

## **Opening statement of Mr. Ray Coyne, Chief Executive of Dublin Bus**

### **Tackling congestion – Towards an integrated and sustainable public transport system.**

I would like to thank the members of Dublin City Council for the invitation to attend here today. Public transport is fundamental to the economic and social development of Dublin. With transport being so vital to the city's economy and the lives of Dubliners, it is essential that we have a safe, modern, affordable and accessible public transport system operating in a congestion free city.

While recent commentary has focused on College Green, congestion is a citywide problem. Roads in the city centre are not designed for large volumes of vehicular traffic. There are many users competing for the limited road space available, including private transport (car and motorcycle), public transport, cyclists, taxis, delivery vehicles and pedestrians. As economic growth continues, congestion levels will further increase unless significant mitigating measures are put in place.

### **What risk does congestion pose?**

Dublin Bus is growing with the city. We carried 139 million customers in 2017 and our customers account for 39% of all retail spend in Dublin city. Congestion threatens this growth and limits the city's ability to achieve its full potential in economic, environmental, social and cultural areas. Research by Department of Transport's Economic and Financial Evaluation Unit in 2017 estimated the cost of aggravated congestion across Ireland's transport system at €350 million per annum and forecasted this to rise to €2 billion per annum in 2033. This is not sustainable for transport operators, Government or the general public. Dublin is positioning itself as a modern European capital and a congested city does not fit with this vision.

Our network speed at peak times is in the region of 14kmph, with substantial variations on all transport corridors. Despite the significant rollout of Quality Bus Corridors, private transport remains extremely competitive in terms of journey times to the city, and in many cases is faster than the bus. A customer centric public transport system must have, after safety, three basic fundamentals in place. These are:

1. frequency of service
2. reliability of service provision and
3. competitive and consistent journey speeds.

Thereafter information and price are key for customers. At a minimum our public transport network speed at peak times must increase from approximately 14kmph to at least 18kmph. This will provide for a more efficient public transport network that is a more attractive option than private car.

### **Investment is the key to tackling congestion**

While we continue to ensure that today's bus services are safe, accessible and attractive to the public, it is of course, essential that we plan for Dublin's future. Dublin Bus and the city is growing rapidly, so steady and sustained investment is vital to help meet this growth. The National Transport Authority (NTA) sponsored BusConnects programme of work will see €750m invested in the bus network for the GDA over the next 5 years. BusConnects has the potential to significantly enhance the customer experience in the city in the short to medium term while providing long term benefits. If all aspects of the NTA's BusConnects programme are implemented, it will have a beneficial impact on congestion levels.

People's work and leisure habits are changing and they're no longer out of the city by 7pm. Significant passenger movement takes place outside of bus lane priority hours, including weekends. Journey times are impacted and reliability and punctuality compromised. Enhanced bus lane priority is required on existing and new quality bus corridors, with the extension of bus lane hours beyond 7pm but one key feature. These next generation corridors will assist in the delivery of an efficient bus network and will encourage modal shift.

One of the key advantages of bus transport is the ability to quickly adapt and accommodate additional customer demand more quickly than other modes. Since 2016, we have added 43 buses to our fleet to help meet customer demand. These buses, funded by the NTA, are in addition to our on-going fleet replacement programme and we will continue to add buses over the next number of years to meet growth across the Greater Dublin Area. As recently as February 10 extra capacity buses were added and we continuously monitor service performance and capacity.

### **Conclusion – Bus is the short to medium term solution**

Having a public transport system that is a better option than owning a car is a vision that is achievable and will enable our city to fulfil its potential in many diverse areas. These include enhanced urban living opportunities, reduced congestion, improved air quality and reduced noise pollution. It will enable the economy to prosper and provide a platform for a vibrant social and cultural city scene.

The bus is the most flexible mode in delivering significant movement in public transport. The bus has the potential to drive the growth in public transport in the short to medium term. This will lay the foundations to implement priority measures on key corridors with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) standards, increase frequency levels on corridors to continue customer growth, and provide the space for the creation of a genuinely integrated and sustainable public transport system.

Finally, I would like to thank Dublin City Council and the other local authorities for their hard work during the recent period of severe weather. I would particularly like to thank the frontline council staff who worked tirelessly to ensure buses could return to the streets of Dublin in a safe manner. The period of severe weather highlights the importance of public transport, and in particular the bus, in keeping the whole city moving during challenging times.

