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Community Liaison Officer,
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RE: DART + West Public Consultation: Submission

Dear Community Liaison Officer,

I wish to make this submission as a public representative for the Dublin West constituency as part of the DART + West public consultation process. The information is based on extensive engagements I have undertaken with local communities including rail users, resident associations, community groups and others who have made submissions as part of the consultation.

First, there is a clear demand for a fit for purpose, high frequency rail service to serve the communities in Dublin West. A sizable proportion of commuters avail of train as their mode of transport to get to work/school on a daily basis, in addition to hospital appointments, social travel etc. While the COVID19 pandemic has impacted passenger numbers, it had been recognised by Irish Rail that current rail service for Dublin West is not meeting demand. Prior to the pandemic, I was regularly inundated with complaints from rail users relating to dangerously overcrowded and congested rail carriages for trains serving the Dublin West area. This included overcrowding issues at platforms in train stations at peak times, including the Docklands and Connolly Station. In this context, the proposal to electrify the Dublin – Maynooth/Hansfield lines as part of the DART + West project and to increase frequency from the current rate of 7 trains per hour in each direction up to 15 trains per hour while increasing passenger capacity from 4,500 to 13,750 has been extremely well received. Communities are positively disposed to this enhanced service and recognise this will be a considerable improvement on what is currently being provided.

Communities have raised concerns with some aspects of the plan which are outlined below.

There is a preference in the local community that additional time beyond the extended timeframe should have been allowed for the public consultation. In subsequent consultations there needs to be adequate time for more substantive and meaningful engagement with the local community.

There is considerable concern and opposition amongst the local community in Riverwood, Carpenterstown, Coolmine & St. Mochta's in relation to the proposal to construct a bridge over the canal at Riverwood/Stationcourt/St Mochta's (Option 3). I have articulated these concerns to Minister Eamon Ryan after a cabinet meeting and there is also a consensus on this issue with my local cabinet colleagues. The potential for increased traffic in this residential area, which currently has a quiet cul de sac due, to the construction of a bridge would have a disproportionately negative impact on this residential amenity. There are concerns that this plan would increase air & noise pollution in this residential area. Residents have articulated that the development of a bridge at this location would attract anti-social behaviour and would significantly increase road safety concerns for

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the local community. There is a strong desire to retain the existing level crossing at Coolmine and upgrade the signalling instead of the proposed road closure and the construction of a bridge – a measure in place at other locations in Dublin which are on the existing Dart line. I fully support the community and an alternative plan needs to be found for local residents so their residential amenity is protected whilst also allowing this important project to proceed.

I have also received a submission from the Navan Road Community Council regarding their feedback on the closure of the level crossing at Ashtown which has been submitted to Irish Rail and requires further engagement with local residents.

Based on my engagements with the community it is clear there is strong support for the DART+West project which will greatly improve public transport services in Dublin West and enhance quality of life through reduced commute times, less traffic, less air pollution and increased investment in the area. Communities are asking that the NTA, Irish Rail and authorities work with them in partnership to deliver a rail service that works for everyone.

However the proposal for the closure of the Coolmine level crossing and construction of a new road/bridge in the middle of a residential amenity has caused considerable concern and understandable opposition within the local community. The clear preference is for the level crossing to remain in place and for signalling solutions to instead be developed, as is in place in the parts of the city where DART services cross vehicular roads/streets. I support the community in this regard and ask that the closure of this level crossing and construction of the bridge is not included in the Dart+West project for the reasons outlined.

I believe the submissions received as part of this process should be closely examined and further engagement with the community should occur so that the project proceeds in line with the needs of the community.



Jack Chambers TD

***Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for Sport & the Gaeltacht
Príomh-Aoire an Rialtais agus Aire Stáit do Spórt & don Ghaeltacht***