



**Submission on
BusConnects Lucan Core Bus Corridor
15th February 2019**



Introduction

Celbridge Community Council was established as a voluntary community group in 1975 and has for over forty years been actively involved in many aspects of community life in Celbridge. Our goal is to promote and improve community life and to influence in a positive way the physical development of the area for the benefit of all those who live and work there. As a voluntary group and representative voice for the community, Celbridge Community Council welcomes this opportunity to make a submission as part of the public consultation on the BusConnects Lucan Core Bus Corridor proposals.

Celbridge Community Council broadly welcomes the proposal for the Lucan Core Bus Corridor as the effects on journey times from Celbridge should improve noticeably but wishes to raise the following concerns:

- The proposed reduction from 2 to 1 lanes on the M50 overpass to facilitate provision of a bus lane would have a serious impact on traffic congestion on the N4
- Ending the Lucan Core Bus Corridor at Junction 3 on the N4 would be a missed opportunity and it should extend west as far as Junction 5 in conjunction with the provision of a Park and Ride facility at Junction 5
- Cyclists are not being prioritised in Palmerstown or Chapelizod and this will result in delays for buses as cyclists continue to use the bus lane on the R148

Measures needed to mitigate impact on M50 overpass

The Lucan Core Bus Corridor proposals include removal of one lane of traffic on the M50 overpass to make space for the bus lane. Celbridge Community Council fully supports a bus lane at this location as it is one of the worst causes of delays for buses but wishes to emphasise that infrastructural options will be needed to mitigate the impact on traffic congestion at this location.

Eastbound traffic on the N4 already tails back significant distances in the mornings from the Palmerstown lights out to Lucan (Junction 4 on the N4) and sometimes even further (Junction 5 and beyond). Reduction to a single lane of traffic on the M50 overpass will absolutely result in even longer tailbacks and drivers will seek out rat runs to avoid the queues approaching the M50. The impact in terms of traffic diverting through surrounding residential areas will be significant as these areas are not equipped to cope with extra traffic volume – cars will divert through Celbridge towards Newcastle/N7, through Leixlip towards Blanchardstown/N3, through South Lucan towards Newcastle/N7, through North Lucan towards Blanchardstown/N3, through Liffey Valley Shopping Centre towards Ballyfermot or via the Fonthill Road towards Clondalkin/N7.

The infrastructural changes needed to facilitate a bus lane in addition to retaining two lanes of traffic must be a priority here. TII needs to assess whether space can be found for lane realignments or whether an additional bridge is needed for the bus lane (like the one that carries the Luas across at the Red Cow). If the cost of infrastructural work needed to retain two lanes of traffic is deemed prohibitive and the Lucan Core Bus Corridor project is going to proceed with only one lane of traffic as per the proposals, then radical measures will need to be taken to reduce the volume of cars that approach the M50 on the N4. It will not be good enough to remove the second traffic lane and expect

that a reduction in traffic will happen organically if commuters are not provided with alternative options in tandem with the changes to enable them to change their commuting behaviour. Options to seriously explore would be the provision of quality, frequent and affordable bus services and Park and Ride facilities. This leads into our next concern regarding how the Core Bus Corridor should commence further west at Junction 5 (where the M4 becomes the N4).

As an aside, when looking at the infrastructure at the M50 overpass and approach thereto, it should be noted that many cars approaching the M50 (eastbound) are already using the bus lane so measures should be implemented to protect the bus lane from this driving behaviour.

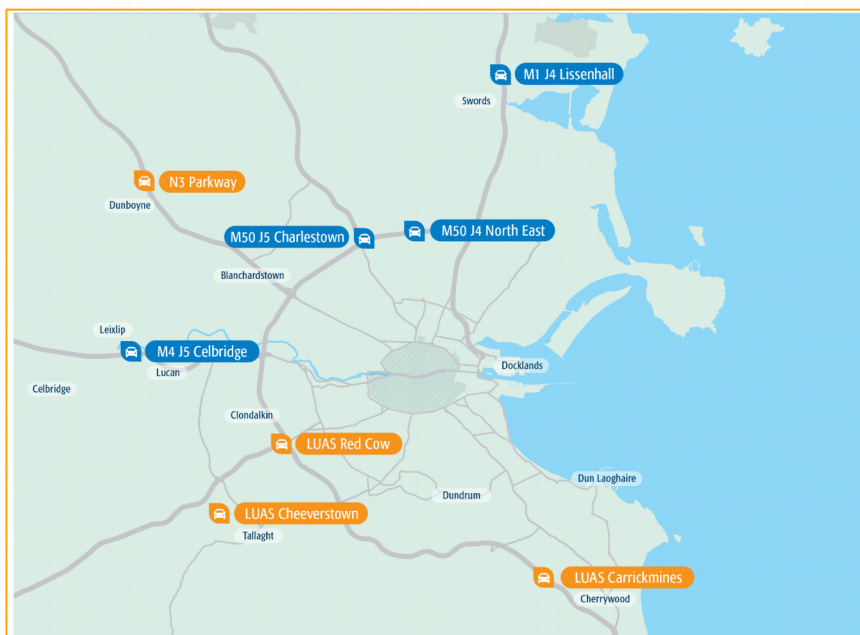
Start Further West

Given the level of traffic congestion on the M4/N4, the volume of cars on it needs to be reduced significantly from as far out west as possible. The population of Metropolitan North Kildare (Celbridge, Donaghcumper, Maynooth, Leixlip, Kilcock and Straffan Electoral Districts) was 62,449 in 2016 and about a quarter of these people commute to Dublin city and suburbs for work. An additional 2,500 may travel into Dublin for study purposes. The population of Metropolitan North Kildare could be in excess of 77,000 by 2031. The current level of car dependency in Celbridge is unacceptably high given that it is a town within the Dublin Metropolitan Area. Although lower than Celbridge's, the car dependency rates in Maynooth and Leixlip (these towns are served by rail into the heart of their population) are still unacceptably high for towns within the Dublin Metropolitan Area.

The BusConnects strategy for provision of Park and Rides¹ marks up Junction 5 as an indicative location for Park and Ride facilities.

Junction 5 is where the M4 becomes the N4. It is 4km further west on the N4 from where the proposed Core Bus Corridor is due to end. There is already a bus lane that starts at Junction 5 so the work needed to extend the Core Bus Corridor out this far should not be extensive.

Fig: 1: Indicative Locations of Park and Ride Facilities



Celbridge Community Council considers it a missed opportunity if the Core Bus Corridor does not commence at Junction 5.

¹ <https://busconnects.ie/initiatives/leave-the-car/>



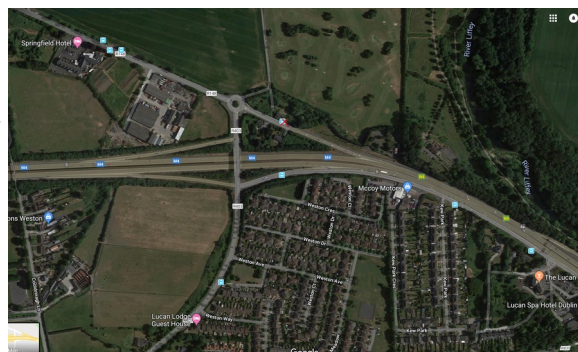
The young age dependency rates in many parts of Kildare and Meath are high as these areas are populated with young couples who couldn't afford homes closer to Dublin. These couples now live with young children on the outer reaches of the Dublin Metropolitan Area and beyond where public transport services are far less frequent and less extensive than in Dublin. While the many workers who commute into Dublin daily from Kildare and Meath absolutely need their cars for the first leg of their outward journeys and the last leg of their homeward journeys due to the distance they live from public transport or due to their need to detour by schools or childcare, there is no reason why those who commute to Dublin shouldn't avail of public transport for the leg of their journeys closest to Dublin where roads are heavily congested and public transport is being prioritised. Transport planning for the Dublin Metropolitan Area focuses largely on the populations that live in Dublin but many of those who travel to Dublin from further out would welcome the opportunity to remove the stresses of driving on congested roads from their lives. These commuters could be regular users of reliable, frequent and fast bus services if they had somewhere to park.

In a 2015 report commissioned by the NTA to examine the role of Park and Ride in the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy up to the year 2035², it is stated that South Dublin County Council had been considering a site in the Lucan Spa Hotel area for a Park and Ride but, due to the lack of competitive onward travel times by the available public transport services, the site was no longer being considered. We were informed at the Community Forum meeting in Chapelizod last month that the removal of constraints along the Lucan Core Bus Corridor will result in an expected 40-50% saving on journey times. This would present the perfect opportunity to deliver the "competitive onward travel times" which South Dublin County Council felt was missing from Junction 5.

The above mentioned Park and Ride strategy document also highlights that ad hoc Park and Ride has been witnessed in the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre car park adjacent to the bus stop facilities. This corroborates numerous reports we have heard from Celbridge commuters about how they park at Liffey Valley so they can maximise their public transport options.

While Hugh Creegan stated at the Community Forum meeting that Park and Rides are generally perceived as a "down the line" thing, he acknowledged that, given the simplicity of the N4 for a Core Bus Corridor relative to other ones (less land take needed, etc.), it might be possible to consider a Park and Ride on the N4 sooner than at other locations. Celbridge Community Council strongly encourages the NTA to pursue this as a strategy.

We are aware that the land to the north of the M4 at Junction 5 is zoned "to protect and enhance the outstanding character and amenity of the Liffey Valley" but this shouldn't prevent provision of a Park and Ride as there is land to the south of the junction that would be perfectly positioned for one.



While the decision to end the Core Bus Corridor at Junction 3 (Woodies) may be based on an analysis of the number of buses using the N4 further out, this number is based on historical routing of all buses from Maynooth, Celbridge and Leixlip through Lucan village. By routing all buses through Lucan, commuters from North Kildare to Dublin can be subjected to 10-20 additional minutes onto already long journey times as their bus crawls through a congested Lucan village. Not routing buses along the N4 also misses opportunities to better connect passengers from North Kildare with other parts of Lucan. For example, the Lucan Swimming Pool that is due to be constructed at Griffeen Valley Park over the next 2 years would be a 7 minute walk from the N4 if a new stop was provided on the N4 at the existing bridge (near 53.351255, -6.441367).



Celbridge is one of the towns with the highest percentages of commuters who commute for more than an hour (18.6%)³. Journeys on public transport cannot currently be completed in an acceptable time-frame by many from Celbridge meaning that large numbers travel by private car thereby exacerbating traffic congestion in Celbridge and on access routes to the city. Drastic measures are needed to address this and, if competitive journey times can be realised as a result of the Core Bus Corridor, then more passengers will avail of the bus.

³ <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp6ci/p6cii/p6td/>



Prioritise Cyclists in Palmerstown and Chapelizod

Public transport users in our community identified use of the bus lanes on the Chapelizod Bypass by cyclists as the other main cause of delays for buses (after delays at the M50 overpass) along the route of the proposed Lucan Core Bus Corridor. Despite the expectation and assumption that cyclists would cycle through Palmerstown and Chapelizod villages, many cyclists prefer to use the Bus Lane on the Chapelizod bypass due, as we found out from the discussion at the Community Forum meeting, to the nature of the cycle through Palmerstown and Chapelizod villages being very stop-start.

Representatives of the cycling community who attended the Community Forum explained that the lack of segregation between motorists and cyclists through most of Palmerstown and Chapelizod combined with the poor quality of the road surface are significant deterrents to cyclists taking this route. Disappointment was expressed that the proposals for the Lucan Core Bus Corridor do not include measures to enhance safety for cyclists along the route that cyclists are being expected to take.

The realities demonstrated by actual cyclists' behaviour cannot be ignored so Celbridge Community Council recommends that the NTA engages in qualitative research to unravel the issues at stake here and that measures to address the issues be included in the Lucan Core Bus Corridor project. Failure to do so will result in delays for buses and greater risk to cyclists.

Conclusion

We trust that the points raised by Celbridge Community Council will be taken into consideration in finalising the details of the Lucan Core Bus Corridor. We wish the NTA every success in getting this extremely valuable project implemented.

With our local knowledge and connections to the community, we feel that the members of Celbridge Community Council could bring many local insights to the table during a deeper analysis of the public transport needs of North Kildare. Celbridge Community Council's only agenda is to realise the best possible public transport service for those who travel to and from our town and we would be delighted to engage with the NTA to assist in any way possible and invite you to reach out to us by emailing info@celbridgecommunitycouncil.ie.