



To: The members of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee
From: Transport Hub Alternatives Group (THAG)
Date: Wednesday, 22nd September 2021
Subject: Belfast Transport Hub & Boyne Bridge

Dear Councillors

We look forward to meeting you all at the committee. In order to provide you with information before the meeting, we have listed a number of our concerns and general comments. We understand that much of the development has become 'crystallized' but there is still the opportunity to make changes. We will try to make the following as brief as possible.

1- Entrance to the new station is nearly as far away from the door to the City Hall as the existing distance to Maysfield.

2- Translink's Proposals involve demolition of the Boyne Bridge and replacing it with a busy four lane road. This means people walking from Belfast City Centre will have to cross two busy roads to get to the station. A Toucan crossing, similar to a puffin crossing will be the only means of crossing Durham Street to the station. Accidents will happen and even fatalities, completely unnecessary if the bridge is maintained as a safe crossing. This point was made to members of the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Infrastructure, who held a number of site meetings. The committee is to explore the possibility of another visit to the site. We would also add that accidents (and even bad weather) at the crossing will also result in travel delays and more demands on the emergency services.

3- There will be Increased traffic, noise and pollution, especially for Sandy Row residents.

4- The proposals involve the demolition of the 1936 Bridge. The structure is unique and is a critical part of Belfast's industrial Heritage.

5- The proposals involve retention of the 1642 Saltwater Bridge, currently encased in concrete in the ramp to the 1936 bridge. The 1642 bridge is probably the most important historic monument on this Island; certainly as the most important introduction to the history of Belfast. The Boyne Bridge Defenders are concerned that the concrete casing and the remains of the bridge itself could be damaged during construction.

6- The approach to the station is along the windy Glengall Street; thus the importance of retaining the great Northern Mall.

7- The existing station is to be replaced with commercial developments provided by the Private Sector. The relocation of the station and the demolition of the bridge seems to be driven by commercial reasons.

8- We pointed out that the location of a thirteen storey Office Building on the south side of the new square will cast a shadow over it for most of the day and that all of Translink's 3D images show a square baked in sunshine. Translink has amended their plans to show this building to the north side, but we would still have concerns about this proposed building.

9- Two entrances to the station create a Catholic/ Nationalist access and a Protestant Loyalist Route. The current bridge has acted as an effective Peace Wall for the past 50 years.

10-The location of a Taxi Rank in Glengall Street is very far away from the station door. Taxi ranks in all great stations are at the entrance.

11- The Telecom Building with its high security fence faces the new public square.

12- Weavers Cross is a weak name. We suggest naming it 'Belfast Central' as with all the great railway stations throughout the world.

13- The folding roof with its reference to the linen industry is contrived. Why not use Historic Belfast Timber Truss?

14- A report by THAG shows that Translink did not follow the Gunning Principles in their Consultation Process. Why not?

15- An alternative scheme was presented by Declan Hill at a conference organised by the South Belfast Partnership Board in May 2017. The proposals he made, meets all the concerns listed in this document.

16- Many of the above points were raised in Translink's Presentation in Spring 2017. The Chief Executive of Translink, Mr Chris Conway responded by saying the concerns would be considered at a Gateway Review. We asked to be part of that review. We have received no correspondence from Translink since that meeting. It is very clear the internationally acclaimed consultants acting for Translink, also have little knowledge of how to promote the character of Belfast.

17- We would be concerned about the disappearance of the traditional entrance from Great Victoria Street. We need a firm guarantee that the Mall will be retained and a continuous walkway from Great Victoria Street (as it is at present) to Durham Street (Boyne Bridge).

18- The proposals could see the disappearance of traditional names such as The Great Northern, Great Victoria and Boyne Bridge.

19- There will be a loss of an ethnic groups place and structure attachment and a loss of local communities place and structure attachment.

20- The present 1936 Art Deco Boyne Bridge should be retained, a view supported by the Historic Buildings Council. The existence of the 1642, incorporated into the present bridge is now established as a result of the recent archaeological survey. Although pleased with the findings, we regret that the Burra Charter, produced by the International Council on Monuments and Sites, was not used before and after the survey. We seek the introduction of the Burra Charter Process for all future works at and around the Boyne Bridge site.

21- We call upon the Belfast City Council to support our application to have the Boyne Bridge and site listed.

22- The Bridge and the site should be promoted as a major tourist attraction with a Belfast Visitor interpretive centre located nearby.

23- The future plans for the future of what is to be named Salt Water Square, and the general area around the present bridge needs to promote the character of Belfast. THAG attended a pre-planning consultation meeting recently, however the information received does not give us any confidence, that what is proposed, will promote the City and Northern Ireland in a way that it should.

24- We need to have open and independent forums to consider all proposals. For a number of years we have asked that Belfast City Council should set up a Working Group to oversee all future developments in the Boyne Bridge area.

With regards,

**Billy Dickson BEM
Declan Hill
Ken Martin**