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5<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District Councillors

### **Briefing with NTA on BusConnects Report 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018...**

Dear Councillors

In advance of your briefing with the National Transport Authority tomorrow 6th July, we wish to take this opportunity to outline some of our thoughts in light of the recent BusConnects Report. We hope that you can feed them into your discussions with the NTA and subsequently provide us with a status update.

We have formulated views on what public transport provision we believe is needed in Celbridge. These are based on the views expressed by many from the Celbridge community over a number of months regarding use of public transport. The BusConnects proposals address a number of our aspirations but we consider the complete removal of an express service from Celbridge by virtue of all buses being routed through Leixlip and Lucan to be a grave mistake. The 324 bus route is described as "express" but there is nothing express about it due to the routing. Given traffic problems in the town, BusConnects needs to be ambitious about encouraging a modal shift from private cars to public transport but we fear that the proposals we are seeing for a downgraded connection to the city centre will do the opposite and further exacerbate traffic problems in Celbridge.

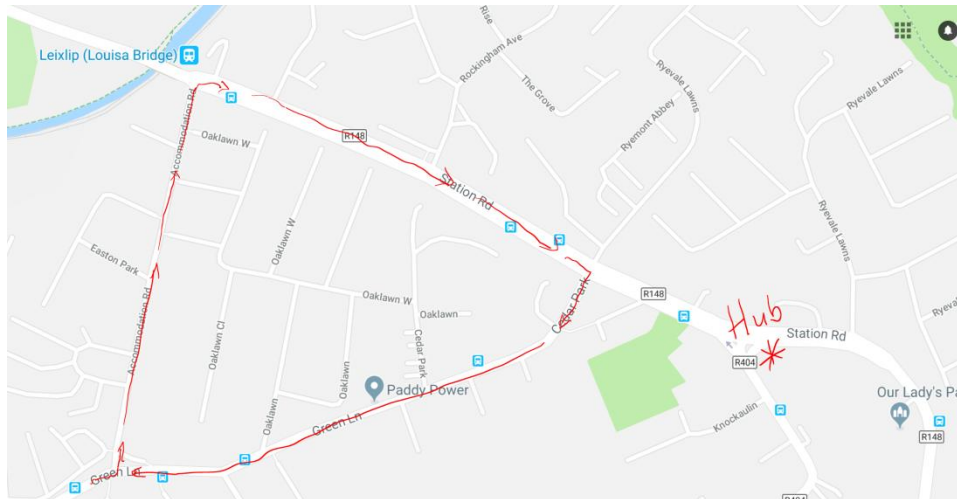
We believe the following to be important for the people who live and work in Celbridge:

- **Efficient access to the city centre**

- We are pleased to note that the proposed C4 route will commence in Celbridge as this should alleviate the problem that many commuters experience whereby buses are full at peak times before they reach the Main Street. A town the size of Celbridge merits its own dedicated bus route rather than merely being a stop on bus routes originating elsewhere.
- We welcome the increased frequency of the C4 service, however we would rather see a much greater increase in frequency
- The proposed changes remove express buses as we know them - this is a huge omission as commute times on the 67X are already excessive and what commuters of Celbridge need is an improvement of the express bus service rather than removal of it!
- We cannot see any way that the proposed C4 route makes sense for a commuter who is only concerned with getting to the city centre - it will be slower than the current 67 by virtue of the routing through Leixlip. The 05:25am 67 Dublin Bus service which currently routes through Leixlip village is painfully slow despite the quiet early morning time. While we appreciate the importance of Celbridge having a public transport link with Leixlip, it makes more sense for this link to be a local one rather than the main Celbridge to Dublin bus route.
- Express buses need to be provided to North Kildare during peak hours that do not serve Lucan or Chapelizod



- The report states that “Demand for travel from Celbridge to city centre should shift somewhat to rail as Kildare Line frequencies improve.” Commuters in Celbridge report a number of issues which detract from the viability of rail for them. These include:
  - services being full - queries to Irish Rail regarding this elicit the response that new carriages are on order;
  - the train service to Heuston is considered prohibitively slow by many as the time needed to get to Hazelhatch combined with the train journey itself and the time needed on a bus or Luas to reach commuters’ final destinations is excessive;
  - the service via the Phoenix Park tunnel would need to be scaled significantly to be considered a viable option by the commuters of Celbridge – besides being full, with a 53 minute gap between the 08:35 and 09:28 trains, there are no times that suit parents who need to do school runs then commute to work to arrive before 10am.
- **Improved feeder bus service to Hazelhatch train station**
  - We welcome the proposed 259 route as a properly timetabled feeder service to Hazelhatch train station is long overdue.
- **Feeder bus connecting residents of Celbridge to Louisa Bridge train station in Leixlip**
  - We welcome the connection of Celbridge with our closest neighbour through the 259 route. A public transport link between Celbridge and Leixlip could reduce reliance on cars for local journeys. However, while the proposed 259 route aims to connect us with Confey station, we believe this is a mistake. The time that will be needed for the bus to get through Leixlip village and up Captain’s Hill is prohibitive and the route will not serve the intended purpose. Facilitating access to more public transport facilities for commuters is laudable it but needs to be practical. In addition to the traffic concerns, the report acknowledges space constraints at Confey station that are not an issue at Louisa Bridge. Routing this bus to Louisa Bridge via Accommodation Road might be considered as an attractive alternative that could still get commuters close to the bus “hub” in Leixlip by looping back from Station Road to Cedar Park.



- **Connect areas of Celbridge that are poorly connected with public transport**
  - We welcome the proposed 259 route that will serve the Hazelhatch, Clane and Aghard’s Roads with a connection to train services at Hazelhatch and Leixlip
  - The replacement of five 67X express buses with three “peak only” 324 buses will be detrimental to commuters from the Clane and Aghard’s Roads parts of town as many rely on this route - the reduction in service and the extra time that would be needed for the routing through Leixlip and Lucan will worsen commute times. Journey times are already well in excess of an hour on the 67X especially in the evenings and these do not go through Leixlip or Lucan.



- **Connect Celbridge to parts of West Dublin to connect with the Luas, City West and other places of work**
  - We welcome the proposed W8 orbital route. We have many commuters who travel to City West and Tallaght and this route should take a number of them out of their cars. It will open up access to the Luas at Saggart, to Tallaght hospital and make the journey to ITT less arduous for Celbridge students while continuing our public transport connection with Maynooth. This route promises to open up more job opportunities to the people of Celbridge who do not drive.
- **Ensure that residents of Celbridge can easily access South Lucan, especially the swimming pool that is expected to open in Lucan in 2020**
  - Routing a bus from Celbridge through Adamstown and onto Griffeen Valley Park before joining the N4 would address this. We're talking visionary stuff here as the Celbridge Link Road that will connect the Adamstown SDZ with the Celbridge Road at Backweston has yet to be built!

As outlined above, we welcome many aspects of the report. Additionally, we welcome the aspects that open up access to areas of Dublin by public transport without needing to be routed through the city centre.

However, these welcome aspects are overshadowed by the negative proposals. With a clear eye on the ultimate goal of enabling as many people as possible to use public transport, we fear that the increase in commute times to Dublin indicated by the BusConnects route proposals for Celbridge will have the opposite effect. Celbridge has the highest rate of car dependency amongst the North Kildare towns of Maynooth, Leixlip and Celbridge and we fear that this will worsen as exasperation with excessive journey times increases. Commuting times for many in Celbridge far exceed 35-40 minutes, a duration that is considered to be at the upper limit of tolerance before stress, decreased quality of life and other health implications kick in. If Celbridge is to be developed as part of the Greater Dublin Area Metropolitan Region, then public transport provision to Celbridge needs to be prioritised to support this. Routing our main service through Leixlip and drastically altering access to "express services" can only be viewed as a downgrading of the existing service.

In addition to the points highlighted above, we have a number of queries which we would appreciate if you could raise with the NTA at your briefing tomorrow:

- Could you obtain a report detailing the traffic/ transport modelling that was carried out for North Kildare?
  - Was POWSCAR data from Census 2016 analysed? What was discovered regarding the desire lines for commuters from Celbridge?
  - With an improvement in rail services, how many more commuters from Celbridge could realistically make use of rail to access their places of employment or study?
  - Were transport providers forthcoming with passenger numbers?
  - Can the NTA provide passenger numbers on all 67X buses to and from Celbridge? Specifically, a breakdown of how many customers board in Celbridge by location?
  - Could the NTA provide you with detailed patterns of demand for North Kildare – the maps in Chapter 5 of the report only show the eastern side of Leixlip and exclude Celbridge and Maynooth.
  - Can the NTA provide passenger numbers on all 67 buses for journeys between Celbridge and Maynooth?
- Has the aggressive population increase targeted for Celbridge, Leixlip and Maynooth under the Kildare County Development Plan been factored into the BusConnects proposals?
- What is the plan for the 120 Bus Eireann?
- Will Bus Eireann buses be included in the simplified 90 minute fare?
- Could you find out what plans are in place to increase capacity on the Kildare rail line, in particular the route going to Grand Canal Dock via Phoenix Park tunnel?
- What was the rationale for routing the 259 to Confey rather than Louisa Bridge?



- What size bus will be used for the W8?
  - Will it be able to cross the bridge at Hazelhatch?
  - Will it have enough capacity to serve the demand for service to Maynooth from Celbridge especially if it is taking passengers from West Dublin who are travelling to Maynooth University?
- Can a commitment be obtained to always retain a service between Celbridge and Maynooth that is not tied to the success of the W8 orbital route?
- Has the NTA got data on the time it takes buses to traverse certain segments of bus routes on a busy day, for example, a **Tuesday morning and evening in November**? e.g.
  - 67 from Salesians to Abbey Lodge
  - 67 from Abbey Lodge to Young's Cross
  - 67 from Young's Cross to Maxol in Lucan
  - 66 / 67 from Maxol in Lucan to the Foxhunter
  - 66B through Leixlip
- Are there any particular plans for a transport "Hub" in Leixlip or other measures that would expedite the passage of buses through Leixlip town centre?
- The BusConnects website refers to provision of high quality cycling facilities, segregated from bus lanes on each of the Core Bus Network corridors but are there any plans for provision of same in North Kildare? Provision of greenways that keep cyclists safely away from traffic is essential to encourage more nervous cyclists and to ensure that neither buses nor cyclists hinder one another.
- Based on initial BusConnects proposals, we had expected there to be a Park n Ride near Leixlip but this does not appear to have materialised. Has this idea been ruled out?

We look forward to hearing your feedback following tomorrow's briefing by the NTA.

Kind regards

Helen Rice  
Secretary  
Celbridge Community Council