

## Bus Connects

Members of the SGCRA attended the meeting on the area on Monday 13 May, organised by the Pembroke Road Residents Association (PRRA), about the impact of the Bus Connects plan on the area.

Pembroke Road is particularly impacted by Bus Connects – it involves the widening of Pembroke Road, the removal of many mature trees, the elimination of most of the on-street parking and the compulsory acquisition of land from around 35 gardens on both sides of the street. The meeting was very well attended with many local representatives in attendance.

PRRA have asked that as many people as possible make a submission wrt the Bus Connects plans. Residents in the South Georgian Core should also be aware that Bus Connects will affect them too and we would urge you to put in an observation. Many residents' groups and individuals have made observations over the past few months as the plans for different areas of the city have been rolled out. A TD at the meeting said they had never seen so much grass roots activism as that around the Bus Connects plan. More information on the full extent of Bus Connects can be found on [www.busconnects.ie](http://www.busconnects.ie)

The deadline for observations is **Friday 31 May 2019**

Observations can be made

On the website: [www.busconnects.ie](http://www.busconnects.ie)

By email to: [cbc@busconnects.ie](mailto:cbc@busconnects.ie)

By post to: Core Bus Corridor Project,  
National Transport Authority  
Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2 D02 WT20

The South Georgian Core is affected by two of the proposed routes

Route 13      Bray to Nassau Street via Leeson Street and St. Stephen's Green

Route 14      UCD to City Centre

Runs from UCD, up Pembroke Road and ends at the junction of Baggot Street Lower and Fitzwilliam Street Upper/Lower.

Possible areas of objection are discussed below and more detail on Bus Connects:

- Destruction of historic stonework and metal work as part of street widening
- Creation of sterile, defeatured streetscapes where traffic dominates - think Clanbrassil Street
- Destruction of numerous trees
- Irreplaceable loss of the proportion/setting of historic streets
- Loss of green space
- Prioritization of traffic to the detriment of local communities
- Loss of on street parking for businesses

It is comparable to the 1960s and 1970s in the UK where drastic, unsympathetic road interventions were made in many cities.

There are large question marks in relation to the design of the scheme and calculation of the improved journey times which would result. So on Route 14, the NTA claims the current bus journey takes 35 minutes, with Bus Connects changes it will take 14-15 minutes while if Bus Connects is not implemented such a journey will take 45 minutes+ in the future. There is no actual detail in the brochure as to how these calculations are made. A road engineer at the meeting confirmed that some of calculations which she had seen in other documentation were questionable in terms of the assumptions made to arrive at these figures. See report on the NTA video which was taken down.

On the Routes 13 and 14, with bus lanes mostly already in place (apart from Nutley Road), it is the provision of 2m wide discrete cycle lanes, alongside the bus lanes in both directions, which is driving the need to take additional land from footpaths, central medians and gardens.

It appears that the central island on Baggot Street Lower will be eliminated taking with it the trees and attractive old-style double lamp posts in the middle of the road as well as many of the on-street parking bays

Route 14 presumably will carry on up Baggot Street Lower, though this is not included in the bus plan and so those trees in the central median at the town-end are not specifically targeted for removal – yet. The on-street parking there may also be under threat.

The plan for Route 14 ends at the junction of Baggot Street Lower and Fitzwilliam Street Upper/Lower presumably the cyclists will continue on the Fitzwilliam cycle way from there to link up with other parts of the city. There is no integration of the canal cycleway into the cycle lanes of the Bus Connects plan.

Are the roads really the problem?

- In 2008, Dublin Bus got €85 million to operate its services. This was then cut every year until 2015, when €57.7 million was invested. In 2017 the subsidy was reduced again to just €47 million.
- In 2009, there were almost 1,200 buses in the Dublin Bus fleet. This fell to 914 in 2013, and only recovered to 1,016 in 2017. Bus Connects only plans a 10% increase in the number of buses.

Even though there are more people travelling on the system than ever before...

Though buses are prioritized on the roads, it is often at junctions that the hold ups occur. It is simply not possible to address this delay in many cases due to lights signaling sequence, lack of space for slip roads, filter lanes etc. The addition of cycle lanes may complicate and slow traffic movement at traffic lights further e.g. if they want to turn right.

This is very much street making by engineers – which creates problems for other road users particularly pedestrians – at some points pedestrians have to cross cycle lanes to get on and off buses. There is also concern around the added difficulty for older people and disabled as a result of Bus Connects as some direct bus routes will be scrapped. The idea is to have high speed spines that other orbital buses will connect to. So a bus that previously went into town will now go as far as a hub and passengers will have to transfer to another bus which will complicate the situation for older and disabled people. In addition, the frequency of the orbital bus to the spine will not increase so, because of the need to change buses, the result will be an increase in the time taken to get in and out of town.

A key idea behind this plan is to take cyclists out of the shared bus lanes making cycling easier and safer for cyclists. Equally buses will not be held up behind cyclists or in trying to overtake them. However the coexistence of the two forms of transport side-by-side is a problem as they are not fully segregated. In many cases – buses cross the cycle lane as they approach or are stopped at a bus stop. So the same problem of mingling buses and cyclists persists – not really solving anything.

Putting cycle lanes anywhere else - apart from directly along side the ‘spine’ bus routes, does not appear to have been considered. At the meeting, it was suggested than rather have the dedicated cycle lane going up Pembroke Road, it could go along other minor roads. I think it highlights the need to think more creatively about the location of cycle lanes. Cyclists do not follow bus routes, they will always take the most direct route. It is questionable whether many more cyclists will actually use the new cycle lane going up Pembroke Road onto Baggot Street Lower – as it doesn’t get them any quicker to where they want to go.

Your observation can incorporate some or all of the above – or any other reasons you are important to bring to the attention. At this stage, the designers will be finalizing the plan and starting to prepare the statutory application for submission to An Bord Pleanala in 2020, with construction anticipated to commence in 2021 on a phased basis. Completion expected 2027.

### **A bit more detail on the NTA Bus Connects Routes 13 and 14**

Bus Connects is a scheme organized by the National Transport Authority to provide sixteen radial bus routes with ‘mostly’ segregated cycle tracks alongside them, across Dublin.

The ‘optimum’ layout they are trying to achieve along each route - as far as possible is:

Footpath – Cycle- Bus Lane – Traffic – Traffic - Bus Lane – Cycle - Footpath  
Track Lane Lane Track

The idea is ‘high frequency spines’, which link up with ‘new orbital routes’.

The two routes which affect the South Georgian Core are:

**Route 14:** The '**B**' spine which will largely replace the current 39 and 39a.

However, instead of travelling via Stillorgan on the southside, it will travel along Baggot Street and Merrion Road through Ballsbridge to St. Vincent's Hospital, then via Nutley Lane to UCD.

On the northside, it will split into two branches, which will run between Blanchardstown and Ongar:

- The B1 will travel along a direct path via the Ongar Distributor
- The B2 will travel a more indirect route via Huntstown and Clonsilla.

On the southside, meanwhile, services along the R118/Merrion Road corridor, travelling through Ballsbridge, will be served by a new non-spine radial service south of Nutley Lane, designated as route 7.

**Route 13:** The '**E**' Spine will combine the Ballymun Road corridor on the northside with the Stillorgan Road on the southside, replacing parts of routes 9, 11, 46a, and 145.

On the northside, the spine extends from Ballymun through Glasnevin to Phibsborough, then into Dublin City Centre and out to the Stillorgan Road to the intersection with Kill Lane in Deansgrange.

It will separate into two branches on both sides of the city:

- The E1 branch will extend past Ballymun to Northwood on the northside, while on the southside, it will extend from Kill Lane along Bray Road, as the 145 currently does, before terminating at Bray Dart Station.
- The E2 branch will travel to Charlestown Shopping Centre on the northside via Balbutcher Lane and Saint Margaret's, while on the southside, it will turn northeast at Kill Lane to follow the current 46a route to Dun Laoghaire.