



Subject:	Belfast - Dublin Rail Connectivity / Belfast – Dublin Economic Corridor
Date:	9th January, 2019
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update Members on a pre-feasibility study with other local authorities and Arup on a potential Belfast–Dublin fast rail link and on progress to date on work to support the development of the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. note that a pre-feasibility report has been undertaken in respect of a potential Belfast Dublin fast rail link and that Arup will provide a summary presentation at Committee setting out the key findings of the report;ii. grant approval to progress the project to the next stage with the other partner organisations, which would include a Strategic Outline Case, with the Council's

	<p>financial contribution to this of £30k being met from within existing departmental budgets; and</p> <p>iii. note the progress to date on the development of the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor and the proposal to hold an Eastern Economic Conference in the Waterfront Hall on 28th February.</p>
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Belfast – Dublin Rail Link</u>
3.1	At the September, 2017 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee it was agreed to contribute towards a joint, co-funded, pre-feasibility study with other local authorities and Arup on a potential Belfast – Dublin fast rail link.
3.2	Five local authorities (Belfast City Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, Louth County Council, Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council) co-commissioned Arup to produce a report exploring the strategic economic benefits of a transformational step change in rail journey time and frequency between Belfast - Dublin. Arup has recently produced this report which identifies the need and makes the case for change, appraises the socio economic factors, assesses transport options and outlines concept solutions with high level funding and delivery options.
3.3	Members were advised at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 5th December 2018 that proposals for a potential Belfast – Dublin rail link would be presented to this Committee. Arup will provide a summary presentation on basis of the report.
	<u>Summary of Report:</u>
3.4	<p><i>Belfast – Dublin Socio-Economic Corridor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounts for 1m+ jobs and a catchment population of c.2.5m (expected to grow to c.3.3m by 2031). - Rail connectivity can help to achieve significant productivity gains through clustering and specialisation. Geographical proximity generates benefits, e.g. access to skills, competition and density, face-to-face contact, local links, attracting visitors, sharing resources, driving innovation, viability, and education sector links. - There is sufficient population along the corridor to justify investment in faster connectivity. - Planned growth along the corridor is ambitious and needs to be accommodated. - Employment patterns along the corridor are specialised in sectors that benefit from agglomeration.

- Strong potential exists to enhance the development of a complementary economic system along the corridor for mutual advantage, e.g. pharmaceuticals, medical services and software development.
- Access to, and affordability of, housing varies along the corridor; better connectivity would improve.
- Reducing journey times to Dublin Airport would enhance global connections.

Current Transport Conditions

- Journey times of 2h / 2h15min don't offer advantage over car / coach.
- Frequency of 8 trains per day is low for a major inter-urban route (compared with hourly coaches).
- Attractiveness to business users is low, e.g. first northbound train reaches Belfast at 9.45 am.
- Airport connections not offered by Enterprise service.
- Belfast Lanyon Place is 1km from city centre with limited onward travel options.

Objectives

3.5 Improved inter-city connectivity offers the chance to tackle a range of strategic objectives:

- 1) Enhance inclusive, sustainable economic growth along the whole Corridor.
- 2) Increase access to skilled workforce and job opportunities along the Corridor.
- 3) Allow all towns and cities in the Corridor to specialise, capitalising on their strengths.
- 4) Support increased housing and commercial development.
- 5) Collaboration to support international competitiveness and capitalise on connections for all island.
- 6) Reduce long-term car dependence and address environmental challenges.

Achieving the Objectives

3.6 The six objectives (*above*) could be met by a rail service that can:

- a) Achieve a 60-min journey time Dublin-Belfast.
- b) Provide at least two trains per hour: one fast + one semi-fast.
- c) Provide a connection to Dublin Airport.
- d) Integrate seamlessly with public transport networks along the Corridor.

Transport Options

- 3.7
- Short term commitments (by optimising impact of schemes already being delivered):
 - 1) Enterprise Hourly Peak Service (2019): No infra upgrades required. Uses additional rolling stock.

2) Knockmore-Lisburn Track Upgrade (2019): Refurb 12miles for return to 90mph line design speed.

3) Belfast Transport Hub (2024): Resolves platform constraints to facilitate increased frequency.

- Medium and Longer term transformational improvements:

1) Enterprise Full Hourly Service (2024): Requires procurement of 4 no. additional trains (no commitment to this as yet)

2) Utilisation of existing alignment with northern interchange with Metro – 90mins

3) Utilisation of existing alignment with Enterprise direct to the airport – 100mins

4) Improved or new alignment (for approx.. 50% of route distance) – 60mins

Indicative Funding

3.8 Projects of this kind are typically funded from a mix of multiple sources. Potential funding options:

- Direct Government: central taxation / devolution deal (NI) / EU: TEN-T Corridor (RoI) / city deal
- User Charges: revenue from ticket sales / passenger surcharge, e.g. special fare for airport station
- Station Area Income: retail rent / station naming rights / station advertising
- Vehicle-Based Charges: tolls on parallel roads / vehicle excise duty / parking charges
- Property-Related Income: tax increment financing / dev. contributions / air rights / land lease or sale

Planning

3.9 Phased approach recommended rather than one large planning application. Scheme disaggregated into work packages with each element involving a separate planning application. This helps mitigate risks.

Potential Delivery Timescales

3.10 Comprises the following indicative phases. *Currently at Stage 1: Project Positioning.*

1) Project Positioning: making the case and maximising support (Q3 2018)

2) Defining the Project: strategic fit, optioneering, benefits appraisal, SOC (Q4 2018 - Q1 2019)

3) Securing Commitment: economic appraisal, planning, finance, funding, OBC (Q2 2019 - Q2 2020)

4) Developing the Detail: detailed design, FBC, procurement (Q3 2020 - Q4 2020)

5) Delivering the Future: construction phasing and packages of works (2023 -)

Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor Research

3.11 Members will be aware that the Economic Development team is currently working to increase collaborations with Dublin and seek opportunities to support economic cooperation and engagement between the cities and along with Belfast-Dublin corridor. An update was presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on 5 December 2018 highlighting the work currently being undertaken.

3.12 In order to inform this work, Ulster University and Dublin City University are currently undertaking research on the economic potential of the corridor. The emerging findings from this research will be presented at a conference to be held in Belfast at the end of February 2018. The research to date has highlighted a number of key points, namely:

- The population along the corridor has been growing faster than on the rest of the island – although the slowest annual population growth has been within the two main urban centres of Belfast and Dublin (possibly due to cost and attractiveness factors?)
- The working population along the corridor is around 800,000 people – with just over half of the jobs based in Belfast and Dublin
- Around 40% of businesses on the island of Ireland are based along the corridor
- Jobs requiring graduates are concentrated along the corridor – and these figures are projected to grow.

The research has identified a number of key risks to the corridor including:

- Connectivity and congestion
- Housing availability and cost
- Access to skills
- Social inclusion
- Regional balance along the corridor
- Brexit.

3.13 Key strengths identified include:

- Attractiveness to FDI
- Agglomeration effect from the larger working population and key infrastructure assets
- Connections to the world (ports and airports)
- Educational attainment of the population
- Projected population growth.

3.14	<p>The research also identifies a number of emerging themes for local government-led collaboration. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and connectivity • Enterprise support • Innovation • Development of sector specialisms e.g. tourism, agri-food • Environmental management. <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.15	<p>The next phase of the Belfast-Dublin Rail Link project i.e. Stage 2 as referred to above (Defining the Project: strategic fit, optioneering, benefits appraisal, and SOC) would require a £30k contribution from each of the partner members. If Members are agreeable to progressing to the next stage the Council's contribution can be met from existing departmental budgets.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.16	<p>There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications at this stage.</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>