport expanded to include night-time transit.
2. Public transport fares to be **abolished entirely** on all Cork bus and suburban rail, following in the example of a number of other European cities.
3. Public transport services should **not be outsourced to the private sector** and run on a for-profit basis. Everywhere this model has been implemented, it has failed to provide value for money for the taxpayer. Public transport services should remain publicly run.
4. Additional **connectivity of bus routes with Kent Railway Station** in Cork City. Changing between bus and rail in Cork City is currently not simple, particularly for the disabled or elderly, and if people are going to use alternative modes of transport, smooth interchanges are crucial. This needs to be reviewed in the short term, and, with the implementation of a light-rail system, interchanges with bus and rail need to be thought out well in advance.
5. We note that the current Cork BusConnects plan no longer provides a bus link between Kent Railway station and MTU (the current Route 205), and we call for this link to remain in a new plan to facilitate transfers for students commuting by rail. **There should be direct bus links from Kent Station and Cork University Hospital, University College Cork and Munster Technological University** so that disabled persons can make these journeys without having to change buses or walk between transport hubs.
6. The **implementation of an express public bus service through the Jack Lynch Tunnel** connecting the population and employment areas of the south and east of Cork City. The proposed route 14 from Little Island to Cork University Hospital is poorly routed through roads on which it will be subject to traffic delays, making it an unattractive option for the public.



This route should make greater use of the N40 South Ring Road, and should be scheduled for a greater frequency than 60 minutes to make it an attractive option.

7. We note that the proposed Route 1 connects the areas which are proposed to be along the line of Cork's Light Rail route. **BusConnects should not be used as a reason to postpone or delay the implementation of Light Rail in Cork.**
8. The implementation of a local link bus service for satellite towns and villages in the Cork Metropolitan area such as Ballincollig, Blarney, Douglas and Glanmire. The housing sprawl in these areas is based on a model of car transportation. We would instead like to see the introduction of a local bus link that would serve people wishing to shop or do business in their local village or connect with the wider public transport network. Such local bus links would make it possible for the goal of the '15 minute city' to be realised. Many cities in the UK have run such local networks for many years. This service would also contribute greatly to reducing the reliance on cars for small trips and accommodate the needs of elderly people and those with mobility issues. These local buses must be fully accessible.
9. Making it an immediate requirement that **all modes of public transport be fully accessible by people with disabilities and the elderly**. On many of the routes, wheelchair users are still unable to access the buses. Accessible transport is vital to enable people with disabilities fully participate in society.

We look forward to receiving a response to this submission.

7. Contact details

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