



Transport & Mobility Forum

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18th December 2023

Public Consultation – Response

BusConnects Cork
Sustainable Transport Corridors
3rd Public Consultation
Preferred Routes – December 2023
<https://busconnects.ie/cork/>

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Transport and Mobility Forum, Cork (TMF) is a cross-sectoral representative group of organisations who have a common interest in sustainable travel *. The TMF fully supports measures and policies promoting sustainable and active travel. Sustainable and Active Travel (cycling and walking) help to reduce congestion on roads, improve air quality, support a low carbon economy, reduce noise pollution and improve public health.

As such it is the TMF's aim to support the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

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We would like to take the opportunity to comment on the proposed **BusConnects Cork Sustainable Transport Corridors (STC) / Preferred Routes** and thank the NTA for providing an additional 3rd round of public consultation.

1 Overview

We are in general very **supportive of the proposed BusConnects Sustainable Transport Corridors** as the re-distribution of road space to benefit bus and active travel will lift the quality of public transport (PT) in Cork and the Cork Metropolitan Area to an entirely new level and will enhance the quality of walking and cycling (Active Travel, AT) infrastructure. The latter will better facilitate both walking and cycling as a singular mode for medium distances, as it will complement the new PT network with better access routes.

Given the volume of material and the complexity of the entire project, we will not be in a position to comment on every Corridor individually, but will make comments rather on general observations.

Regarding the complexity, we wish to highlight cross-project requirements and ask for a holistic view on the traffic and transport eco-system in the city. We understand that the public consultation is primarily aimed at topics and items that are within the boundaries of the Corridors, but knock-on effects are inevitable to areas outside the projects' boundaries. The STC projects will happen within the complex living organism of a complex city structure, and cannot be seen in isolation.

2 General Comments

At this stage of the BusConnects STC project, we will concentrate on a few general points to comment upon, many of which were already mentioned in our 1st and 2nd round submissions, which we will not repeat in detail.

In the second part, we will list a number of observations on specific locations. This list, however, cannot be exhaustive or complete.

2.1 Space requirements

We acknowledge that in the evolution of the plans so far, efforts were made to minimise the land takes required for the Corridors, and green spaces / trees along the Corridors are being retained as much as possible.

2.2 Bus Gates / displaced remaining motor traffic

In principle, we are in favour of bus gates as a measure to prioritise and accelerate bus traffic. It reduces local motor traffic load along the bus routes and reduces the risk of buses getting stuck in heavy traffic, without a bus lane.

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It must be noted, however, that local access traffic (residents, deliveries, ...) needs to find new routes between main through roads and their origin/destination locally. This can, in some cases, result in substantial detours, and new routes that run through streets that are not intended to take larger amounts of through traffic.

While a large amount of trips currently done by car is to be replaced by bus or active travel, it needs to be seen how much remaining car traffic will still access these local areas around the bus gates. Depending on the nature of these local access areas and trip attractors within them, remaining local traffic can still be substantial. These can be deliveries, service vans (plumber, electrician, ...), people with care duties, elderly, etc., or just local residents.

The Provisional Transport Modelling Report (maps in appendices E and F) give a good indication of the amounts of car traffic to be displaced into other streets in the wider areas around the bus gates. E.g. in the case of bus gates on College Rd (STC E) and at St. Finbarr's Cathedral (STC F), access motor traffic will be pushed into Magazine Rd, Barrack St, Dean St, Industry St, most of which are residential streets. As free flow two-way traffic there is often not possible, eventually large-scale restrictions of residents parking will have to apply here. The same applies to through roads like Friars/Evergreen St (city end).

In connection with the bus gate at the UCC Gates (STC F), the eventual success of the intended 'Quiet Street treatment' of Donovan's Rd, as condition for the removal of the cycle lane, becomes uncertain.

We call for a critical and measured approach in this regard.

2.3 Bus stop locations

Bus stops are the passengers' access points to the bus system. Their location as well as their quality is a determining factor for the easy of access, and hence the success of the bus system as a whole.

Bus stops locations

- Must provide short access to their main catchment area (also to maximise same)
- Have safe and attractive access routes
- Must be visible and placed in a prominent spot within their catchment area
- Should be found intuitively by potential users

The bus stop itself should provide

- Sufficient space for all users (waiting bus passengers (incl. shelter), pedestrians, cyclists (where a cycle lane exists)) to allow for a good quality of service and necessary safety
- Be in an attractive place (e.g. near shops)
- Have natural footfall, e.g. for natural surveillance, and hence provide for a certain degree of personal security (esp. during dark hours, for women, the elderly etc), and must be well lit
- Have a high quality of place, i.e. should be a pleasant space to be in while waiting for the bus.

While aspects of efficient bus operation are also important, the above is essential for the city's people to use the bus network, to have a good user experience and subsequently make the new bus system a success.

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BusConnects must be planned with the user/bus passenger in mind in the first place, and bus stops are one big key factor here. We feel that in some instances, the current plans for the BusConnects STCs in detail fall short of this requirement.

Some examples here are: City Hall/Clontarf St (STC H) with bus stops away from the actual natural footfall (in Anglesea St and Parnell Place), Washington St/South Main St (STC F) with insufficient space available to adequately serve all user groups there, or bus stops at the access to the South City Link Rd (STC H and J) with their locations isolated and away from natural footfall (issues with perceived safety).

We understand that for the sake of attractive journey times, there is an aim for minimum distances between bus stops. While this appears reasonable (see e.g. today's very short distances between certain stops at Western Rd), it must be balanced against short and intuitive access routes in places with a high concentration of trip attractors, where a certain flexibility should be applied (e.g. plans for bus stop locations along Washington St, STC F, omission of the bus stop near the Courthouse).

We ask the NTA to reconsider some of the proposed bus stop locations or details of corridor routings (see individual observations further down).

2.4 Cycle routes and local connectivity

We strongly welcome the development of long-distance cycle routes with large proportions of protected cycle lanes along the Corridors. While they are to provide safe and comfortable cycle trips for longer distances through the city, their success is also dependant on easy access to them from large trip attractors along the way, and local area connectivity along them is essential.

While we understand that cycling infrastructure within BusConnects can only be delivered along the project's Corridors, connectivity around them (joining, leaving or crossing them) must be maintained. Changes in road layout or traffic management in BusConnects must reflect and facilitate future upgrades of the cycling network in the Corridors' vicinity. Provisions for same must be made on the ground today.

One example here is STC F around Washington and Sheare's St. As both will change from one-way to two-way operation, right turns from or crossing these streets outside signalled junctions will become more difficult for cyclists. Small items of additional cycle infrastructure will be needed locally here to maintain connectivity in all directions.

For details, see further down.

3 Observations on specific Locations

As mentioned above, this is a non-exhaustive collection of observations on individual locations.

STC B (Mayfield to City Centre)

The proposed Bus gates along route are welcomed but we are disappointed more were not included, particularly at Dillions Cross limiting traffic along the Old Youghal Rd. between Dillions Cross and Gordons Hill/Murmount Lawn.

We are also concerned at the very low level of removal of on-street parking, particularly along the Old Youghal Rd. between Dillions Cross and Gordons Hill/Murmount Lawn and on Wellington Rd.

We are wondering if the Quiet Street cycle route on Wellington Rd. will provide a sufficient level of service for cycling in the absence of cycle lanes, and no substantial removal of on-street parking. We feel that one or the other at least is required.

In relation to the proposed filtered permeability on York Hill – no through traffic except pedestrian and bicycles – we have some concern as to how cyclists will join traffic on Summer Hill North.

The Quiet Street cycle route using the Middle Glanmire Rd./Leycester's Lane is a positive aspect of the scheme and we note that the entire route is free from on street parking. However, we have concerns over the pedestrian provision on this route. The junction of Leycester's Lane and Middle Glanmire Road needs to be made pedestrian friendly as it currently has no safe space for pedestrians to cross. The junction needs to be redesigned to better cater for pedestrians.

We welcome the addition of pedestrian crossing at St Lukes.

STC F (Bishopstown to Washington St)

We welcome the large scale provision of continuous bus lanes in the Corridor which serves a high amount of large trip attractors (MTU, CUH, County Hall, UCC, Mercy Hospital etc.).

While we support the proposed bus gate at the UCC gates in principle, we have concerns that the amount of displaced remaining local access motor traffic (also in combination with the bus gates on College Rd and at St. Finbarr's Cathedral) will compromise the Quiet Street treatment of Donovan's Rd and the subsequent removal of the uphill cycle lane there.

Regarding local area cycle connectivity, we are critical of two locations along STC F: Victoria Cross and Washington St/Sheare's St.

At Victoria Cross, we see a lack of connectivity between the cycle route (Sacred Heart/Mardyke Walk) and the large trip attractors (UCC's WGB complex and the student accommodations) with dedicated protected cycle infrastructure. This applies in particular for travel to and from the east.

Around Washington St/Sheare's St, cycle connectivity North-South and North-West will in future be dependant on signalled junctions (at Wood St/Prospect Row and at Courthouse St/Grattan St, also see

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above, 2.4). While on Wood St we think a southbound cycling option is needed, the situation around the Courthouse is more complex. While a direct southbound cycling option would be desirable as a missing link between Grattan St (primary cycle route in CycleConnects) and the new proposed southbound cycle lane across Clarke's Bridge, northbound cyclists towards the Middle Parish (Grattan St, Mercy Hospital area) would need to use the southern end of Grattan St, which today and in future is one-way southbound. A short contraflow cycle lane is needed here, as an unprotected right-turn from Sheare's St into Coach St would not be safe in future (two-way traffic).

Access from the East to Sheare's St will also be blocked with Liberty St becoming one-way to the east behind the Courthouse, with no contraflow cycle lane marked in the plans. In South Main St, a northern extension of the contraflow cycle lane up to Liberty St (the current plans show a reduction to only one southbound motor lane here) would also be a very valuable addition.

This should be considered also in light of the primary school in Grattan St, which is also part of the Safe Routes to School programme.

Maintaining and improving the micro scale (local area) connectivity in the Mercy Hospital / Courthouse / South Main St area is complex and needs to be reconsidered in detail in connection with the changes proposed in BusConnects.

We are very critical of the bus stop location in Washington St, east of South Main St. First we feel that it lack of prominence and visibility from the main trip attractors around the Grand Parade (/Patrick St/Oliver Plunkett St). Second and more important, we think there is insufficient space to add a highly frequented bus stop into an already confined street space which is already saturated with bus, pedestrian and cycle traffic. There simply seems to be no room for the additional function of a major bus stop. Otherwise we fear that the service quality of all user groups there (pedestrians, bus users and cyclists) will be severely compromised. It is hard to imagine how a bus stop should safely fit in this location. We suggest moving this bus stop to the northern end of the Grand Parade.

STC H (Airport Rd to City Hall)

As mentioned in our earlier submissions, we feel that the main north-south bus corridor around City Hall should run through Anglesea St and Parnell Place, instead of one block further east (Eglinton/Clontarf St). This would put the bus stops in far more prominent locations (front of the City Hall, end of Oliver Plunkett/ Maylor St as main shopping streets etc.). It would be a prime example of our above statements on bus locations (see 2.3), as bus stops here would be in prominent and well visible locations, with a more pleasant environment and more space for passengers, and in places where people would intuitively expect to find the bus.

We ask the NTA to reconsider the plans here in the interest of higher attractiveness for bus passengers.

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For cycling along Anglesea St/Infirmary Rd, we suggest maintaining and extending the two-way cycle track on the western side of the street, to provide better and more direct access e.g. to St. John's Central College, the local primary school and the future UCC Business School (South Terrace). This would also provide better continuity of the two-way cycle track further to the north up to Merchand's Quay, and the main cycle route along STC H and I will also continue to the west along Longford Row.

STC J (Mahon to South City Link Rd)

We support the provision of a cycle route avoiding the section of the route on the South City Link Road using Hibernian Rd/Rockboro Rd, a short section of the Old Blackrock Rd. and the section of Boreenmanna Rd. from the Old Blackrock Rd to Rockboro Ave. We have concerns however about the lack of provision for cyclists coming from Rockboro Rd across the Old Blackrock Road onto Boreenmanna Rd and feel that this junction and a short stretch of Old Blackrock Rd. require dedicated cycle infrastructure. We also feel the junction of Boreenmanna Rd/Rockboro Ave and the Boreenmanna Rd to South City Link slip road requires a link of dedicated cycle infrastructure across the junction build out.

At the South City Link slip road, we feel that the inbound bus stop is in a too isolated location regarding perception of personal safety and suggest to having it move further to the east.

The discontinuous parking on Boreenmanna Rd between Ceanncora Lawn and the Church Yard Lane junction should be removed to allow the bus lane to run continuously through this section of Boreenmanna Rd. We would like to reiterate our objection to any additional car parking being provided as part of the BusConnects scheme. A significant objective of this scheme should be to reduce the use of private motor vehicles and providing additional parking runs contrary to this and a number of established government policies.

STC K (Kinsale Rd to Douglas)

We welcome the omission of the formerly proposed Mangala bridge, which is no longer part of the plans for STC K.

4 Conclusion

The Transport and Mobility Forum is very much in favour and supports the overall BusConnects STC project. It will provide the infrastructure for the New Bus Network that can only unfold its full potential on redesigned roads and streets that give the buses priority over private car traffic. The proposed active travel infrastructure will largely enhance conditions for cycling and walking, both for access to the buses and for safely covering longer distances, esp. on the continuous cycle routes.

A project of this scale will be best planned with an iterative approach. In this sense we hope that this additional 3rd round of public consultation will contribute to further refine the plans and find viable



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and balances solutions for the individual locations, in the interest to deliver the best plans for Cork's future bus system. We hope that our input will contribute to this.

We trust that our observations will be taken on board and will contribute to a further optimisation of the plans.

The TMF would be obliged to further be involved in the planning process and discourse, at the general scale as well as in the following detailed plans for delivering the individual re-design projects locally.

Should you require any clarifications, please email us at tmfcork@gmail.com.

Kind regards

Dr Darren McAdam-O'Connell (Coordinator)

Stephan Koch (Acting chair)

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Note: *The comments within this submission are solely the view of the Transport and Mobility Forum (TMF) as a whole and not the opinion or view of any individual partner of the TMF.*

*) A full list of partners in the Transport and Mobility Forum can be found at

<https://transportandmobilityforum.com/partners/>