



Labour



Getting Dublin Moving
Labour proposals for ending the gridlock

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Introduction

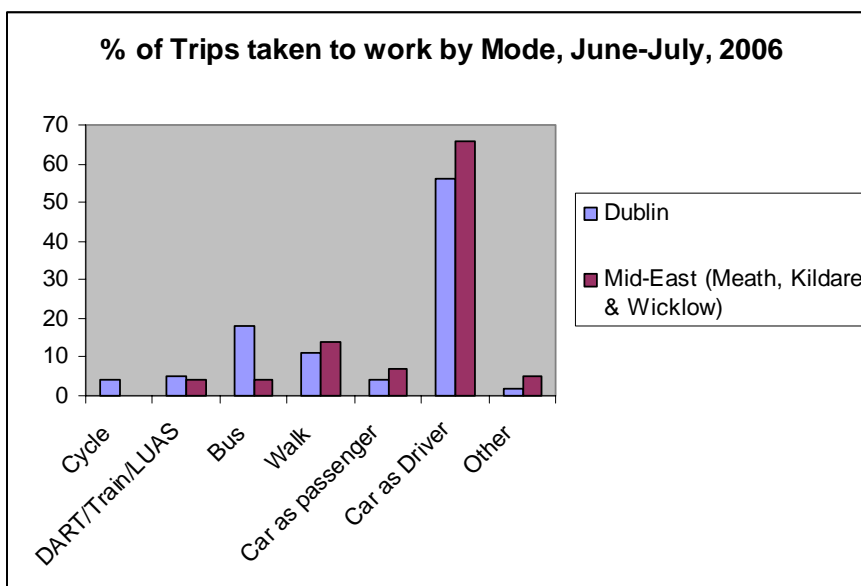
Dublin is at a standstill. With average speeds of 10 mph, we live in a city that grinds to a halt when it rains and cannot handle even minor roadworks and road traffic collisions without serious congestion.

Average peak time bus speeds have dropped to 8 mph. Even on some Quality Bus Corridors, the average peak-time speed can be as low as 6 mph, and as low as 3 mph at pinch points.

With a population increase of 250,000 in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) in the last nine years, half of it in the counties bordering Dublin, we have ever more commuters, travelling ever longer distances to get to work. As a result, journey times have become unbearably long. From Stepside Village to the City Centre it takes 64 minutes; from Dunshaughlin 75 minutes; from Loughlinstown Roundabout it takes 76 minutes; from Kill 86 minutes; from Saggart Village 99 minutes. Many thousands of commuters, whether in private or public transport, are spending more than three hours per day on the road.

That is the scale of the problem facing commuters in the Greater Dublin Area. By any standard, it is a crisis.

The fundamental problem is our utterly inadequate public transport system. Dublin remains a heavily car-dependant city. Annual traffic surveys tell us that cars represent over 80% of the traffic crossing the canals into Dublin City Centre, whereas buses represent only 2% of that total. At the time of the 2002 Census, over 60% of us that travelled to work in the Greater Dublin Area did so by motorcar, lorry or van. The latest DTO survey figures indicate that this trend is continuing. Indeed, that figure is over 70% for the three counties of the Mid-East region.



We are counting the cost of all this congestion in our pockets and in our lives. Business groups suggest that the annual cost of congestion could be in excess of €2 B. There is the incalculable cost to people's lives, in terms of the loss of significant family and leisure time, increased stress levels, reduced job and social opportunities, and the ongoing degradation of the environment. It is estimated that congestion costs Dublin Bus €60 M annually.

The Government Response

The Government response to this crisis has been bewildering. Incredibly, despite all the congestion, the Government has spectacularly failed to meet the demand for public transport services.

The Government's belated strategy is the €34 B Transport 21 plan. It remains to be seen the extent to which this plan will ever be implemented given the complete failure to deliver on the earlier *Platform for Change* plan. The public transport element of Transport 21 essentially represents a longterm plan to expand rail services in the Capital, little of which will come on stream within the next 5-10 years.

But the Government has no short to medium term strategy to deal with the congestion crisis that faces commuters right now. Dublin commuters simply cannot wait for Transport 21.

The Government has deliberately starved Dublin commuters of extra buses, with no increase in the Dublin Bus fleet from 2001 to late 2005. One year into Transport 21, only 20 extra buses operate on our streets. We still have the problem of QBCs without adequate bus services, and bus services without adequate QBCs. The only short to medium term solution to the traffic chaos in the Greater Dublin Area is to provide commuters with the option of reliable public transport; and the only way to do this is through improved bus services.

What Can Be Done...

The Government's approach to bus services has been lethargic and incompetent. There has been no serious attempt to develop bus services to the point to where they are seen by the public generally as being a realistic, reliable or attractive alternative to the private car. There are lessons to be learned from the experience with LUAS.

When commuters are given the option of a transport system which they can depend on, which is fast, and which has reliable journey times, they will make the switch. Many of the characteristics of LUAS can be replicated across the Greater Dublin Area if a strategic approach is adopted to bus services. There is an urgent need to vastly expand bus capacity, to speed up journey times, and to make bus travel financially attractive. It is only then that significant numbers of people will leave their cars at home.

1. More Buses

Labour will increase the Dublin Bus fleet by 50% (500 buses) significantly increasing frequency and reducing waiting times.

Dublin has been starved of buses. Under the current National Development Plan, the Government promised to provide Dublin Bus with 275 additional buses by the end of 2006. This promise was never kept.

Incredibly, in spite of population growth and increased numbers in employment between 2001 and late 2005, the Government refused to increase the size of the Dublin Bus fleet of 1,062. Late last year this number was increased to 1,082 and is due to rise to 1,182 by the end of next year.

Dublin Bus fleet 2001 to Present

2001	1,062
2002	1,062
2003	1,062
2004	1,062
2005	1,082
2006	1,082

There is a vague Government promise to provide a further 100 buses from the private sector and this is to be overseen by the Dublin Transport Authority. Not only will this not meet the demand, the question is when, if ever, will we see these? The Dublin Transport Authority has yet to be established, does not even have an interim CEO, and no bill for its establishment has yet been published by the Minister for Transport let alone passed by the Dáil. In addition, reform of bus licensing law which dates back to 1932 is required, although legislation is not expected to be available until the end of 2007 at the earliest.

The Government's proposals are hopelessly inadequate. In their network review of 2005, Dublin Bus set out the need for an extra 425 buses, primarily to service areas of expanding population and to increase bus frequency along QBC routes such as Tallaght, Rathfarnham, South Clondalkin, Malahide, Blanchardstown, and Lucan. It is inexcusable that the Government continues to deny commuters decent public transport. It is particularly frustrating for commuters to see bus-lanes without buses.

We accept this figure of 425 from Dublin Bus but we also want to extend express/limited stop services from outside the M50 and from Park and Ride sites; we want to expand orbital and feeder services; and we want more local services for centres of population, work and commerce.

To this end, we would increase the current bus fleet by 50% (500 buses) bringing it up to 1,582.

2. Quicker Bus Journeys

Labour will complete the Quality Bus Corridors, and greatly reduce journey times

Labour wants to put the quality back into Quality Bus Corridors. QBCs have contributed enormously to Dublin's transport system. A 50% increase in bus passenger numbers on these routes in the last 9 years shows that they are popular and they do work.

However, QBCs have the potential to be far more effective in terms of shorter journey times and achieving far greater efficiency from the bus fleet. To do this, we would take the following steps.

Firstly, we would complete the existing bus corridors. The table below sets out the percentage of each of the current routes that actually has bus priority in place. In 6 of the 13 QBCs listed, less than half of that route is actually a bus lane. Overall, only 52% of the road space on QBC routes are actually bus lanes, and there are particular shortages on outbound routes.

Length of each QBC and % of each QBC in Bus Lane.

13 QBCs	KMs	Ave % of Corridor with Bus Lane
Lucan	14.6	65%
Malahide	11.4	67%
Stillorgan	15.9	87%
Finglas	10.3	61%
North Clondalkin	4.9	20%
Rathfarnham	6.5	39%
Tallaght	6.8	30%
Blanchardstown	7.5	45%
Swords	28.2	56%
Howth Road	2.5	29%
Ballymun	7.4	56%
Bray	9.9	52%
Clontarf	2.7	49%
Total	216.9	52%

It is this lack of bus priority that impacts drastically on bus journey times and operating costs. It makes buses an unattractive alternative for motorists because of the uncertainty about journey times and in many cases the minimal time advantage of travelling by bus. It also makes the system unmanageable by bus providers. Bus speeds on part of the Swords QBC

where bus priority is not in place can be as low as 4 kph. Some Blanchardstown services now have journey times lasting up to a gruelling 130 minutes! A Labour Party survey in March 2006 of the Granby Row/Dorset Street junction at peak time showed that outbound buses were waiting an average of 22 minutes (and up to 31 minutes) to travel around this junction and into the nearest bus lane, a distance of a quarter of a mile.

Secondly, we would expedite the commissioning of additional QBCs on the main arteries and give greater priority to buses at junctions.

In addition, we will introduce real-time information at bus-stops.

3. €1 Fares

Labour will introduce a €1 per trip fare for adults and a 50c per trip fare for children

There is a need to totally revamp fare structures. At present, fares are too high, too cumbersome and add to delays.

Labour will introduce a standard €1 per trip fare across the entire Dublin Bus network (similar to London model) and on all public bus services within 25 miles of the City Centre. Outside of this zone we will taper fares according to distance ensuring simplicity and fairness in the fare structure.

We will place particular emphasis on child fares by providing a standard 50c fare and extending eligibility to all under 18's. This is critical as the school run adds considerably to morning congestion and it is important to encourage the use of public transport from a young age. In addition, there is no logic to the current situation where 16 and 17 year olds must pay adult fares.

We will make tickets more accessible by ensuring that on-street ticket machines for buses (similar to LUAS) are available to the public at key City Centre and suburban stopping points.

In addition, Labour will extend the Dublin Bus Network and the €1 fare zone to major residential areas within a radius of at least 25 miles of the City Centre, including towns/villages like Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin, Clane, Kill, Naas, Prosperous, Ratoath, Sallins, and Straffan. We will reduce fares on a scale (related to distance) beyond this zone resulting in a more affordable and simplified fare structure throughout the region. Bus Eireann may continue to operate the service, but the service will become the overall responsibility of Dublin Bus and their fare structures will apply.

In particular, this will help address a serious anomaly in fare structures as outlined in the example below and ensure that many more communities can benefit from the €1 fare proposal.

**Comparison of current adult fares for Ratoath and Enniskerry
(both approximately 15 miles from Dublin City Centre)**

	One way	10-Journey
Ratoath - served by Bus Eireann	€4.10	€26.10
Enniskerry - served by Dublin Bus	€1.80	€16.50

4. Bus-based Park & Ride

Labour will fast-track Park & Ride facilities on the outskirts of Dublin with express bus services

The logic of bus-based Park & Ride has been talked about for many years but no action has been taken. As a result, there is no permanent bus-based park and ride facility in the Greater Dublin Area.

In the 2005 DTO annual survey, 195,000 thousand vehicles crossed the M50 during the morning peak.

Transport 21 provides for 6 Park & Ride sites around the M50 in conjunction with planned rail improvements. These sites need to be commissioned immediately and along with the enhanced bus services which we propose, will provide an attractive public transport option to many thousands of commuters.

Labour in Government will establish these 6 Park & Ride sites immediately and will service them with express bus services to the City Centre. We will also develop additional Park & Ride sites on approaches to the City as identified by the local authorities.

5. Freedom Card

Labour will replace the Travel Pass Scheme with a new value "Freedom Card" providing cheaper fares and greater integration for all commuters

The Travel Pass scheme that offers Tax-Saver Commuter tickets, is not working to its full potential.

Currently, 43,104 commuters, avail of tickets under this scheme. While the overall number continues to increase, the rate of increase is slowing rapidly (only 3% from 2004 to 2005). Indeed, last year the numbers availing of the annual and monthly Dublin Bus only tickets, for example, fell from 2004. This suggests that the scheme is not coaxing a sufficient number of motorists from their cars.

There are a number of problems with the scheme as it operates as present.

- A commuter can't avail of the scheme if his/her employer does not wish to accommodate them.
- The scheme cannot be accessed by many temporary and seasonal staff and in some cases new employees.
- The cost to the commuter of replacing lost/stolen cards is prohibitive.
- The pass is cheaper for people on the top rate of tax and is inequitable.
- The scheme is poorly marketed for private bus providers.

There is little integration with Bus Eireann tickets. While an integrated ticket exists for Dublin Bus/Luas, Luas/Rail and Dublin Bus/Luas, there is no such ticket arrangement for Bus Eireann and other transport operators. This leads to exorbitant costs for commuters from parts of the Mid-East area (see example below). It is also interesting to note that Bus Eireann is not mentioned at all in much of the promotional literature for the scheme.

Labour wants to replace this scheme with a more straight-forward arrangement. We would introduce a new ticket available at the same net cost to existing customers (eg: €390 for Dublin Bus only annual ticket and corresponding good value rates for combined tickets). We would make it available to all commuters by taking it out of the tax system and directly subsidising the various transport providers. We would ensure that commuters are offered tickets that are fully integrated with all modes of transport, payable monthly by direct debit, and we would ensure that this ticket is aggressively marketed.

Comparison of costs for Celbridge & Ashbourne commuters under current Travel Pass and Fare Zone arrangements

Catherine from Celbridge and **Aisling** from Ashbourne both work in the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs on Mespil Road, Dublin 4.

Each morning both take a bus journey of similar distance (14 miles) to the City Centre, where they change and take a Number 10 Dublin Bus to their destination.

As Dublin Bus serves Celbridge, **Catherine** purchases the Dublin Bus annual ticket at a cost of €750.

As Bus Eireann serves Ashbourne, **Aisling** must purchase an annual Bus Eireann Ratoath-Dublin ticket at a cost of €1392. However, as Bus Eireann tickets are not integrated with Dublin Bus tickets, **Aisling** must also purchase a Dublin Bus annual ticket at a cost of €750 for her follow on journey.

Under this arrangement, the different fare structure for Bus Eireann and Dublin Bus for similar distances costs **Aisling** €642 (gross) more than **Catherine** a year. The lack of integration between tickets costs **Aisling** €750 (gross) more than **Catherine** per year.

Overall, Aisling pays €1,392 more than Catherine to get the same distance to the same workplace.

	Celbridge	Ashbourne
Annual Bus Eireann ticket, Ratoath-Dublin	not required	€1,392
Annual Dublin Bus only ticket	€750	€750
Total	€750	€2,142

6. The Future Role of Dublin Bus

Labour will ensure that the integrity of the Dublin Bus Network will be kept intact, will expand and enhance services, and will deploy private operators in a more co-ordinated manner

Dublin Bus has provided a reasonable service to commuters of the GDA for many years. It has been greatly hampered by underfunding, by a shortage of buses and by congestion. However, it has considerable expertise in respect of bus network management. Integration and coordination of services are critical for an effective public transport system. It makes no sense at all to interfere with the integrity of the existing bus network.

Experience from elsewhere, especially the UK, indicates that competition in the bus-network often leads to poorer services, lack of integration and high regulatory costs.

Labour is highly sceptical of Government plans to hive off profitable sections of the Dublin Bus network to private operators. Management of the bus network should be left to those who know the business and those who appreciate the wider social benefits of good bus services.

Labour plans to greatly increase the volume and scope of bus services and to do so in the shortest time possible. We accept that the dramatic increase in service which we propose will pose major challenges to Dublin Bus. We believe that in order to meet these challenges Dublin Bus would need to supplement their services by the contracting in of private operators. This will especially be the case if the targets we set in respect of peak-hour services are to be met quickly. The existing model in Dublin Bus (and in Bus Eireann) in respect of the contracting in of private operators for School Bus Services should be replicated in this regard.

We believe that concerns in respect of value-for-money and standards can be adequately addressed by the operation of service level agreements and by bench-marking of bus service costs to European averages. This monitoring role should be performed by the proposed Dublin Transport Authority.

7. Other Measures

While the focus of this policy paper is to bring about a major expansion of bus services in the Greater Dublin Area, Labour recognises the need for urgent attention to be paid to several other critical aspects of transport policy. Labour is committed to taking immediate action on these, on return to Government.

The most important of these measures are as follows:

- **Reschedule Transport 21 to prioritise the Rail Interconnector to allow for a fourfold increase in commuter capacity and to provide for the early electrification of the Balbriggan, Maynooth, Navan, & Hazelhatch rail lines.**
- **Renegotiate the agreement with NTR in respect of the Westlink Toll Bridge in order to provide immediate flexibility to the Government to manage the chaotic traffic conditions at this location by the lifting of the barriers at times of heavy congestion and by varying the tolls at different hours of the day.**
- **Prioritise the introduction of an integrated smart card for all public transport modes.**
- **Significantly increase train-based park and ride facilities in the GDA.**
- **Introduce parity of rail fares to at least equalise the fare per passenger mile paid.**
- **Ensure greater policing and parking enforcement on the main arteries of the city and extend clearway restrictions.**
- **Develop safe cross-city cycle routes.**
- **Curtail city deliveries between 7 am and 8 pm.**
- **Reduce the numbers of children travelling to school by car through an expansion of the school warden service, more pedestrian crossings close to schools and longer crossing times at these.**