

Transport Infrastructure Ireland,
Parkgate Business Centre,
Parkgate Street,
D08 DK10

RE: Luas Cork Emerging Preferred Route Public Consultation

9th June, 2025

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Luas Cork Emerging Preferred Route.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork City and County, and our purpose is to unite, represent and support our members and community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for 2024 – 2025.

At the outset, Cork Chamber wishes to express its strong support for this project, its ambition, its vision, and the significant positive impact it is poised to have on not only the city's future but that of the entire Cork region. As envisaged in the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy the Cork Luas has the potential to enable and sustain population and employment growth, unlock the potential of the Cork Docklands, deliver a major modal shift from private car use to sustainable transport, and enhance Cork's competitiveness and attractiveness for international investment.

What was, only a few short years ago, considered an ambitious vision is now rapidly becoming a reality with the publication of this emerging preferred route. Maintaining the current momentum is vital to realising this project's full potential for a city that urgently needs it. In this context, we respectfully submit the following observations and recommendations, with the aim of constructively supporting the project's continued progress to the next stage. This submission has been informed by engagement with Cork Chamber members and insights gathered during a constructive public briefing session we hosted for our membership with representatives from TII as well as Jacobs Engineering.

Cork Chamber stands ready to support and contribute in any way that may help progress this transformative and city-shaping project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Conor Healy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Conor Healy

CEO

Strategic Recommendations

Futureproofing

As Cork's population, employment base, and tourism offering continue to expand, it is essential that we take a forward-looking approach to fully harness the opportunities this growth presents. It is essential that the current planning for Cork's light rail system includes consideration of future spurs or extensions, particularly to Cork Airport, as the city's population, economy, and mobility needs continue to grow. Future-proofing the light rail system to accommodate potential spurs will strengthen Cork's economic competitiveness and attractiveness for foreign direct investment, avoid costly and disruptive retrofitting down the line, and support inclusive, sustainable access for those who want to live in, work in and visit Cork. Similarly, areas like Ballincollig, which are rapidly growing and designated for significant residential and employment development, highlight the importance of designing the system with future extension capacity in mind. Planning for potential extensions to other strategic growth areas across the metropolitan region will enhance regional connectivity, unlock development potential, and ensure the light rail system remains responsive to Cork's evolving spatial and economic landscape.

River and Marine Access Considerations

The proposed new bridge across the River Lee to connect Kent Station with the Docklands is a critical piece of infrastructure. It is important however that the route's impact is fully assessed to minimise disruption and preserve the city's blue economy potential, and that full stakeholder engagement is prioritised through the development of this project.

Operational Design

The current design of the light rail system for Cork presents an exciting and promising vision, offering connectivity across all major areas of the city, while linking key hubs of education, commerce, and retail to commuters, residents and visitors. It is important that the light rail system runs as efficiently as possible. Therefore, any opportunity to minimise mixed traffic interactions must be explored and the location of bus stops within tram lanes should be avoided where feasible to ensure the success of both the light rail project and Bus Connects. It is also important to consider other design elements at this stage including the removal of any platform extension constraints and the use of single-track segments which result in a lack of overtaking options.

Branding

Cork Chamber fully supports the development of a distinct Cork identity for the light rail system, and we recommend open public consultation on the naming, branding, and positioning of the new trams. It is important that the public feel ownership of the project and it will also mitigate confusion with Dublin's Luas.