

STATES OF JERSEY



MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016 – 2019 (P.72/2015): SEVENTH AMENDMENT (P.72/2015 AMD.(7)) – AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 29th September 2015
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade**

STATES GREFFE

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016 – 2019 (P.72/2015): SEVENTH
AMENDMENT (P.72/2015 AMD.(7)) – AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, AMENDMENT 1 –

For the words “in 2016” substitute the words “in 2017” and delete the words “by £100,000 in 2017 and”.

2 PAGE 2, AMENDMENT 2 –

After the words “for States members’ pensions” insert the words “and the net revenue expenditure of the Transport and Technical Services department shall be increased by £100,000 in order to provide funding for concessionary bus passes for the disabled”.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

'These [disabled] people need to have access to public transport which is free.' – Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence, seeking election as Minister for Transport and Technical Services, 6th November 2014.

The issue of free access for disabled people to public transport came up at the very first senatorial hustings at Grouville in 2014. Thanks to modern technology, the videos of the Hustings meetings are online for all to see and the question and answer about the bus passes comes up at around 01:08 into the video. For ease of recall, I have attached, below, a transcript of the hustings. It is amazing how so many long-serving politicians were unaware of the fact that disabled people in Jersey do not and did not (then) have free concessionary passes.

GROUVILLE SENATORIAL HUSTINGS – BUS PASSES ISSUE

Question from Anthony Lewis: I have not been able to get a disabled bus pass; do we do enough for disabled people in Jersey?

Responses from successful candidates:

Senator Ozouf: “I didn’t know you couldn’t get a bus pass. **Many of us would want to fix that.** More money is going into healthcare spending.”

Dr. Cameron: “We can do a lot more. I have concerns over the way the Impairment Benefit is assessed, it’s not fit for purpose. The Jersey Disability Partnership is there and we do need to listen more to people like you to inform our policy in future.”

Senator Routier: “No we’re not doing enough. I am the Chair of the Service Users’ Forum and wasn’t aware of this issue of not having a bus pass. We’re having a Transport Policy Review which I’m sure will put that in there.”

Senator Farnham: “I’m embarrassed to learn you couldn’t get a bus pass, **you should be able to; something has to be done about that.** A lot more could be done, keep campaigning and I’m sure you’ll continue to get results.”

Senator Bailhache: “I never thought about the question of bus passes. I’m sure we should be thinking about it. I’m sure there is more to be done, the question has certainly stimulated me and I’m sure others I think about the question for the future.”

Senator Maclean: “The question is why you should have had to come to a Hustings to raise this issue, you shouldn’t have had to, we should’ve known about it and been able to deal with issues to do with disabled people, if we can’t help as a government people who are in genuine need, what are we here for, if something needs to be dealt with? I might add that the system of support is sometimes too rigid, people feel almost criminalised at times with genuine needs who need genuine help and other people are abusing the system, so that needs balancing out to ensure we don’t waste money.”

Deputy Green: “No we don’t do enough, not focussed on what disabled people can do we concentrate on what they can’t do... nor do we look after the carers. There’s a lot more work to be done.”

Senator Gorst: “Should we put more money into disability? The answer is yes... so we are going to need to put more money in certain areas. We are not doing enough for the disabled. Senator Routier and I have allocated some of our budget now to start a

mapping process of disability. We do not know what all the conditions are, how many people there are, therefore we can't even properly plan all the services that we need or make the changes to the buildings. So we're starting that work and it's got to be done in conjunction with business as well; it's about public awareness... and what businesses are going to need to do as well to look after the people who are working for them, because it's about ability. We're not doing enough but **we are absolutely committed to doing more... and once we've done the mapping and research we're going to have to spend a lot more money**, is that the right thing? I believe it is."

Clearly, there is a lot of support in the Council of Ministers for this issue. The same sentiment and commitment to action were conveyed only a few weeks later when in Deputy Noel was making his pitch to the States Assembly for the job of Minister for Transport and Technical Services –

"I was appalled when I heard that at the Grouville hustings and I have had another. Yes, that is going to be high on my priorities... We will find a solution and implement that in short order."

Deputy E.J. Noel (see **Appendix** for full transcript).

I was initially disappointed that with so much apparent political will, the promise of free bus passes for the disabled has not been brought back to the house already, especially when we have seen the Deputy's fellow Minister in other departments not wasting any time in implementing their austerity agenda, sometimes without even referring matters to the Assembly.

This said, I understand from speaking to the Minister, and from answers given in Scrutiny and the Assembly, that some work is underway into the feasibility of such a scheme and how it might work.

It should be noted that the wideness or narrowness of any proposed scheme (i.e. how many people are likely to be eligible) will have an effect on the overall cost of the scheme. It will also depend on what level of subsidy/discount, if any, the current bus operator will give, but it should be noted that Liberty Bus's own website confirms that CT Plus is committed to *Social Enterprise* (presumably a modern phrase for *Social Corporate Responsibility*). It may well be that part of that Social Enterprise can be to offer free bus passes for the disabled, or at the very least, offer a discounted fair, with the rest being funded by Government.

With this said, I can give no guarantee that the £100,000 being allocated to TTS specifically ear-marked for disabled concessionary passes will be enough. It may be too much, but the point is that it gives this assembly the opportunity to give the Minister a clear steer that we support the principle of free bus-passes for the disabled; it also puts some money in the pot, in a cost neutral manner, to kick start this initiative.

Finally, I have not as yet touched on the matter of States Members Pensions. All I will say is that it is clear that if a choice had to be made by the public between giving £100,000 to disabled transport, giving it to States Members in the form of a future pension or putting it back in the pot, I am sure our constituents would vote overwhelmingly for the first option.

Financial and manpower implications

The financial implications, as previously stated, are cost neutral. There are no additional manpower implications.

Questions to the candidate [Deputy Noel] prior to his election as Minister for Transport and Technical Services: [6/11/2014]

5.1.18 Deputy M. Tadier:

My question is, and the Deputy will know, he was at the Grouville hustings for Senators when there was talk, and I think almost all of the candidates endorsed the need for disabled people to have free bus passes. Is this something that he will reintroduce and how quickly can he do it?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I do not know if that is a fact about reintroducing, I am not sure if they have ever had them. **But I was appalled** when I heard that at the Grouville hustings and I have had another instance of a parishioner in St. Lawrence as well. So, yes, **that is going to be high on my priorities**. It is not just a T.T.S. issue, it goes wider than that. But, yes, it makes sense; these people do need to be able to have access to public transport which is free. [Approbation]

5.1.19 Deputy M. Tadier:

How is that done? Is it up to the bus providers to provide that or is it really at directions from the Minister for Transport and Technical Services?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I said, it is across departments. It is not just T.T.S. it is Social Security, it is other departments as well. But I am a team player I believe in working with people, taking people with us and together between T.T.S., Treasury and Social Security we will find a solution and implement that in short order.