

STATES OF JERSEY



BUS SERVICE CONTRACT: HOPPA

Lodged au Greffe on 20th September 2011
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) to request the Minister for Transport and Technical Services to ensure that the provision of a ‘Hoppa’ bus service in the town and its environs is prioritised for inclusion in the tendering process to be undertaken over the coming months for the new bus service contract, and that this service should –
 - (i) be provided free of charge, or at a low, fixed-cost rate, and
 - (ii) use zero or low-emission vehicles;
- (b) to request the Council of Ministers to make provision for the additional cost of the ‘Hoppa’ bus service in the draft expenditure proposals for 2013 for approval by the States in 2012.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

The Sustainable Transport Policy (P.104/2010) contains the following targets for improving our bus service:

“3.1.4 Proposed network improvements

The review identified the following potential revisions to the main bus network in order to make the operation more efficient and to encourage and provide for increased patronage.

- **A new high frequency 7 day a week southern route**
The route to run between the Airport, Red Houses, St. Aubin, Liberation Station, La Rocque and Gorey. The service will run at a 10 minute frequency during the peaks offering a ‘turn up and go’ service and allowing for travel beyond St. Helier.
- **A regular timetable to rationalise and increase coverage**
Services will be scheduled to provide a more regular timetable, improving convenience of use. Additional early morning and early evening services will be provided, where necessary, to extend the period of coverage, particularly in the rural areas that currently receive a limited service.
- **Improved Sunday winter service to rural area.**
During the winter period there are currently no bus services to the north of the Airport or West of Durrell. An all year round island-wide Sunday service will be developed.
- **All year round island circular service**
The current Island Explorer will be replaced with an all year round circular route with vehicles circulating both clockwise and anticlockwise enabling passengers to travel across the north of the Island without travelling via St. Helier.
- **A town hopper service**
A service should be provided to link Liberation Station with areas such as the hospital, Elizabeth Harbour, the central market and other key town destinations. This service will be low cost or possibly no charge at all as many users will be pensioners and therefore travel free in any case, and the reductions in boarding time and administration would partly compensate for lost revenue. Some income could be gained through sponsorship and advertising. Vehicles would ideally be low or zero emissions, subject to availability.”

Some of these targets for improvement are to be built into the tendering process for the several companies which I am informed are bidding for the contract. My understanding is that putting the means to improve the bus service is seen as absolutely critical to delivering the Sustainable Transport Policy and reducing car use on the Island over the coming years.

For example, my understanding is that the successful company will have to put in place plans to deliver a 100% increase in commuter bus use and a 20% increase in school pupils over a particular timescale. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used over the length of the contract to monitor improvements and drive efficiencies and to keep costs down whilst delivering service.

After 10 years of waiting for a reliable, integrated service to serve the requirements of many, especially the elderly, to be able to get about town and its neighbouring areas, conveniently and affordably, we now have the opportunity to deliver. The early stages of tendering are already underway, and at the time of writing I believe the shortlist is being whittled down. Further work will be needed over 2012 to develop realistic and costed schemes for delivering improvements for the start of a new 7 year contract starting in January 2013.

Financial and manpower implications

There will of course be a cost to introducing a 'Hoppa' service in and around town in 2013, but this will form part of the 2013 Annual Business Plan (or future Medium Term Financial Plan) process, and will in any case depend on the balance of frequency, routes, fare pricing and sponsorship put forward by the successful bidder. There are no financial or manpower costs arising from this in-principle proposition, other than the work involved in including this service in the tendering process.

However, for those who wish to start to consider potential cost, an approximate cost can be derived from an answer given in the States in 2002, when giving consideration to a replacement for the previous trial Hoppabus service, the then President of the Public Services Committee replied as follows –

“If the Hoppabus service was to operate in a similar manner to that during the experiment in 1999, the estimated overall cost would be in the order of £315,000 per year.”

Uprating this figure by inflation over the intervening period (36%) would produce a figure of £430,000. At the outside, then, a total of no more than £500,000 would produce a town service of the highest quality.