

Coach Tourism and Transport Council of Ireland

Submission by the

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On

“NTA Statement of Strategy 2018 - 2022”

July 2017

Introduction

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The Coach Tourism and Transport Council of Ireland welcomes the opportunity to make a Submission to the NTA in relation to “NTA Statement of Strategy 2018 – 2022”.

The Coach Tourism and Transport Council of Ireland (CTTC) is the representative body for Ireland’s coach touring companies and Ireland’s private bus operators. The CTTC’s members are experts in all types of coach hire and transport solutions, including: airport transfers, day tours, extended touring, incentive travel, golf tours, school transport and provision of scheduled services. In addition to specialising in long distance scheduled services, many of CTTC’s members also operate licensed bus services in town and cities throughout Ireland.

All CTTC members are family owned companies, with a combined fleet of over 1,500 coaches, employing over 3,000 people directly. The CTTC comments and makes representations regularly on matters of concern to its members such as public transport, school transport, the coach tourism sector and the transport industry generally.

Overview

CTTC believe that the core focus of this strategy is to successfully implement a mode shift from ever increasing dependency on car-based travel to a more user-friendly passenger transport system which offers an affordable and attractive alternative to car users. Any future transport strategy must ensure that there is sufficient funding to maintain our existing transport infrastructure and provide adequate resources to meet future transport supply and demand for an increasing population. The strategy must be customer focused, maximize service provision and capacity particularly with city and urban networks to increase the patronage of public transport.

While CTTC welcomes the recent improvements such as the impending introduction of the Luas Cross City, Direct Train services from Kildare to the City Centre and development of a Coach Parking facility at South Wapping Street, we are of the opinion that these improvements on their own are not sufficient to achieve the core aims of any future transport strategy. Currently approximately €350m is provided on an annual basis for the provision of public transport and CTTC recommends that increased funding be provided to facilitate the following:-

Recommendations

1. The provision of designated set down and pick up facilities in the core city centre area to facilitate coach tourism traffic particularly for the ever increasing volumes of cruise ship tourists.
2. Acceleration of bus lane provision on motorways and main approach roads into/out of our major urban areas.
3. The procurement of strategic Park and Ride facilities in key commuter belt locations to provide affordable parking facilities to incentivise private motorists to use public / private transport, avoid long traffic delays and expensive parking costs. The introduction of these facilities would also reduce traffic congestion on the arterial routes into and out of major town and cities.
4. While there is merit in the proposals by Jarreth Walker Consultants on the restructuring of Dublin Bus routes, CTTC are of the opinion that investing significant amounts of tax payer money on the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit services on high volume bus routes is imprudent. CTTC recommends that existing services could be enhanced at much lower cost to the exchequer by the provision of off – bus fare collection, off - vehicle ticket validation and interface with traffic control signals to ensure preferential treatment of buses at junctions and actuation of the green light at signalised junctions upon detection of an approaching bus to increase the competency and quality of existing services.
5. CTTC members are fully supportive of providing a cleaner environment by reducing vehicle emissions. The road passenger industry has made significant progress in this area in recent years at considerable cost to operators. We recommend that grant aid be made available to assist the industry in the retrofitting of vehicles to meet the required standards.
6. It is the stated objective of the NTA to have all public transport fully accessible as soon as possible, however, this goal is not possible without the injection of significant funding to provide same. CTTC recommends that the Strategy Statement should include a request for additional funding from Government to fast-track this process.
7. CTTC recommends that the strategy examines the potential impact of Brexit in areas such as the free movement of people and the potential increase costs and administration.

8. CTTC recommends that the Strategy Statement should incorporate a radical review of the current PSO subvention to ensure that is value for money to the taxpayer. In addition, CTTC recommends that the Strategy should include a provision for expedition of the competitive PSO Tendering Process in a fair and equitable manner, which does not exclude the vast majority of indigenous operators.

9. Currently there is significant wastage of state funding through lack of transport coordination and joined up thinking by state sub-vented bodies leading to duplication of services. CTTC recommends that the statement strategy incorporates remedial measures to maximize state resources and ensure value for money.

10. CTTC recommends that future strategy statements must ensure more effective co-operation and co-ordination between the NTA, Government Departments, Local Authority and Planners to ensure alignment between land use, spatial planning and transport infrastructure.

Conclusion

The members of The Coach Tourism and Transport Council of Ireland have a proven track record in the both private and public transport and welcome the opportunity to make this submission. As a significant stakeholder in the delivery of transport we look forward to active and constructive dialogue with the NTA to deliver safe, high quality customer focused transport.