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Independent Senator for
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Autumn 2018

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Time to



the Metrolink madness

Don't Let Them Close Luas Green Line For Up to 2 Years

Dear Resident,

As you are aware there is mounting local disquiet concerning the Metrolink project as it effects Ranelagh and surrounding South City districts.

I have consistently opposed the plan to incorporate the Luas Green Line into a closed Metro system on a number of grounds which I have set out on my website www.michaelmcdowell.ie and in my submission to the public consultation process which closed in mid May this year.

€170 million has already been spent on the planning of a project which has not received Oireachtas approval.

I have also attended a number of meetings with the representatives of local residents who have now called their campaign group Rethink Metrolink.

I am strongly of the view that the current consultation process is a sham and that the National Transport Authority (NTA) intends to sink between €3.5 billion and €4.5 billion of public capital into one white elephant, when for that money we could have 6-8 Luas lines

serving many of Dublin's suburbs for the same cost. I am especially concerned at the loss of use of the Luas Green Line during the construction period of 1-2 years.

I will continue to represent your interests and concerns when the NTA issues its next proposed report in late August outlining changes to the scheme and will contribute to a further consultation process which will then open until late September.

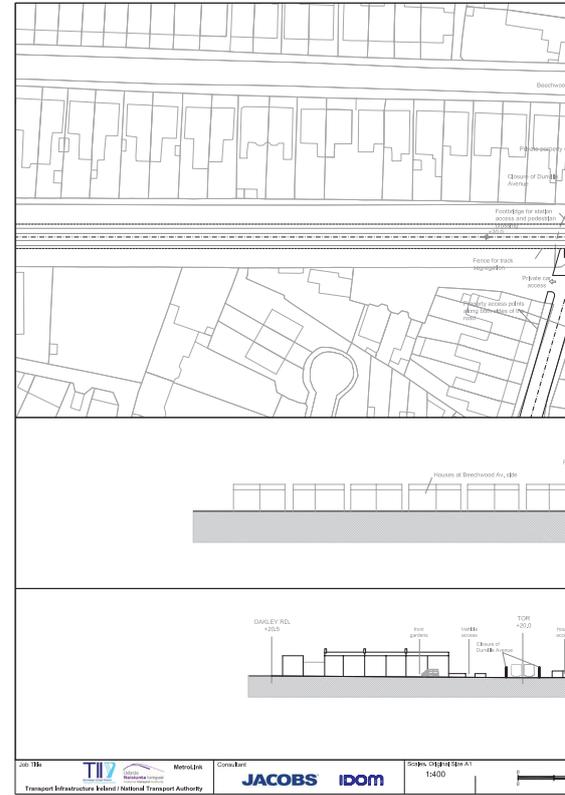
I look forward to hearing from you if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

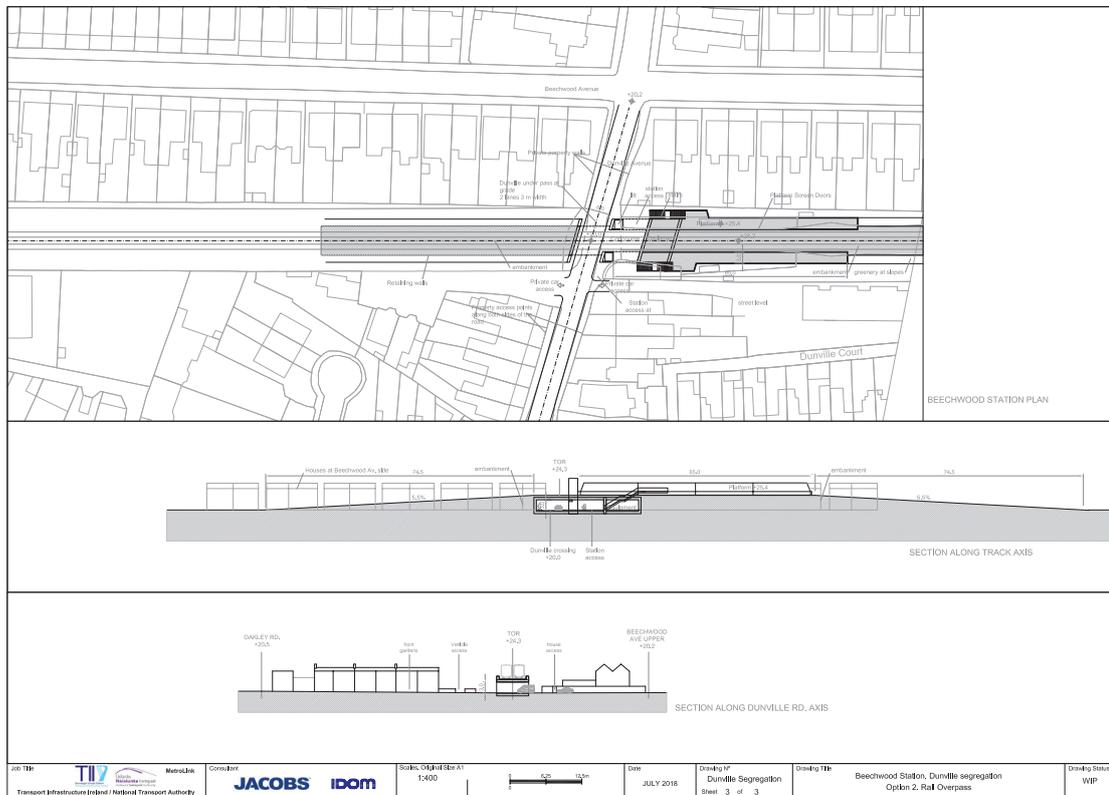
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McDowell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

WHAT THESE PROPOSALS MEAN FOR YOU:

- The complete closure of the Luas Green Line from Harcourt Street to Sandyford for the duration of the works, probably 18 to 24 months, although the NTA ridiculously claims that the works could be completed in 6 months
- Further closure for 3 months to facilitate commissioning and testing
- For residents of the Beechwood area the NTA is proposing either a foot bridge, a rail bridge over Dunville Avenue or a low underpass for cars only (not lorries)
- The line as far as Sandyford would be sealed off along its entire length to accommodate high speed driverless Metrolink trains every 2 minutes
- Rebuilding all stations from Charlemont to Sandyford to accommodate high floor Metro trains
- Leaving the remaining parts of the Green line Luas service from Charlemont to Cabra and from Sandyford to Cherrywood as separate disconnected tram services



Beechwood Station, Dunville segregation



Beechwood Station, Dunville segregation. Rail Overpass

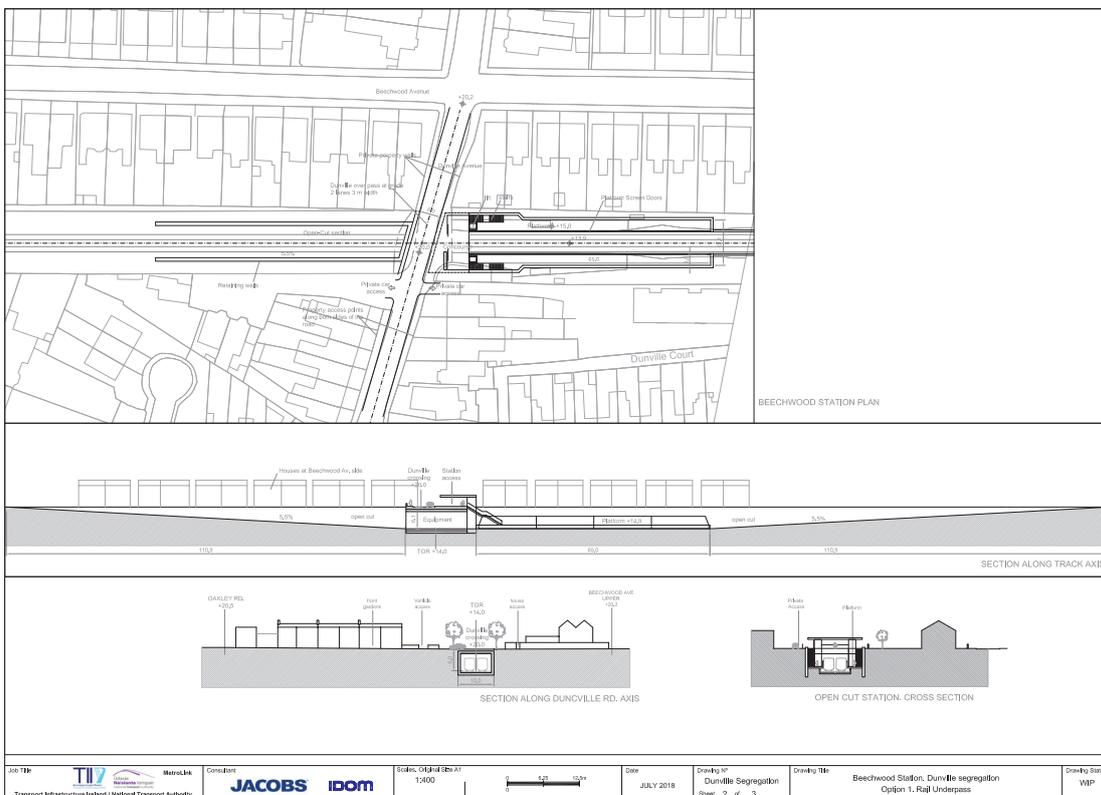
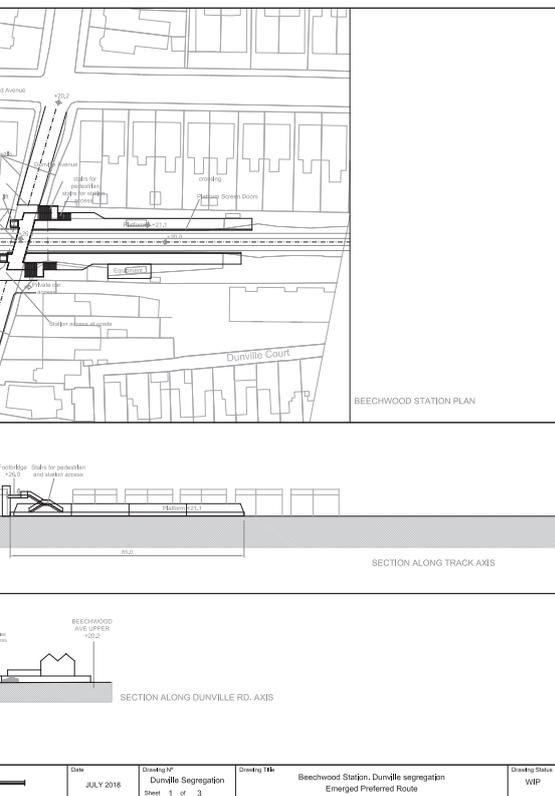


Swords-Airport-Sandyford Metrolink Project

The story so far...

- €170 million spent to date on an **unapproved** project
- Estimated delivery cost of **€3.5 billion to €4.5 billion** following a sham consultation process
- **€368 million** recently spent on the **Luas Cross City project**
- **8-10 new Luas lines** could be provided for a similar cost to the exchequer, serving areas of much greater transport need and **truly connecting Dublin**
- **No** meaningful public consultation
- **No** prior parliamentary approval
- **No** consideration of alternatives
- **No** cost-benefit analysis

Engagement. Emerged preferred route



Beechwood Station, Dunville segregation. Rail Underpass

To view these maps in more detail please visit www.michaelmcdowell.ie

Time for transparency

The Dublin Metrolink project, I regret to say, is rapidly emerging as a scandalous example of everything that is worst about policy making and governance in Ireland.

€170 million of taxpayers' money has already been spent on the project. That is a vast sum. There was never any debate or parliamentary approval for that expenditure. A plan to build a metro from Swords via Dublin airport to Sandyford has been hatched in private, planned largely in secret (gobbling up that €170 million), and then presented for a phony "public consultation" which consisted of a PR exercise designed to convey the impression that the people of Dublin were being asked for their views on whether the project should proceed at all!

Given that the project, if constructed, would probably cost the tax-payer a further €3.5 billion or €4 billion, you might have thought that before anyone spent €170 million on preliminary designs and planning there would be a public debate and evaluation on whether the Metrolink project was a good idea or whether that kind of money could have been spent, say on developing 8 or 10 new Luas lines to serve other suburbs of Dublin.

But no – that didn't happen. An un-approved project was allowed to trundle forwards with no debate or democratic line of sight. And now it is becoming so expensive that stopping this behemoth would create a political scandal for the members of the Government who, by act or omission, have brought us to this pass.

One of the most astonishing aspects of the scheme is that the great majority of the public have been kept in the dark about what it will mean.

The carefully concealed fact is that the project will entail the complete closure of the Luas Green line from Harcourt Street to Sandyford for the duration of the works. The National Transport Authority ridiculously claimed recently at a meeting with Oireachtas members that these works could be completed in 6 months! Anyone who has seen the length of time required for the Luas cross-city part of the Green line will understand that the likely time frame for the loss of passenger services from Charlemont to Sandyford is far more likely to be in the range of 18 to 24 months.

I should add that the NTA has now conceded that it is planning to use high-floor metro trains. This means that every station along the cannibalised portion of the Luas Green line will have to be rebuilt with high platforms. That means, in turn, that Luas-type trams will never again be able to operate on that portion of the line.

On top of the lengthy period that the Green Line is planned to be out of action for construction, the NTA has admitted that they will need a further period of close-down of three months after the completion of the line to "commission" the new Metro train service.

They say that existing passengers would be conveyed in buses from Sandyford to Charlemont during these periods. So commuters in Cherrywood will take three journeys – one by tram to Sandyford, one by bus to Charlemont, and one by tram from Charlemont to their north-city destinations to get to work each morning. That is three journeys – one by bus on very congested roads – twice a day.

I needn't remind you that we have just spent €368 million connecting the Green line across the city to Cabra with surface stations on St Stephen's Green and O'Connell Street.

But the Metrolink plan envisages building new "cut and cover" underground stations on O'Connell Street and at the far side of St Stephen's Green. Think of the traffic chaos for those streets and adjoining areas which are just recovering from the hugely lengthy cross-city Luas works. Think of the effect on people going to and from Dundrum and Cherrywood as commuters and shoppers.

That's not all folks!

The NTA is now considering abandoning the two-tunnel underground system so expensively devised and using a single, larger bore tunnel to carry driverless trains side by side in each direction. It is also argued that a single-bore tunnel would cause less disruption for the Na Fianna sports complex on the city's north side.

The "good news" for residents of the Beechwood area is that the NTA are now considering building at Dunville Avenue either a road bridge with lengthy access ramps or else creating an underpass for cars (not lorries) by raising the railway line. That work too is included in their absurd 6 month time estimate for closing down the Green line!

But even that does not avoid the need to seal off the line along its entire length so as to accommodate the high-speed driverless train service every two minutes.

NTA argues that Cherrywood will soon be a town of 35,000 inhabitants and that the existing Luas Green line service will not be able to cope with the demand.

Well, remember this, Cherrywood is not getting any Metrolink service. The planned Metro will stop at Sandyford and will not go further.

Cherrywood residents will have to use a separate tram to reach Sandyford. They will in future have to use one train and two tram services to get to the DIT at Broadstone instead of the existing continuous tram service.

It would make more sense to use much longer 90 metre Luas tram sets on the entire stretch from Brides Glen through Cherrywood, Sandyford, Dundrum, to Charlemont run on a much more frequent timetable to cope with the demand on the Green line. If such longer tram sets would cause insurmountable problems on the city centre stretches, existing 60 metre sets could be used between Charlemont and Cabra.

The bigger issue is this. We have just spent €368 million on a cross-city Luas service that would not have been built if the Metrolink project was intended. The NTA has spent €170 million planning a €3.5 to €4 billion project with no public consultation, no parliamentary approval and no consideration of the alternatives. There has been no cost benefit analysis done of the project compared to its alternatives. No such comparative analysis is planned or intended.

We know that Irish Rail were working up to last year on an entirely different underground system which would have joined the Belfast railway line via the south inner city to the railway for the west and south at Heuston. Who vetoed that, why and at what cost thrown away is not clear.

One thing is clear to me. Closing down and cannibalising the Luas Green line service instead of increasing its capacity seems daft. If any metro tunnel is to be bored as planned, should it not have its southern end at some suburb that has no service. Why not spend the huge capital budget on giving many more of Dublin's citizens a proper tram system.

It is time to stop this madness and to reconsider in an intelligent, transparent way what the policy and cost implications of these highly expensive, secretly devised plans really are.

It is time too that the real transport choices for all of Dublin were considered and democratically decided out in the open.



*Keep in touch with your views on Metrolink and any other topics
by emailing michael.mcdowell@oireachtas.ie*