



Submission re Little Island Transportation Strategy

01 September 2017

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions to Cork County Council and its appointed consultants as part of the preparation of a future transportation strategy for Little Island.

As the largest industrial and commercial space in the Cork Metropolitan Area, Little Island acts as a critical location for economic activity, catalysing growth in the Southern region. Having only two access and exit points and almost 6,000 people employed in the area, with plans to attract another 2,000 jobs to the Island under the recently published Local Area Plan, Little Island experiences significant traffic congestion issues particularly at peak commuting times, which Cork Chamber expects to exacerbate both in the short and medium term unless appropriate measures and investment is made to better manage traffic on the island and the surrounding area.

On behalf of our 1,200 members, Cork Chamber thus welcomes the commitment by Cork County Council to undertake a study into traffic flow on Little Island and to put in place a long-term transportation strategy for the area. We particularly welcome the project team's willingness to engage directly with employers based on Little Island to identify potential solutions on a rolling basis. Lack of knowledge and dialogue can compound frustration but ongoing conversation is immensely constructive.

Nevertheless, while we fully support the need for a long-term strategy to guide future investment and development within Little Island, it is critical that Cork County Council also commits to implementing any short to medium term measures that will have an immediate positive impact on traffic management on the island.

With the uptake in the economy, many businesses are already looking to expand and attract highly qualified staff. These businesses cannot afford to wait a number of years until they see an improvement in traffic flow. From our members we hear how business currently are finding it difficult to attract staff to Little Island needed to scale their operations. Consequently, we strongly urge the Council to consider immediate relieving measures in tandem with the long term transportation strategy.

Below, we outline the ideas and suggestions raised by our members located on Little Island for consideration as the strategy evolves.

Little Island Traffic

Compounded issues

Little Island users travel to work from a wide geographic base. The traffic issues on the island compound existing frustrations along routes such as the N28, Bloomfield Interchange and Dunkettle

Interchange. The issue is very much linked to the wider improvements programme advocated by for by the Chamber in the Capital Plan Mid Term Review, the National Planning Framework, CASP and other associated policy areas.

We ask that Cork County Council in developing a new transportation strategy takes into account how the Dunkettle Interchange Upgrade will impact on traffic in the area, particularly during its construction phase. We ask that interim measures are adopted to mitigate any negative impacts in the short term in tandem with the longer-term strategy being implemented and funding sourced. Little Island traffic cannot be looked at in isolation from other traffic development plans in the Metropolitan Area.

We also recommend Cork County Council to undertake an assessment of commuting patterns of employees working on Little Island, similar to what has been done in Ringaskiddy to help guide the development of the Transportation Strategy. We note how the survey to date has primarily focused on getting local residents' responses rather than local businesses despite the total number of residents only amounting to one fifth of the total number of employees which hence have a much larger impact on local traffic.

Constrained Capacity

There are a number of potential developments coming on stream in East Gate alone that will bring several hundred additional employees to the area. As such, traffic issues will intensify and any short-term alleviation measures are of absolute importance.

In addition, it is hoped that the development of Harbour Point may now stride ahead following the publication of the Local Area Plan. This is of huge strategic importance to Little Island but will equally add additional strain to the traffic system.

The worst time for traffic is 5 to 6.

We suggest that any measures outlined here which could have an immediate positive impact on traffic are adapted without delay.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

It is a challenge to recruit workers to Little Island, and one of our members explained that they have already seen staff members leave their job to move to another job away from traffic. This sentiment was echoed by numerous members and is a threat to business in terms of ability to attract talent and to avoid the detrimental effects of employee churn.

Interim Alleviation Measures

The following interim measures have been recommended by Chamber members. Members acknowledge that in the medium term a true solution must be sought, but that other short-term measures should also be adopted to alleviate some of the current pressures while permanent options are considered. Cork Chamber strongly urges that these are carefully considered for immediate action. If further clarification or insight on any point is needed please contact Cork Chamber.

Dunkettle Interchange

There must be constant liaison between Cork County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) during construction works on either project.

Where Dunkettle works interfere with traffic flow they must be off peak.

There must also be constant liaison between Cork County Council and TII during these works and during the strategic planning for Little Island to ensure that both developments are mutually beneficial.

EastGate

Our members suggest that lights at the Crompan to ease traffic at the roundabout are installed. It could be lights on the roundabout or a junction.

Define the left lane at the main EastGate Crompan exit as a left turn only and the right lane for straight ahead or right turn. Use clear road markings and potentially bollards to make this distinction.

Measures to control the use of car park shortcuts should be introduced. The use of the route that runs past the entrance of retail units such as the Range and Harvey Norman is of particular concern. The area is frequented by families and children and it is not suitable for commuter traffic to be using this route. Any potential accident resulting from this usage would be inconceivably regrettable. Consider making sections of EastGate business park, e.g. at Range or Harvey Norman, one-way traffic.

Bus service from city centre to EastGate and shuttle bus service from train station to EastGate.

A public bike share scheme in EastGate similar to the Coca Cola bike scheme in the City would be of enormous benefit to commuters accessing Little Island via the train station and/or travelling between meetings. Bike stations should be located across the island to promote the use and access of such a scheme. It is essential that cycle infrastructure is developed in both EastGate and the wider Little Island area to ensure safety

R623 Traffic calming

There should be traffic calming measures in place in the area adjacent to Cork Golf Club to ensure that cars entering and exiting the road from locations such as EastGate do so safely.

R623 Exit to Dunkettle roundabout

The addition of a second lane at this exit point should be considered. This would alleviate the congestion point where the R623 meets the N25 Westbound Dunkettle interchange slip road. Currently, cars cannot slit into the relevant lanes until the last moment leading to unnecessary congestion. The adjacent land is scrub land of no commercial value.

A yellow box where the R623 meets the N25 Westbound Dunkettle interchange slip road would also be advantageous to allow higher parity between those entering from the R623 and those already on the N25 slip road.

Back road traffic lights sequence should be changed in the morning to slow traffic exiting from estate – people using as short cut to tunnel.

R623 Exit to N25 Eastbound and Island Corporate Park (Rockgrove, Glounthaune Old Middleton Road)

Light sequencing at this junction must be responsive to higher volumes of traffic at peak times to maximise efficiency of movement. Alternative lane usage on the bridge should be considered in line with this.

Create a new roundabout coming from Glounthaune to Little Island bridge (turning right has a long wait).

N25 Eastbound Little island entrance to R623

Morning tailbacks at this slip road pose a serious threat to road safety. Light sequencing should be examined to allow larger volumes of traffic to get through with each change.

N40 Exit to Richmond/R623

Another entry lane to Little Island when entering the tunnel should be considered.

Morning traffic build up through the tunnel for cars queuing in a single lane to go around the Dunkettle Interchange to access Little Island via the western end of the R623.

N25 Exit from EastGate

KFC and Main roundabout at NRG: consider adding extra lane for exit.

Multi Modal and Sustainable Transport

Secure bike parking should be made available by businesses at each premises.

Secure daytime and overnight bike parking should be made available at Little Island train station enabling multimodal options for commuters accessing the island. If secure overnight bicycle parking were available, commuters may be more inclined to use the train in accessing Little Island, where they can then switch mode to bicycle thereby easing vehicle congestion within the Island

A city 'Coca Cola' style bike scheme should be made available at the station and at multiple points around the island. This should be integrated with the city scheme.

City Centre Connectivity

If car traffic is to be reduced and far more sustainable rail and bus options are to be provided, the answer lies not in Little Island but in improved public transport connectivity in the city centre. In order to make public transport a more viable option to car usage the connectivity and integration between the rail and bus stations in the city centre must continue to be improved and upgraded so commuters can easily change from one route to another without having to cross the city on foot. Any user frustration in this leads to reliance on car usage.

As with this, an increase in the bus services stopping at/ departing the bus service would be beneficial in promoting bus/ train usage.

Commuter Train Line

Early schedule to be added to train for Bank Holidays.

A shuttle bus departing and arriving to the Little Island train station at regular intervals and in line with the train arrival/ departure timetable, ferrying commuters within an acceptable proximity to their respective workplaces would alleviate concerns that deter many commuters from using public transport such as walking distance to workplace, weather factors, safety concerns.

Medium Terms Solutions

In addition to the interim solutions suggested above, our members have identified a number of medium term proposals which we ask to be carefully considered.

New N25 Easterly Entrance/Exit

A new entrance located to the east of the current entrance at Ballytrasna would facilitate access to the more easterly side of the island. This would facilitate the development of Harbour Point and ease pressure on some of the more mature estates at this side of the island. It would remove the bottleneck adjacent to the Top Garage junction.

R623 Exit to N25 Eastbound and Island Corporate Park (Rockgrove, Glounthaune Old Middleton Road)

The current infrastructure should be retained to enable ease of access from the old Middleton Road.

This should be supplemented with slip road entrance and exit that does not require stopping or traffic lights such as that seen on the new plans for the Dunkettle Interchange.

Connectivity between estates

The current network of estates is unnecessarily impermeable for both car and pedestrians/cyclists. Connections should be put in place to promote sustainable transport options, including the addition of bus routes and to alleviate pressures on the R623 and other internal Island roads.

Bus/Carpool Lanes

To be encouraged in all future infrastructure and retrofitted to the existing.

NB bus share / park and ride will not be attractive unless specific purpose-built bus lanes are introduced to ensure people do not end up just sitting in traffic in buses instead of their own cars.

Real Time Information

Colour code traffic management: Highlighting hot spot areas/alerts on traffic in the evening

Other Suggestions

- Flexibility on core hours from all Estate Companies.
- Start and finish 10-15 minutes before/after standard shift times, e.g. 3.45pm instead of 3.30pm.
- Carefully consider the appropriateness of granting new planning permissions for car-dependent businesses in EastGate until (at minimum) interim suggestions are implemented.
- Any upgrades possible to the N28 should be made in the interim prior to M28 works begin.
- Explore the opportunity for using the disused road by the Dunkettle interchange running East/West as a possible interim measures to alleviate pressure at the roundabout.

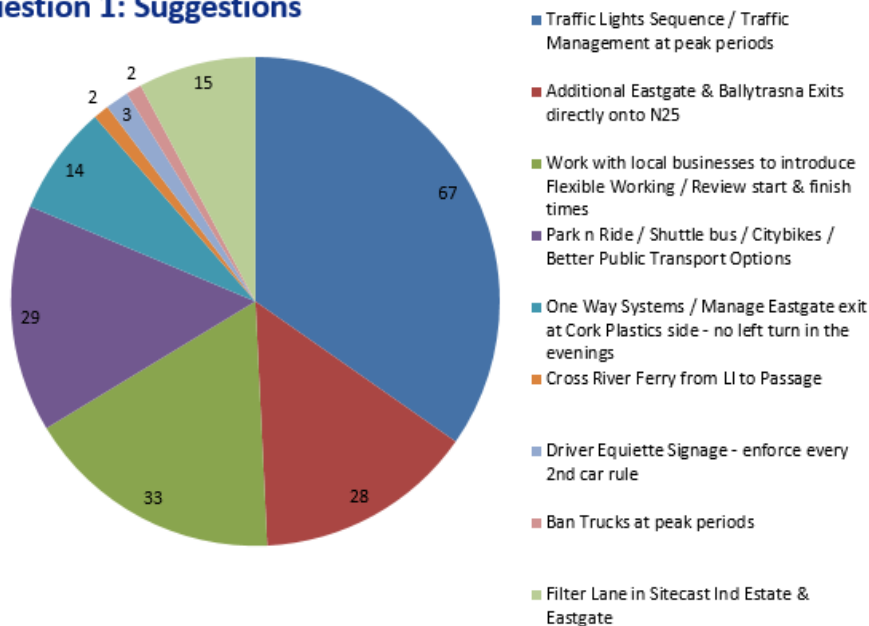
Appendix 1: Survey Findings by one large employer in Little Island

One of Cork Chamber's Members, which is a large employer based in Little Island, conducted a short survey of its employees on 24 and 25 August 2017.

The survey invited staff to read the Systra study and provide interim solutions, as well as it afforded staff the opportunity to pose questions to Cork County Council regarding the current traffic situation in Little Island.

Below are the findings of the two questions posed in the survey:

Question 1: Suggestions



Quick Wins:

Traffic Lights Sequence / Traffic Control at peak periods

Driver Etiquette – enforce every 2nd car rule

One way system exiting Eastgate – no left turn from Cork Plastics side

Questions for Council

- Why was the junction at Island Cross (O'Connell Transport) upgraded to a footpath instead of a filter lane?
- There are no timelines mentioned in the study. Why? And why is it taking so long to publish the report?
- Why does the report focus on volume of traffic rather than journey times? The current situation is impacting on family and personal lives.
- There are cars driving on the wrong side of the road up the Sitecast Ind Estate towards the junction to skip the queue in the evenings. This is illegal, dangerous and needs to be addressed urgently.
- Similar situation to the above in Eastgate – skipping queue by driving into Costa Coffee section and coming out at KFC.
- What is the Council's response to the offer of land from Martin O'Neill to build a new access road to / from the East?
- There appears to be a lot of focus on walking/cycling in the Proposal, this is not something that will suit the majority of the workforce on Little Island as the majority live too far from Little Island to avail of this mode of transportation
- Why are there 300 houses being built in Courtown and planning permission given for a massive call-centre when there is no infrastructure to deal with it
- Please communicate any work that is being done. If people are aware that something is being done about the issue, that will at least ease some of the frustrations.