

Dear Mr Shakespeare,

The Dublin Commuter Coalition, along with the representatives of the undersigned groups, are calling for an emergency meeting with yourself - DCC CEO Richard Shakespeare, and the Council's Executive Manager for Traffic Brendan O'Brien, to discuss the last minute changes to the Dublin City Centre Transport Plan.

The DCC Transport Plan is scheduled to begin its rollout before the end of the summer, most notably, with the installation of bus gates on the North and South Quays. This measure will reduce the amount of through-traffic and congestion in the core City Centre which DCC estimates to account for 60% of all private motor traffic¹, and provides no economic value to local businesses. In fact, as stated in a recent Government Report, "the cost of congestion is estimated to be €336m in 2022 rising to over €1.5bn by 2040".²

In addition, as expressed by Dublin Bus CEO, Billy Hann earlier this year, the dominance of private cars in Dublin are the "*biggest barrier*" to faster and more reliable bus services, adding that cars using the city as a route to reach a destination outside of the City Centre "*take up vital road space and increase journey times for people using Dublin Bus*"³. Crucially, a delay to March 2025, as has been suggested, will have serious consequences for the delivery of BusConnects, as core bus routes with higher frequencies were supposed to leverage these bus gates.

Finally, the timely delivery of this project was the basis for the cancellation of the Liffey Cycle Track project, which has been superseded by the new DCC Transport Plan. Without implementing safe infrastructure for walking and cycling, we fail to see how DCC aims to achieve its own goal of increasing the modal shift to active travel, thus reducing carbon emissions and air pollution. We believe that this modal shift will bring much needed life, vibrancy and economic benefit to Dublin City.

Reducing the bus gate on Bachelor's Walk from 24 hours to 12 hours (7am-7pm) will hinder reallocating road space for walking and cycling, thus failing in the goal of promoting active travel. Additionally, we do not believe that this change addresses the concerns of disability groups as intended. Time-bound bus gates, like those previously seen at College Green, lead to poor adherence and ineffectiveness, often requiring constant enforcement. In the end, a 24 hour restriction for private vehicles was established - which should have been the case from the start.

Regarding the recent unacceptable interference from political representatives outside of those directly elected to Dublin City Council, we wish to highlight the following;

The lengthy consultation process for the DCC Transport Plan, resulted in 80% support from Dublin citizens, with one of the largest volumes of submissions ever recorded. In addition, last month's local elections returned a majority of councillors who had supported the Transport Plan in its current form, further expressing the public's support. These councillors made their support for the plan clear whilst

¹ Transportation SPC Briefing September 2023 - Brendan O'Brien, Hugh Creegan NTA

² The Economic Cost of Congestion in the Greater Dublin Area 2022-2040 - Strategic Research and Analysis Division - Department of Transport 2023

³ Oireachtas Committee on Transport - 8th May 2024

canvassing, and voters elected them. Furthermore, these councillors' support is clearly outlined in their ruling group's document, stating that "*agreed transport plans will be safeguarded and implemented*".

As the recent intervention relates to the concerns of local business, we must refer to the submission made by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce - Ireland's largest chamber of commerce with over 1,300 member companies, making it the most representative and broadly-based business group in the Greater Dublin Area - "*We commend Dublin City Council and the NTA for developing a plan for Dublin City that at its core aims to develop the City Core as an area where both businesses and recreation can go hand in hand*"⁴.

We also question the inclusion of an economic analysis after the consultation phase has ended, nor do we agree with a lobby group commissioning its own report, whose conclusions can not be considered independent or impartial.

It is concerning that the democratic process which involves input from all quarters of society, over an open and public consultation period, is now potentially being disregarded, in the eleventh hour, for the benefit of a powerful lobby group, representing the interests of a small number of city centre car parks, whose business model will always be opposed to any efforts to reduce car traffic in the City Centre.

The weight given to their concerns is disproportionate to the weight given to the public's opinion. This undermines the democratic process of local government and public consultations, and this subversion of democracy needs to be challenged. The council should also reflect on how future development plans must consult more meaningfully with Disabled People's Organisations.

We cannot stand by and risk more serious injury and death on the roads in central Dublin, or allow the continued car-reliant mindset to be propagated by a small handful of lobbyists with vested interests in perpetuating the status quo. We are requesting an immediate meeting with yourself - DCC CEO Richard Shakespeare, and the Council's Executive Manager for Traffic Brendan O'Brien, to discuss our concerns, in the hopes you will implement the agreed project in full, and on time.

Regards

Gary Marshall, Public Relations Officer - Dublin Commuter Coalition

Signed by

Jason Cullen, Chairperson - Dublin Commuter Coalition

Úna Morrison - Dublin Cycling Campaign

Elaine McGoff, Head of Advocacy - An Taisce

Dr. Ola L Nordrum, Operations Officer - Irish Doctors for the Environment

Dr. Ciara Murphy, Environmental Policy Advocate - Jesuit centre for faith and justice

Dr. Lorraine D'Arcy, Sustainability Action Research & Innovation Lead - TUD

Janis Morrissey, Director of Health Promotion - Irish Heart Foundation

Ciarán Ferrie - I BIKE Dublin

Stephen McManus, Co-Founder - The Bike Hub

⁴ Submission on the Draft Dublin City Centre Transport Plan 2023 - Dublin Chamber - December 2024