

Bus Connects: Submission Cllr Dean Mulligan – Independents4Change- Swords Ward

Introduction:

With respect to the NTAs objective to roll out, what is vitally needed state of the art bus corridor and transport link for the greater Dublin area namely Bus connects. The consultation process and discussion to date with respect to such has not been good enough. The issue in my opinion is that the National Transport Authority employ “experts” in their respective fields to develop and propose such transport initiatives. It must be acknowledged I feel that the businesspeople and engineers working on these projects are looking at figures and statistics and have no real understanding of the local issues and lived experience of the communities, this is why the consultation process is so important. However I feel rather than have a consultation process which focus on ones ability to submit written documentation, a much fuller and in-depth consultation which we have seen work well would be citizens assemblies, they are both cost effective and the information ascertained goes beyond that of infrastructure and gives clear example of lived experiences. Such consultations should include representatives from all relevant parties including but not limit to NTA, Dublin Bus, Department of Transport, Elected Reps, Community groups. As an elected rep there is far to many instances where responsibility is shared from various stakeholders and issues are stagnated and not resolved as major stakeholders are not amenable to have cross party consultation and make decisions, because it is easier to pass the book and put the ownness on another stakeholder.

Swords Corridor

The biggest issue in Swords is the issue of Knocksedan estate, the planners have stated to me they do not view the population size as enough to warrant a more frequent bus service.

However they fail to see the issue the current bus services and that proposed bus connects poses for residents of Knocksedan. Bus services in this area has been an issue ongoing for the past 15 years but there was at no stage a commitment to increase it, which as a public rep I find it very annoying and frustrating. Growing up in Swords I could never understand why given the route taken by 41, 41c and proposed A4 why such doesn't begin and end at Knocksedan. Considering the buses passes the estate going to and from the depo at present? why the 41 doesn't start in Knocksedan particularly with the upgrade in times is beyond me.

It is not a new development to see large scale isolated housing with little to no infrastructure or public service amenities, it is disgraceful to think in reality you need a car to live in Knocksedan, especially when we are trying to incentives greener communities. This can be said for other areas who have the same issue, including Rivermeade which will continue with the roll out of the 196 which will serve Knocksedan in the same instance. The frequencies is not enough for these areas and the poor numbers on buses at present are due to frequencies and not desire to use such.

Regards alternatives I feel creating a pedestrian cycle and pathway via main road should happen, however as an immediate solution, I have asked the NTA to provide funding under the Fingal greenway scheme or any such manner to develop a walk and cycle route which would be well lit, from Knocksedan via ward valley park to Swords Manor bus terminus. This would incentivise more residents to use the bus as it makes access to main routes viable and amenable especially with a 24 hour services being proposed for 41. It would go some way to dealing with the frequency of direct links to Knocksedan. It is a climate friendly solution which will have long term gains. Although ideally the

proposed A4 would begin and terminate and Knocksedan or even Rivermeade? It is important to note Bus Connects is far from set in stone there will be lots of changes so we should tackle this issue from all angles. It must be noted that the absence of transport links for Rolestown and surrounding areas is also a disappointment given the growth in population in the area along with planned growth for the future.

Another issue for Swords is that of the total eradication of the current 43 route in that the feasibility of going from Swords to Clare Hall via Kinsealy in an amenable manner via public transport is not viable, many residents send their children to school in these areas having moved to Swords and surrounding areas for work or because of promises of better transport links etc.

Rural Dublin Fingal note: North of Swords

Much of rural Fingal sees such growth but facing into a climate crisis with poor road infrastructure and the requirement to own a car to live and work in the rural areas of Dublin Fingal is an absolute disgrace and planners and developers alike should be ashamed. Areas like Naul, Oldtown, Garristown, Ballboughal, Lispoppel, Coolquey and Rolestown where allowed to be developed and built up without due attention to public transport links. Bus connect is merely reactive and lacks the proactive long term thinking for these areas in my opinion.

Santry/ Swords Road

The below is a summary of residents' feedback on the Santry area which takes in Swords/ Ballymun / Coolock and Finglas aspects of Bus Connects.

I am disappointed to say that I still have serious concerns that Santry and communities farther north will experience a reduced bus service under these proposals compared to the existing network.

At present, Santry has one direct public transport link to Beaumont Hospital and areas such as Coolock, Artane, Malahide Road, Clontarf and Fairview. This is the 27b service, and it is used daily by patients and staff accessing Beaumont Hospital, and by schoolchildren and workers accessing schools and workplaces along the 27b route. For example, many employees who work in EastPoint Business Park live in Northwood and nearby developments in Santry as this direct bus service exists between home and work.

Passengers from farther north than Santry also use this 27b service. It is common to see passengers disembarking from Dublin Bus services such as the 41 or 33, or Bus Eireann services such as the 101, at the bus stop across from Northwood and then boarding the 27b to continue their journey. As such, the 27b represents a vital link for both Santry and communities farther north. However, under the current BusConnect proposals, we will lose this connectivity. There are a number of alternative routes suggested under the proposals, but each have significant drawbacks, as detailed below.

For those wishing to access Beaumont Hospital, one suggestion is to board the N8 at the bus stop on Coolock Lane, across from the Margaret Ball Church. This bus stop is 850 m away from the current bus stop where many passengers board the 27b. This is extremely inconvenient, and in the case of elderly or infirm passengers or those with mobility issues, may not be feasible at all.

There is a further suggestion to board the 82 bus across from Northwood Plaza, and disembark approximately one minute later at the first stop in Santry Village before walking around to Santry Avenue to board the N8. This interchange is inconvenient and impractical, particularly for those with mobility issues, and compares poorly to our present direct service. In addition, the N8 has a proposed frequency of 10 minutes, so it is entirely possible that having waited for the 82 or an A bus on Swords Road, one would then wait another 9 or 10 minutes for an N8 on Santry Avenue.

For those wishing to travel further than Beaumont Hospital, e.g. to schools or workplaces in Coolock, Artane, Malahide Road, Clontarf, Fairview, etc, it is suggested to use the D4 service. The proposed starting point of this service is on Oscar Traynor Road. This is 1.4 km away from the bus stop across from Northwood Plaza, and would require crossing the roads leading to and from the M50 at a busy roundabout that has no pedestrian accommodation. Aside from the safety risks to all passengers walking here, this bus stop is even more difficult to access for the elderly or those with mobility issues than the Coolock Lane bus stop. Furthermore, the proposed frequency of the D4 route is only once every 30 minutes.

From personal experience expressed to me, I can say with certainty that this is insufficient. The current 27b has a frequency of every 10 minutes or less at peak time in the mornings, and a significant number of passengers are waiting to board the bus along Oscar Traynor Road. In the evenings, the 27b coming from the city centre is a busy service, with significant numbers of passengers disembarking at residential areas that will only be served by the D4. A D4 bus every 30 minutes, particularly at peak times, is simply not enough. There are also more developments planned along this route, so passenger numbers will only increase. Therefore, the frequency of service along this route should at a minimum match the current frequency, and should definitely not decrease.

The route planner suggests alternative routes to the D4, namely to board either the A2 or A4 across from Northwood Plaza, and then to either disembark at Iveragh Road and board the N4 on Collins Avenue or disembark at Griffith Downs and board the N2 on Griffith Avenue. Aside from concerns around the capacity of the A4, discussed in more detail below, these routes have a number of drawbacks. Firstly, the A2 and A4 will travel along the M1 spine with all feeder roads northbound. The Swords Road is subsequently an extremely busy road and it can take 20 minutes or more to travel from Northwood Plaza to Collins Avenue. Then there are the issues around changing to either the N2 or N4. Firstly, there is the inconvenience of an interchange on what was previously a direct journey, and the challenges that represents for the elderly and passengers with mobility issues. This will be even more of an issue on wet mornings, as people must make their way from Swords Road onto either Collins Avenue or Griffith Avenue to wait for the next bus. Secondly, there is the question of how long that wait will be. The N4 is proposed to have 10 minute frequency in the morning, while the N2 is proposed to have 15 minute frequency in the morning, extending to 20-25 minute frequency after peak times. So after spending 20 minutes in traffic on the M1, it is entirely possible that passengers will then have to wait 10 minutes or more to catch the next bus.

This is incredibly inefficient in any case, even more so when compared to the current direct journey from Northwood Plaza to Malahide Road and beyond via the 27b. Having examined each of the suggested routes in detail, and considering their drawbacks, it seems obvious that the best solution is to extend the D4 route so that it also serves the Swords Road and Coolock Lane, as the 27b does

currently. This would allow Santry to retain our direct link to Beaumont Hospital and other services in these easterly areas, and would continue to provide a link between more northerly communities and these services. This change would also provide a direct connection between the A and D routes. Additionally, a greater frequency for the D4 will be needed to meet demand – at least 10 minute frequency at peak times is required, given current passenger numbers and planned housing developments along the route.

It should be noted that the proposed starting point of the D4 and the consequent loss of service to and those communities farther north bears strong similarities to proposed changes to the 27b route put forward by Dublin Bus in the summer of 2016. These proposals would have seen the truncation the 27b route to begin at the roundabout at Oscar Traynor Road, cutting off our local community such vital services as Beaumont Hospital, schools and workplaces. This proposal was successfully by our local community with the support of our elected representatives, on the grounds that it was unacceptable for our community to be denied public transport access to these critical services. I am disappointed to see another attempt to introduce these changes, this time under the guise of the Bus Connects program.

I also have significant concerns about the bus service linking Santry to the city centre. At present, we are served by the 41, 41c, 41b, 33, 16 and 16d routes. The bus stop on Swords Road across from Northwood Plaza is extremely busy in the mornings, with residents from the various developments in Northwood and the surrounding estates off the Swords Road boarding buses into the city centre. Between approximately 7:50 am and 8:05 am, currently at least six buses often stop here and take on passengers. It is quite common that some buses arriving in from Swords are nearly at capacity by the time they arrive here. At later stops, there are also large numbers of passengers waiting to board in Santry Village outside Magners Pharmacy, and across from Omni Park Shopping Centre.

Under the BusConnects proposal, our current service of 41, 41c, 41b, 33, 16 and 16d will be reduced to the A2 from the Airport with a frequency of 12 minutes, the A4 from Swords with a frequency of 12 minutes, and the 82 from Swords with a frequency of 15 minutes. That already represents a reduced capacity. This issue is further compounded by the fact that the service provided to the Swords community will be severely reduced, with the 41, 41c, 41b and 33 being replaced by the A4 and 82. It is therefore probable that the A4 will be near or at capacity by the time it reaches Northwood Plaza, meaning that very few, if any, passengers will be able to board at that or subsequent stops. This means that the effective bus service provided to the Santry community on this route will be the A2 every 12 minutes and the 82 every 15 minutes. This will be insufficient for current population levels, and will result in passengers waiting much longer for buses or resorting to private transport as the bus service cannot accommodate them.

Additionally, there are new developments being built in Northwood, as well as sizeable developments underway in Santry Village, at the corner of Santry Avenue and on the site of the Swiss Cottage. This will only add to the number of passengers wishing to travel by bus to the city centre. Therefore additional buses and higher frequencies will be required along this route.

In summary, I think the BusConnects proposals should be amended as follows: - The D4 route should be extended so that it also serves Swords Road and Coolock Lane, and the frequency should be

increased to at least every ten minutes at peak times;
- The frequency of buses from the Airport and from Swords along the A line should be increased in order to cater for the current and future passenger numbers along the route.

Conclusion

The first round showed a significant number of revisions to the original BusConnects proposal, with nearly 150 separate modifications listed in the appendix of the Revised Proposal. That number of revisions indicates the misalignment of the original proposals with the requirements of the Dublin community or the need for appropriate consultation as stipulated at the start. However, it is encouraging that the BusConnects proposals were significantly altered to address these concerns in some instances. Unfortunately, there are still serious shortcomings with the proposals, and I sincerely hope that concerns raised in this second round of public consultation will also be addressed in the final proposal. Negative impact on communities and inferior bus service compared to that afforded by the existing network should be avoided at all costs, whilst acknowledging the lived experience of residence and current road infrastructure and clear remediation and upgrades necessarily the operational effects such works will cause for the wider community. As well as carbon objectives and planned growth for each area.