

EU Regional Policy at work, an example in Dublin, Ireland



Travelling light and speedily across the Fair City

Ten years in the planning, Dublin's light rail transit system has been a huge success since opening for business in June 2004. It achieved operational breakeven in its first full year of service and carried more than 27 million passengers in 2008.

Commuters and visitors to Ireland's capital city today enjoy fast and comfortable rides aboard modern vehicles on the two lines that together total 25 km in length. Major extensions to the system are now underway.

Two new tram lines

Dublin's first tram system began service in the 1870s and was once considered among the world's best. However increasing competition from more flexible buses and lack of investment eventually led to the end of the service in July 1949.

In the late 20th century, as light-rail transport became more popular because of its speed and efficiency, Dublin decided the time was right for a new network. After years of planning and construction, the city opened two surface light-rail lines in 2004. Operated under contract with the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) by Veolia Transport Ireland, the city's light rail system is called 'Luas', meaning 'speed' in Gaelic.

"Not only has Luas delivered in terms of a very meaningful contribution to public transport capacity, but in itself it is a very significant addition to the public perception of the city."

John Fitzgerald, former Dublin City Manager, now Chairman of Limerick Regeneration and of Grangegorman Regeneration projects

The 'Red' line runs from Tallaght in the south-western suburbs to the mainline railway station at Connolly, north of the River Liffey. One third of its construction was co-financed with an ERDF contribution under the Economic and Social Infrastructure Operational Programme. The 'Green' line follows a route from the business/industrial estate at Sandyford in the southern suburbs to St. Stephen's Green in the city centre.

Platform for infrastructure extension

It was anticipated that Luas would require an operational subsidy in the early years, in common with many new major transport projects in Europe. Yet thanks to high passenger numbers, a modest operational subsidy was only needed for the first few months of operation and

EU funding

€82.5 million was allocated to the Light Rail Transit system in Dublin – Luas Line A project from the ERDF for the 2000 to 2006 period.

the service is now profitable. The two lines have proved very popular with Dubliners and passenger numbers grew by 23% in the first three years of operation, at one point reaching 28.4 million.

The system's success is reflected in plans for further investment in light-rail infrastructure in Dublin. Under Transport 21, the Irish Government's 10-year plan for investment in transport infrastructure, the RPA is developing seven new Luas lines and two metro lines.



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Under this new investment programme, the Red Line is being extended at both ends, adding a total 5.5 km of additional route. Trams on this line have also been lengthened to accommodate passenger demand.

More about this project can be found at:
www.rpa.ie

