

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

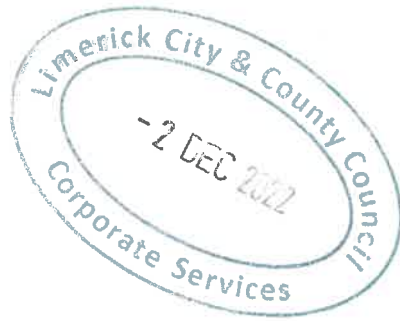
### **MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF LIMERICK**

**16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2023**

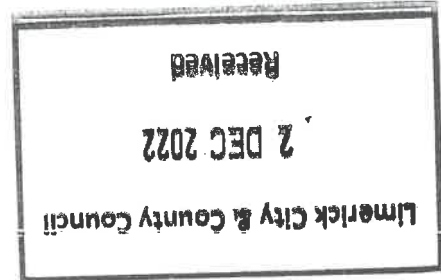
- Letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 from the Office of the Taoiseach in reply to Notice of Motion from Members that the District writes to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien and the Taoiseach Micheál Martin outlining the urgent need for the allocation of additional funding to recruit the additional staff required to deliver affordable housing within our City and County.
  
- Letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 from the National Transport Authority in reply to Notice of Motion from Members to write to the Minister for Transport and Irish Rail and impress upon them the need to allow leap cards to be used across the rail network especially the Limerick routes to Dublin and Cork which should be a priority.
  
- Letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 from the National Transport Authority in reply to the following Notices of Motion from Members:
  - I will move at the next meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick that an invitation be sent to the NTA and Bus Eireann to appear before the Council to discuss the 301, 303 and 305 bus routes and timetables.
  - I will move at the next Meeting that Limerick Metropolitan Council write to the National Transport Authority requesting the introduction of a new faster direct bus service linking Raheen Dooradoyle to UL via Childers Road to accommodate growing population now living in the area.



30th November 2022



Mr Mark Leahy  
Meetings Administrator  
Limerick City and County Council  
Corporate Headquarters  
Merchants Quay  
Limerick



Reference Number: DOT-TM-15823-2022

Dear Mr Leahy

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter to the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, T.D., dated 28th November 2022.

Yours sincerely

  
Katie Downes  
Assistant Private Secretary to the Taoiseach

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**Limerick City and County Council  
Corporate Services  
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Limerick  
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**FAO: Mark Leahy**

7<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Dear Mr Leahy,

I refer to your correspondence dated 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 regarding a motion that was adopted by Councillors at the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022 meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick.

Having initially launched in Dublin in 2011, the Leap Card scheme has since been extended to Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford cities. It was designed as a system that would suit urban transport services particularly to allow interchange between the modes. Leap Card is available across all of the major providers providing public transport services in those areas, including some private bus companies.

Currently on Irish Rail the Leap Card is used on urban services in the Cork and Dublin commuter areas. Any further expansion of Leap Card beyond the current areas would have a number of implications which I will outline below.

The expansion of Leap Card on Iarnród Éireann beyond the current areas would require procurement of additional ticketing equipment – for each station. This would involve a significant capital expenditure to source the equipment and to cover the civil engineering works to install the equipment (including communications and power). However, even with this equipment, the Leap Card would not be ideal for such services.

Specifically, the extension of Leap to longer distance and Inter-City services is impractical for the use of travel credit (i.e. using Leap Card to ‘pay-as-you-go’). Customers pre-load their cards with travel credit, which they can then use to pay for travel on a range of different transport operators. This is not optimal for Irish Rail inter-city services, because it does not facilitate capacity management (i.e. there no way for Irish Rail to know whether a particular time or day is over-subscribed because the ‘on-the-spot’ payment via a Leap Card does not allow advance notice or planning). Leap Card also does

not facilitate dynamic pricing such as can be obtained by purchasing an online ticket well in advance of the date of travel.

In addition, the fares on such services are typically higher and reflect the longer distances. Under the current fare structure, the prices of such journeys are not ideal for the use of the Leap pay-as-you-go travel credit, as it would require the customer to maintain a very high minimum balance on the Leap Card for the customer to be able to tag-on. As an example, the current adult single fare from Dublin to Thurles is typically €28.30 from the station booking office whereas the online fare can be as low as €14.99. Therefore, a customer using travel credit would have to have a minimum balance of €23.31 to be able to do a single journey (€5 card deposit is available to be added to the cost of the travel) , and they may have to top-up again to ensure the minimum balance is available should they wish to do a return journey.

There is also the challenge in terms of how to correctly charge the customer in the first instance. A passenger going through the gates in Heuston using a Leap Card might only be going a short distance (e.g. to Sallins) but the system would have to charge the maximum fare that could apply on the services from Heuston which could be in excess of €30. If the amount deducted upon entry was a lower amount there is a real risk that a passenger travelling to Thurles as an example, would simply not tag-off and therefore the Authority would suffer a significant revenue loss.

In the future, these issues could be addressed by means of mobile ticketing with the use of QR codes, which would not require as much infrastructure. The NTA has already successfully launched the TFI Go mobile ticketing app and this can now be used across all Bus Éireann PSO services nationwide, on a substantial number of TFI Local Link rural transport services as well as on 25 private bus operator's services as part of the Young Adult fares scheme.

It should be noted that NTA is in the midst of procuring a new 'Next Generation Ticketing' (NGT) system which seeks to implement new and more flexible ticketing systems, to provide additional means of paying for travel and to improve the overall customer experience. Work on the development of the NGT Programme is well advanced. That work comprises a series of projects to modernise the ticketing experience across the country and will eventually supersede the current Leap integrated ticketing system.

As a result of the NGT Programme customers will be able to use their bank debit/credit card, their smart phone or their Leap Card to pay for travel. The payment methods will be smarter with a greater choice of post-payment options (not just auto top-up) and the ability for the best fare for customers to be automatically charged. Better mobile apps and near real-time information will be available. In addition, the system will cater for services not covered by Leap Card, particularly inter-city rail services where customers typically book and pay online for their ticket.

Yours sincerely,



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**Anne Graham**  
Chief Executive Officer



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**FAO: Mark Leahy**

14<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Dear Mr Leahy,

I refer to your correspondence dated 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022 regarding a motion that was adopted by Councillors at the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick.

The National Transport Authority has commenced a review of the Limerick City Bus Network under the BusConnects Programme. The review will entail identification of a new bus network for Limerick City which will completely overhaul the existing network, resulting in new routes and enhancements of existing routes. Specialist public transport consultants Jarrett Walker and Associates have been appointed to carry out the review which will assess the existing and future demand for bus services across Limerick City and recommend changes to the bus network to meet these needs.

In Q1 of 2023 the Authority will commence a public consultation on a draft new network. The feedback received during the public consultation will influence the final design of the network. It is anticipated that implementation of the new network will commence in 2025. The Authority will be liaising with the Council as part of this redesign process, and there will be the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft new network and identify issues to be further considered.

As the process of a fundamental redesign of the network is underway, the Authority does not intend to any significant changes to the Limerick City Bus Network outside of this process.

I trust that the above is of assistance and clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

**Anne Graham  
Chief Executive Officer**