

Minister Eamon Ryan TD,  
Department of Transport,  
Leeson Lane,  
Dublin 2,  
D02 TR60.

7<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**Re: Misplaced Metrolink Terminus at Charlemont and the potential for Cathal Brugha Barracks**

Dear Minister Ryan,

We represent the Charlemont/Dartmouth Community Group of over 1,000 residents in the area and we are making a very strong case that there is a fundamental flaw in the proposed South Terminus of MetroLink that will reduce the utility and future value of the overall metro system – it is simply in the wrong location. This view is fully supported by numerous community groups across the southside<sup>1</sup>. Please see attached our most recent submission to the draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042 from the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2022. We set out our concerns and observations below.

**Ministerial Responsibility**

We are very concerned that the business case now appears to be progressing toward final approval and that TII intends to submit a rail order application with Charlemont as the South Terminus. Once the project goes to planning, the grounds for evaluation are significantly restricted and these social, economic and strategic issues will not be adequately addressed.

As Minister for Transport it is your responsibility to ensure that these issues are fully addressed during the business case evaluation and before a rail order is submitted. We urge you to take action in this very important matter and ensure that this fundamental flaw in the Metrolink project is addressed before proceeding to planning.

**The potential of the Cathal Brugha Barracks site clearly demonstrates the fundamental flaw in the Metrolink business case**

We note with interest your recent confirmation that a feasibility study is to be carried out into the use of Cathal Brugha Barracks for social and affordable housing. This is a very positive development on many fronts. A future connection to Cathal Brugha Barracks (or its selection as the south terminus of MetroLink) would provide a golden opportunity to directly service 1,000 homes and showcase a "modal shift" towards sustainable public transport in which there is full

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<sup>1</sup> You will recall the points we made in our letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021, multiple emails and a zoom meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

integration with the future transport fleet of zero emissions vehicles, cyclists and walkers. This would ensure that MetroLink is made easily accessible to large volumes of people living on the southside.

### **Reducing options for the future development of Metrolink**

If the proposed Metrolink Terminus is built at Charlemont it will be impossible for MetroLink to connect with Cathal Brugha Barracks as it will have terminated too far south. The only possible tunnel alignment to make that connection work will be to create a new tunnel and junction starting further north and back at St. Stephen's Green.

Along with many others on the southside, we have argued that a St. Stephen's Green terminus provides the greatest range of future possible southern route extensions and that the Charlemont station is only valid in the context of a Luas Green Line "tie-in" and replacement – which is now a largely abandoned concept.

### **Charlemont does not facilitate proper integration with other forms of road transport**

Zero emission cars and especially buses will remain very important components in the future transport system of Dublin. Therefore, MetroLink must integrate with road transport if it is to encourage a "modal shift" towards sustainable public transport and meet our national climate targets. Road access is effectively closed off at the Charlemont site because the surrounding roads are already at capacity (the Canal) or too small (Dartmouth Lane) or closed to through traffic (around Dartmouth Square West) or not on direct bus routes (Dartmouth Road). Both St. Stephen's Green and Cathal Brugha Barracks offer superior integration with multiple modes of transport including road, cycling and walking.

### **Developing Charlemont as a terminus is a waste of public money**

Charlemont contributes nothing substantial in terms integration with road transport and yet will incur very substantial costs and time delays in order to extend the tunnel (at greater depth to avoid the Grand Canal Drainage Tunnel) and to build a full additional station in a cramped site under a newly constructed office building.

Locating the terminus in St. Stephen's Green has the potential to substantially reduce the cost and complexity of the MetroLink project while increasing the utility and future potential of the overall system (i.e. less tunnel distance and one less station).

### **No studies are completed on the 'optimal' location of a city centre terminus**

One of the most fundamental components of the current MetroLink project is to define the selection criteria for an optimal city centre terminus and to select the best location on that basis. The current TII proposal has never done that work. The station studies were done prior to the publication of the "Preferred Route Design Development Report" in March 2019. That Preferred Route envisaged a future Luas Green Line "tie-in" and replacement as being the de facto southern extension of MetroLink. Charlemont was selected as the ideal "tie-in" Metro station, and it was proposed to build to that point in the first phase before continuing to Sandyford.

However, the Green Line "tie-in" and replacement is now a largely abandoned concept. But TII did not reframe a new MetroLink project in which a City Centre Terminus must become a crucial new component. This would require new selection criteria that covered factors such as options for future southern routes, a high-quality Luas interchange and interaction with other modes of transport. Instead, TII simply defaulted to Charlemont as a the most southern terminus under the old criteria. This is the reason why it will be impossible for an opportunity such as that presented by Cathal Brugha Barracks to become part of MetroLink if the project proceeds as proposed.

### **The Proposed MetroLink has no good interchange with the Luas Green Line**

To be successful, it should be a prerequisite that MetroLink has at least one station with an exceptionally good interchange with the Luas Green Line. St. Stephen's Green offers the potential for a far superior interchange than is ever possible at Charlemont due to having to connect with the above canal Luas station. Freed from the constraint to having to connect to a largely obsolete Charlemont station (and to allow a possible connection with Cathal Brugha Barracks), the MetroLink Terminus could be located next to the St. Stephen's Green Luas station to the west or be connected to the east one level down via a travelator. (O'Connell Street also offers a superior potential for a high-quality interchange with an extended connection only required for the southbound Luas).

### **Lack of accessibility of proposed Charlemont Terminus**

The proposed Charlemont terminus excludes easy access to MetroLink for anyone who has mobility challenges – the disabled, the elderly and those travelling with young children (or indeed those travelling to the airport with luggage). The Charlemont terminus relies on three modes of access - a difficult Luas Green Line interchange, walking or cycling and long escalators travelling deep underground. The absence of a seamless and highly efficient Luas interchange, only one lift at the north entrance for passengers requiring assistance, and an extremely limited road drop off zone at the south entrance goes against the NTA's commitment to a "Universal Design" approach. This is supposed to create an environment that can be "accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability".

### **In conclusion**

Our aim is to support the development of the best possible solution for MetroLink so that the transport needs of Dublin can be addressed while simultaneously meeting our legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050.

We believe that the current MetroLink proposal is fundamentally flawed in misplacing a south terminus at Charlemont and we urge you, as Minister for Transport, to avert a major mistake that could cost hundreds of millions of euros and deliver a compromised metro system.

The NTA/TII is very clear that the Rail Order will be submitted under the existing "Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035". That strategy defined the Metrolink project as connecting Estuary to Sandyford.

However, we are currently in transition to a new transport strategy which is very much framed in the context of the climate emergency. The new "Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2042" is already in draft form and a public consultation has just been completed. In the new strategy MetroLink is defined from Estuary to City Centre. These are very different project definitions. The criteria for success of a North-South Spine v a North to Central Hub metro are profoundly different in terms of access from the southside. A spine metro system allows access at every point along the spine. In a central hub system there is enormous pressure on the hub to provide excellent connections to all modes of transport. Otherwise access from the south of the city is severely compromised and the modal shift required to meet climate targets will not happen in the timeframe of the new strategy (up to 2042). Clearly Charlemont does not meet the criteria for a successful central hub terminus. The MetroLink infrastructure we plan to build today will stand alone for many decades and must be viewed as a discrete project. It must succeed in its own right and not be dependent on some future projects that have yet to be defined and may never happen.

MetroLink can and should be enhanced in the future but it must be fit for purpose and do its job now. Our climate emergency does not allow us the luxury to do otherwise.

We would like to meet with you as a matter of urgency, before the approval of the business case, to discuss these very serious issues and understand whether and how you propose to take action to address them.

Yours sincerely,

Ciaran

Signed on behalf of the Charlemont/Dartmouth Community Group by the lead representatives:  
*Ciaran Black, Leon McCarthy, Grattan Boylan, Caitriona Shaffrey, Mark Colgan,  
Diarmuid Burke, Edward Kelly, Loraine Mulligan, John Conway.*