

2.7 Deputy R.C. Duhamel of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the availability of bus passenger figures for the period 2005-2007:

Could the Minister explain to the Assembly why the figures promised to the Environment Scrutiny Panel relating to the breakdown of the bus passenger figures for the period 2005 to 2007 have not been forthcoming and when the panel can expect to receive this information?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye of St. Helier (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

Yes, I can. The initial analysis that Transport and Technical Services undertook on bus passenger and expenditure figures has been forwarded to the Environment Scrutiny Panel. However, when the following year's figures were analysed the inclusion of the summer leisure service in 2007 meant that the figures were no longer comparable and the analysis proved inconsistent. It was, therefore, decided that a fuller, more extensive model should be developed which would be capable of providing in-depth analysis of the network in preparation for the re-tendering exercise relevant to the contract. This work is now nearing completion and it is hoped that the analysis will be available for the scrutiny panel early in the New Year. Meanwhile, Sir, I can assure the Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Panel that in this particular respect I hold no further information that the scrutiny panel does not already have.

2.7.1 Deputy R.C. Duhamel:

It is my belief that contrary to what the Minister has just indicated, only part of the figures for the period of 2005 to 2007 have been received by the Environment Scrutiny Panel and the request really was to the Minister to explain why those figures, if they are in the possession of the department, could not be forthcoming?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It was my opinion and I think the opinion of my officers that to send figures to the scrutiny panel that were effectively misleading and could be misunderstood was not a helpful thing to do.

2.7.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister not agree that when the original contract was signed, the intention was that every year the then Public Services and now T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) would produce a report on the functioning of the service and they would distance themselves from Connex in order that we might have an independent view?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

There have been a number of reports produced both by the department and most certainly by Connex indicating that States Members in this House and indeed the public at large have absolutely nothing to worry about. The current public bus service is doing extremely well. Year on year it accrues more revenue. It carries more passengers. The only issue frankly for the new States next year is to understand that the public's appetite for more enhanced public services has increased and there will be a responsibility for this House to satisfy that demand probably by further financing.

2.7.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Supplementary, Sir. Would the Minister not agree, and notwithstanding some of the excellent work which he has pioneered and which I hope becomes part of his tribute, so to speak, would he not agree that the absence of things like luggage provision on the airport service is a continual irritant and it is this inability to deal with minor issues which have a major impact which is hindering its future development?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

It is a feature I think of the success not only of the public bus service but many activities that the States undertake that minor issues can sometimes achieve a level of notoriety way beyond their fundamental trivial nature. I have always been concerned about the luggage issue relating to buses

servicing the airport and that has been a difficult balancing act that up to now I have resolved on the basis that seating is more important over the generality of the services being offered than luggage racks. Nevertheless, it is an aspect under constant review and I am sure that if new rolling stock arrives, not only will it have regard to disabled access but it will also have regard to luggage storage capacity. There are always problems. There are always complaints. I am sure that they can be dealt with in a better way and I know that the both the department and Connex are striving to find better ways of dealing with even the most minute issues.

2.7.4 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:

Does the Minister agree that there are still improvements needed in the provision of service to commuters, people in urban Parishes wanting to get into St. Helier and that further incentives are necessary to the company in order to provide those over the coming year onwards?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I absolutely agree with Deputy Scott Warren and I should warn whoever turns out to be the next Minister for Transport and Technical Services that there is plenty of the mountain still to climb in respect of providing a public bus transportation system that the Island wants because I can assure Members that our customers are demanding and there are more and more customers. The more capacity we provide, the more people use the buses. This will present a challenge, not only for the department but I hope also will see support from the new House to move forward what I think have been some very helpful early strides. We now have an integrated service for the first time in a very long time and we have to back-up that tremendous support and enthusiasm from the travelling public who will insist on more and better services, more frequent running times on routes and indeed more routes.

The Bailiff:

We come to the next question by Senator Syvret of the Minister for Education. Before I call Senator Syvret, may I just draw his attention to the provisions of Standing Order 104 which requires that Members must not refer to an individual not a member of the States by name and that you must not refer to any such person, Senator, please.