From: ellen kelly  
Sent: 05 August 2016 12:50  
To: Statement of Strategy  
Subject: Statement of Strategy observations - Bus Eireann Ratoath service

I refer to your request for observations regarding the Statement of Strategy 2017 – 2019 for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports. My main area of interest is in regards to Transport and in particular the service provided by Bus Eireann to Ratoath, Co Meath. I understand that this may be more a local issue than a matter for the Department. Nonetheless, I would like my observations to be included in the process.

A number of issues have arisen that the Department should be made aware of;

1) The timetable (105/103) was substantially changed earlier this year without any public consultation process with passengers or the local community
2) Because of the number of complaints received following the introduction of the timetable, it was further changed. However, when there was an opportunity to take on passenger feedback at that time, it wasn’t – the timetable was worse. Direct services from Ratoath via the M2 motorway were taken off
3) The newly introduced bus schedule is a waste of taxpayers money. If you monitor passenger numbers, there are very few passengers on each bus. There are far too many buses, the financial waste of running empty buses is sinful – yet all these buses still don’t suit the majority of commuter schedules*.
4) To achieve efficiencies, buses are now shared with Ashbourne. I understand this but surely Ratoath – a growing town should have a number of buses with a direct route to town during peak hours to reduce journey times?
5) Direct buses to Blanchardstown now do not serve the shopping centre but stop a substantial distance away meaning teenagers and young people shopping and working in the centre are taking unnecessary risks to their personal safety. More negatively, potential shoppers cannot easily get to Blanchardstown Shopping Centre.
6) There is a regular bus service going to Blanchardstown Hospital – where is the demand for this and is anyone monitoring passenger numbers for this service? I can only imagine the buses are regularly empty. Again, a dreadful waste of money
7) School children attending school in the city centre now have a longer distance to walk due to the route change and are taking unnecessary risks
8) Finally, even with the number of buses, bus still are not reliable and are turning up late, with some not turning up at all
9) When Bus Eireann are contacted, they say Transport for Ireland are making all the decisions. The Bus Eireann drivers themselves say (regularly) that management won’t listen to them – where is the accountability here?
I wanted to air my views and hope that other commuters from Ratoath will also make their views known as part of this process. While Government want to increase passengers numbers and ensure more people use public transport, therefore reducing an over reliance on the private car and avoiding traffic congestion, the service provided currently does not encourage anyone to use it.

I can see what I have outlined above already is in the previous Statement of Strategy – page 6 ‘encouraging efficiencies and customer responsiveness in the public transport companies’, ‘better bus stops’ but it is not enforced. If you want to encourage solid sustainable communities outside Dublin, and stimulate local economies, there needs to be a reliable, appropriate and efficient public transport infrastructure in place that meets the needs of the user - otherwise the user will find an alternative. You can't force people to use public transport if it doesn't suit.

*If you look at previous passenger numbers, there were three buses that were full on a daily basis – Depart Ratoath 7.15am and 7.30am and Depart Dublin 5.30pm. Yet all three buses were taken off the current timetable.

To overcome such issues, provision should be in place in the new Statement of Strategy whereby public consultation or surveys are obligatory when introducing services. Similarly, reviews of services should be carried out where there are low passengers numbers or discontent aired.

Regards,

Ellen Kelly