

City Council Meeting 5th March 2018

Report from National Transport Authority

A Ard-Mheára, council members, thank you for the invitation to your meeting this evening. I have been asked to speak about traffic management arrangements for Dublin city.

It was always recognised by the City Council and the National Transport Authority that College Green, which has only one lane in each direction, would not be able to accommodate the same number of buses and taxis following the introduction on Luas Cross City. In order to address this capacity issue, a Dublin City Centre Transport Study was developed by the NTA and DCC in June 2015 which was published for consultation. In addition, the City Council and the NTA developed specific traffic management proposals for the College Green area in April 2016 which included the elimination of all traffic through College Green on an east-west axis creating the College Green Plaza. The existing complex sequence of traffic signals would be replaced with a single pedestrian crossing from the front entrance of Trinity across to the new Plaza. It was expected that the Plaza proposal would have been in place prior to or shortly after the launch of Luas Cross City.

Since the publication of the study in 2015, Dublin City Council in collaboration with the NTA, has implemented many of the recommended changes prior to the 9 December 2017 launch of Luas Cross City in order to facilitate its operation. These changes included the introduction of double bus lanes on stretches of the North and South Quays, a ban on general traffic turning right from the North Quays onto O'Connell Bridge and a range of junction and traffic signal changes.

However since the start of the operation of Luas Cross city and without the College Green plaza in place, commuters have been experiencing delays in the city centre area during certain peak periods.

To alleviate these delays, the National Transport Authority has worked with Dublin Bus and Dublin City Council to explore measures which could facilitate a more effective movement of public transport services through the College Green area in advance of An Bord Pleanála's decision on the plaza development.

Arising from those consultations, a number of changes to Dublin Bus routes were implemented in the College Green / College Street area on 29th January. These changes reduced the number of buses passing through these streets and allowed for a more effective operation of services in the area.

Eight routes which previously travelled through College Street and College Green, but didn't stop on these streets, were re-routed through Tara Street and the South Quays. A further nine Xpresso routes, which are limited stop routes in peak hours, have been relocated onto other streets, mainly Townsend Street and Westland Row.

The combined impact of those changes reduced the number of bus movements by 20% and enabled the traffic signalling system and junctions in the College Green area to operate more effectively.

The National Transport Authority and Dublin City Council monitored the impact of these adjustments which showed that while journey times had improved for the buses continuing to travel through College Green, further improvement was needed.

It was also recognised by DCC and NTA that further changes were required to cater for the increase in the number of longer trams that will come on stream over the coming weeks and for the higher pedestrian volumes that will arise in College Green as we move into the tourist season which will require more signal time to be devoted to pedestrian crossing movement.

From this morning, changes were made to 10 additional Dublin Bus routes that currently operate through the College Green/ College Street area.

The changes will further reduce the volume of vehicles passing through this area by a further 10% and enable the traffic signalling system and junctions in the College Green area to operate more effectively.

In addition, the following changes to taxi movements within College Green will be operational from 12th March:

During the hours of 7-10am, taxis will be restricted from driving southbound through College Green. The measure will affect vehicles moving in front of Trinity either towards Grafton St, or towards Dame St.

There will be no restriction on northbound taxi movements from Dame St, towards Westmoreland St, in front of Bank of Ireland or from College Street to Westmoreland Street.

Approximately 150 taxis per hour move southbound through College Green during the morning peak. Reducing taxi movements will ease congestion and relieve pressure by freeing up space for the other public transport modes.

As a partial compensatory measure, it is agreed that taxis will be able to travel northbound along the Luas/bus alignment from Dawson St to Westmoreland St, during the hours of 12 midnight to 6.00am

It is vital for a modern vibrant city such as Dublin to have a well-functioning public transport system. The NTA is committed to continuing to improve public transport in the Greater Dublin Area. The statutory Transport Strategy for the GDA sets out the transport infrastructure that is required to meet Dublin's transport demands sustainably for the next 20 years. Having that strategy in place allowed the Authority to make a strong case for support in the National Development Plan 2018 - 2027 for a significant investment in public transport infrastructure for Dublin. There is now a government commitment to:

- The Metrolink project – a full metro service between Swords and Sandyford (using the existing green line between Charlemont and Sandyford) through the city centre by 2027. Public consultation on the preferred route will commence in the next few weeks.

- Dart Expansion – €2bn to be invested in new electric/diesel fleet and electrification of the rail lines.
- BusConnects – the NTA published its plan last year to radically improve bus services in the Dublin region. The plan for improved bus priority measures along each main radial route will be published for consultation in April. A revised bus network will be published in the summer also for consultation. Along with the development of Park & Ride, new ticketing solutions and moving to low carbon emission fleet, the bus system will greatly improve its service offer to customers.

Before completing my statement, I would like to thank Dublin Bus and all our public transport operators for their valiant efforts in returning public transport to the streets of Dublin after the severe weather event. They were greatly assisted by the crews from Dublin City Council and I would like to thank all the council staff that worked long hours to ensure that buses and the Luas could return to the streets and enable communities to return to some normality. It was a great example of multi-agency co-operation and is greatly appreciated by the NTA.