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MEDIA RELEASE

NORTHERN IRELAND'S INFRASTRUCTURE MINISTER JOHN O'DOWD WELCOMES NEW ERA FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AS BELFAST GRAND CENTRAL STATION OPENS

- **Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd has welcomed a new era for public transport as services begin to be phased in at Belfast Grand Central Station.**

Madrid, September 9, 2024.- Bus stands at the new world class transport hub became operational this week in the first phase of opening. Set to be Ireland's largest integrated transport hub, the new facility will advance the transformation of public transport with a step change in customer experience.

A date for the commencement of rail services will be confirmed once the rail safety authorization process is complete. That important and necessary process is continuing and will be finalized as soon as possible to enable train services at the new station to get underway.

Public Realm work to put a clear focus on allocation of road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport around the station will continue in to 2025.

Speaking as he opened Grand Central Station as bus services begin to operate, **John O'Dowd** said:

"This is truly a new era for public transport here in Belfast and across the north and indeed the island of Ireland. This new flagship station is iconic as well as historic and it signals our intent in relation to our climate commitments and our focus on transport decarbonization.

"There is no doubt that this is an impressive facility with the space to cater for up to 20 million customer journeys per year. At the moment, 16 bus stands are operational and this will increase to 26 and double the number of rail platforms from four to eight. With 200+ spaces for bicycles, we are focused on encouraging more active travel and providing passenger facilities and services that deliver an enhanced user experience.

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"This is an example of the importance of infrastructure and the transformative changes my department can deliver. I would like to thank everyone who has worked tirelessly on this project to make this happen and bring the vision of Ireland's largest integrated transport hub to reality."

Chris Conway, Translink Group Chief Executive said: "We are excited to be opening this modern major transport interchange this week. With advanced customer features and integrated networks, it offers huge opportunity to grow public transport driving economic development across the region and play a major part in tackling the climate emergency. That means a better-connected future for people and communities for generations to come. I would like to thank the Minister and his Department for the funding and the wider NI Executive for their support in designating this as a Flagship Project. I would also like to thank the Translink team and the contractors for their commitment and dedication to get this project to this key stage".

Duane McCreadie, Project Director for Farrans Sacyr JV, said: "The departure of the first bus from Belfast Grand Central Station this weekend has been a proud moment for the FS JV team who have worked hard to deliver this first operational phase on time. There has been a true sense of collaboration on this project since day one and we have worked closely alongside Translink, Babcock and our local supply chain to meet the challenging construction program. This is an impressive building which has been built for the city of Belfast by local people who are invested in our region. We know that it will have wide ranging positive benefits for sustainable travel in Northern Ireland."

Sacyr UK & Ireland

The United Kingdom is one of the priority markets in Sacyr's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan. Belfast Grand Central Station joins other successful construction projects such as the Edinburgh Tramway, the University of Ulster in Belfast and the A6 motorway between Dungiven and Drumahoe.

In addition, in July 2022, Sacyr was awarded its first concession in the country, the new Velindre Cancer Center in Wales. Construction for this project started in early Summer 2024.

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