

**MetroNorth Submission on DART Interchange at  
Cross Gunns Bridge and Drumcondra Rd, Dublin.**

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## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this submission is to highlight the potential benefits of developing a major public transport interchange for Metro/Commuter Rail/Inter-City Rail and Bus Services in the region just east of Cross Gunns Bridge, or on Drumcondra Road immediately north of the Midland Railway Line (which runs alongside the Royal Canal) and adjacent to the existing Drumcondra Station, providing a near vertical interchange between said station and metroNorth.

This submission proposes to demonstrated how a public transport interchange adjacent to the present Mountjoy Prison site or at the Drumcondra Statin location is not only compatible with the Government's Transport21 plan, but will add significantly to the potential of the RPA's MetroNorth with a multi-modal interchange located within the heart of the densely populated neighbourhoods of Phibsborough and/or Drumcondra.

## Proposal

### What is MetroNorth?

MetroNorth is a high-capacity, fully segregated metro line currently under construction, which will link St. Stephens Green with Swords via Dublin Airport. The route will provide interchange opportunities with the highly successful Luas network at St. Stephens Green and in the O'Connell Street area.

MetroNorth will serve the Mater Hospital before passing under the existing Maynooth/Navan/Sligo railway lines at Cross Gunns Bridge or at Drumcondra and from there will serve Dublin City University (DCU) and will surface to serve Ballymun before crossing the M50 motorway and on to Dublin Airport and Swords. The Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) is responsible for delivering MetroNorth on behalf of the Government under the ambitions Transport21 plan announced by Minister Martin Cullen earlier this year.

### Prospect Metro Station

"Prospect" is the proposed station name for MetroNorth central route in the vicinity of Cross Gunns Bridge, between Phibsborough and Glasnevin on the N2 road. The exact station location has yet to be decided, but with the RPA and Iarnród Eireann stand to benefit greatly from providing an interchange between MetroNorth and the railway at Prospect.

### Drumcondra Metro Station

"Drumcondra" is the proposed station name for MetroNorth east route in the vicinity of the existing IE Drumcondra Station on the N1 road. The exact station location has yet to be decided, but the RPA and Iarnród Eireann stand to benefit greatly from providing an interchange between MetroNorth and *both* the existing railway lines through Drumcondra, even though the southernmost line does not see passenger service presently-post T21 things could be very different.

Rationale

### **MetroNorth Proposed Station Locations**

The RPA have outlined a station location some 400 metres north of the unserved railway lines at Cross Gunns Bridge on Prospect Road. This will not provide easy interchange with the nearest current commuter rail station at Drumcondra Road, which is located 800 meters walk away. This places Sligo Line/Maynooth/Navan rail passengers at a distinct disadvantage in order to transfer to MetroNorth in they wish to reach Dublin Airport by rail.

As part of the government's revolutionary Transport21 plan, the Dublin Area Rapid Rail service (DART) will be extended to Maynooth and eventually Navan. It is proposed that these services will operate every few minutes at peak hours. This is consistent with standard Metro type train service frequencies. It makes sense at this location to allow passengers of these two high capacity rail transit systems (Metro and DART) to change lines with ease, as this is consistent with standard practice among urban rail networks the world over.

This decision has sadly not been taken for Prospect or Drumcondra which is what this submission aims to the interested stakeholders to reconsider during the public hearings.

### **When will DART be Extended to Maynooth?**

MetroNorth and the DART extension are due to come on stream within a year of each other. Even in the absence of the DART line, the entire area to the south of Cross Gunns Bridge will experience major changes in the coming years as Mountjoy Prison is to be developed into a Spencer Dock type residential/commercial development, along with the major expansion plans currently earmarked for the Mater Hospital, Dalymount Park and Phibsborough Shopping Centre.

Below Cross Gunns Bridge is an existing railway line under the Phoenix Park and on towards Lucan and Kildare. There is no practical reason why the DART can't also run from Lucan via Cross Gunns Bridge to the Dublin Docklands where a new station is already under construction for this purpose. This would also allow rail passengers from Kildare/Sallins/Newbridge to make a one-change to the Airport. Currently this is not possible under the Transport21 plan.

### **Location of Interchange Stations.**

Prospect

With regards to Prospect Station, there is a large open space in the form of the Charleville Tennis Club located right between the railway lines at Cross Gunns Bridge along Withworth Road. It is located behind Porterhouse North public house. A MetroNorth station could easily be built here and would form a link between the current railway lines when the current freight only line under the Phoenix Park returns to passenger carrying service upon the completion of the Spencer Dock station.

An Interchange station located where the tennis club now resides, would provide easy access to residents of the many existing and future residential, high-density complex just to the south of the Royal Canal at this location.

## Drumcondra

With regards to Drumcondra Station, there is a large space available in the form of the Drumcondra Rd stretch of the N1 road, located right between the existing heavy railway lines, both of which should see high frequency services post T21. A MetroNorth station could easily be built here using the 'box' technique and would form a link between the current railway lines when the current freight only line under the Phoenix Park returns to passenger carrying service upon the completion of the Spencer Dock station.

An Interchange station located in either of these locations, would provide easy access to residents of the many existing and future residential, high-density complexes proposed for these areas.

## Wider Benefit

The wider benefit however is that passengers from all over north, southeast and west Dublin as well as Kildare, Longford and Sligo will benefit from zero or one change journeys to and from many important destinations such as Dublin Airport, DCU, NUI Maynooth, Intel, Blackrock Clinic, St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin City Centre, Mater Hospital, Trinity College as well as two of Dublin's Strategic Development Zones (Adamstown and Hansfield). One of the key benefits of stations at either of these locations is that neither MetroNorth route deviation, nor Iarnród Eireann rail line is necessary to achieve this. Stations linking the one metro and two rail routes provides seamless integration across all three and would relieve future capacity pressures on the St Stephens Green underground station.

Clearly any interchange station of the importance of Cross Gunns Bridge or Drumcondra would be an attractive location for retail and other service industries as well as being a desirable office location as staff would easily be able to reach the area from most parts of Dublin with hundreds of trains per day, serving most of the Greater Dublin Region and beyond to Longford and Sligo in close proximity to each other. These benefits are there for landowners and developers to take advantage of in this context and the developers of these sites would be in a position to contribute to any station at Cross Gunns Bridge or Drumcondra as it would be of mutual benefit.

## Other Benefits

By insisting upon a quality (near vertical) interchange between the existing rail lines across the north of the city and the proposed MetroNorth, other cost savings can be made. The major benefit is that the proposed interchange at Tara St Station could be readily dropped from the plans as there would be no real journeys one could make by changing at Tara that one could not make by changing at Cross Gunns or Drumcondra. It must be remembered that the DART will be fundamentally different following T21, with two DART routes in an X formation, interchanging at Pearse Station. By eliminating the need to interchange at Tara there can be major cost savings on the route by shortening it and indeed completely removing a city centre station. I would propose that there should only be 2 no. city centre stations-one at St. Stephen's Green and one on O'Connell Street at Abbey Street, interchanging with Red Line Luas here. This interchange with Luas is impossible with a metro station at Tara as the route deviation prevents the metro alignment returning to beneath O'Connell St before an area in the vicinity of the Gresham Hotel, not integrated with

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Red Line Luas at all. Eliminating the proposed Tara deviation and proposed Trinity stations also allows for faster journey times as the route is shorter and has one less stop. The cost savings here can be directed at proper integration with the north city rail lines (see appendix) and also at a tunnel under Dublin Airport to provide a quality experience for airport bound passengers and staff. Dublin Airport is the largest employer in County Fingal. Eliminating the stop between St. Stephen's Green and O'Connell St will not have a very negative impact on the travelling experience as it is such a short walk from the O'Connell/Abbey St junction (Red Line integration) to the areas served by Trinity/Tara (Temple Bar etc.).

## Appendix I

### **User Example with/without Cross Gunns Bridge/Drumcondra Station;**

- A Maynooth rail traveller would have to take DART as far as Pearse Station, change onto another DART for St. Stephen's Green and then onto MetroNorth to reach the airport.
- With Cross Gunns Bridge Station, that convoluted two-change journey becomes a simple single change at Cross Gunns Bridge or Drumcondra.

### **A Stephen's Green Type Interchange for the Northside of Dublin and Beyond**

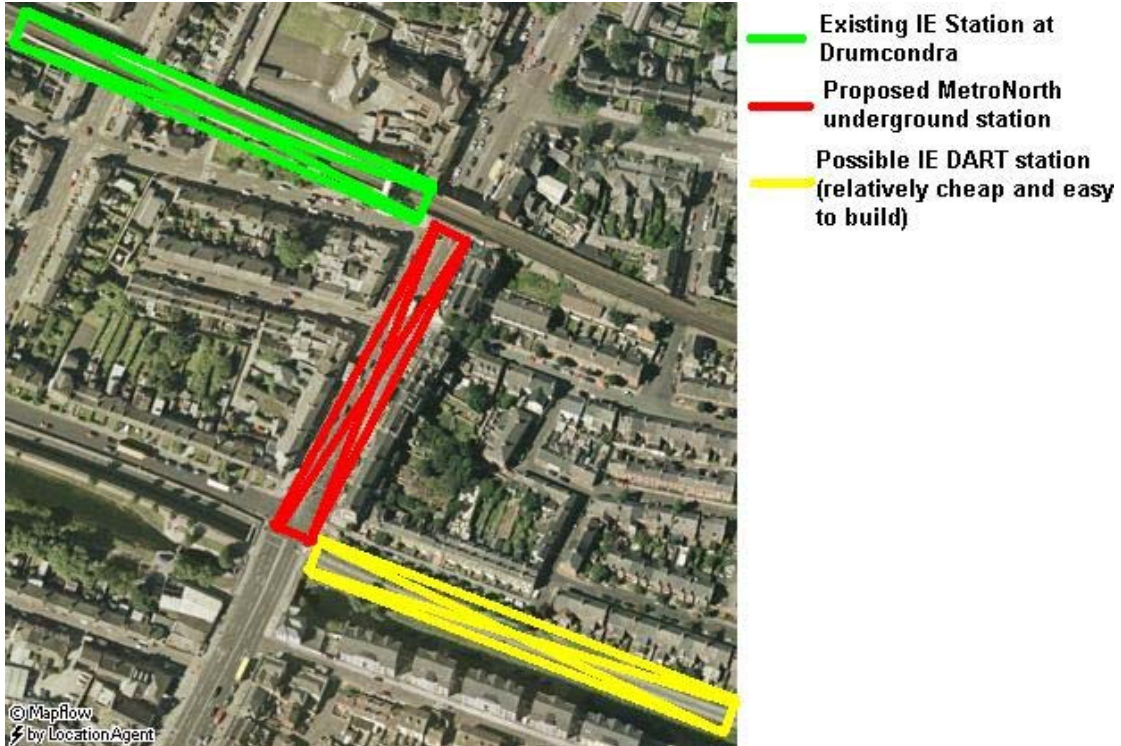
The Government's Transport 21 plan is ambitious, visionary and very achievable. It may be hard to imagine it today but in less than 10 years Dublin will have a criss-cross of intersecting Metro, Luas, DART and Heavy Rail lines and it is key to the effectiveness of this rail transit grid that it is a cohesive, user-friendly network. A true network can only exist when easy interchange between lines is possible and Cross Gunns Bridge and Drumcondra interchange stations are second only in importance to St. Stephen's Green in this respect.

## Appendix II

Aerial Map of locations with proposed platforms



Cross Gunns Bridge just east of the Tennis Club. Some CPO's required for this solution to integration and DART platforms on the Midland (southern) line would be quite expensive to build. The northernmost set of platforms would be relatively cheap but currently do not exist.



The above shows that no CPO of note would be required for a MetroNorth station box under Drumcondra Rd. Clonliffe Rd (immediately north east of station) is a busy thoroughfare as it is and could be used to divert N1 traffic along it during construction. There are obvious advantages to this station location as easy interchange between MetroNorth and BOTH heavy rail lines is possible, as well as linking the existing rail lines in a sheltered environment (possible mezzanine level immediately below street level) allowing comfortable interchange between both rail lines. Having this type of footfall allows retail opportunities in the metro station mezzanine which could assist in paying for the station. Drumcondra Rd is very wide at this location some 7 lanes in fact. Sinking a station box should be relatively easy, perhaps even allowing some traffic flow to continue either side of the works.