

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND TECHNICAL SERVICES BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 30th APRIL 2013**

Question

Given the 4% decrease in bus usage since CT Plus replaced Connex, would the Minister advise:

- a) whether he was aware at the time of awarding the contract that a similar problem existed in Guernsey, where the service is also operated by CT Plus?
- b) how many buses CT Plus are presently using (and their capacity) compared with Connex and whether he considers this adequate?
- c) whether he is aware of the problems unreliable buses pose to the travelling public, especially those trying to get to work?
- d) what steps, if any, he is taking to halt the decline in bus usage and the consequential migration of people into cars?

Answer

- a) Recorded trip numbers on Guernsey's bus service have been reducing since the peak in 2010 when it carried 1.64 million passengers. Subsequently in 2011 numbers declined to 1.58 million (-3.7%) and then 2012 this weakening continued to 1.51million passengers (-4.6%). Guernsey advises that this trend appears to mirror the decline in visitor numbers to the Island. Similarly, in Jersey during 2012 Connex reported a corresponding decline.

Following the withdrawal at short notice of Guernsey's incumbent bus operator Island Coachways, April 2012 the States of Guernsey selected CT Plus from a field of seven bus companies to partner with it under a two year contract to operate the buses and assist the States of Guernsey to develop a 'long term future for the bus services' to stabilise what had already become a service under duress. The Guernsey situation differs from Jersey in several important aspects, in that the States of Guernsey owns the vehicles, sets the fares, and takes responsibility for setting the routes and frequencies, retaining the revenue and associated risks. The core responsibility of CT Plus is to supply drivers and operate the buses.

Working with the States of Guernsey, CT Plus is in the process of introducing new initiatives for Guernsey, such as late evening buses and innovative travel pass products, to try and reinvigorate the market.

The statistical significance of a 4% decrease in Jersey's recorded passenger numbers during the first quarter has yet to be established. It may be a continuation of the decline experienced by Connex, but is more likely to be attributable, at least in part, to the extended period of adverse and cold weather the Island suffered during early 2013, and the services' teething problems which have largely been addressed by LibertyBus through the

Spring timetable changes and will further be addressed through the forthcoming Summer timetable changes.

- b) LibertyBus have 90 vehicles available to them to deliver the public and school services, compared to Connex's peak fleet strength of 84 vehicles. The LibertyBus fleet provides an additional 321 seats compared to that of Connex at the height of their operation.

The table below summarises the fleets of the two companies, detailing seating and vehicle capacities. Of the 84 Connex vehicles, the nine Mercedes schoolbuses had all been taken out of service by the summer of 2012, reducing their fleet to 75 vehicles and the overall seating capacity by 267 seats.

COMPARISON OF VEHICLE CAPACITY - CONNEX V LIBERTYBUS					
Vehicle type	Seats per vehicle	Connex fleet		LibertyBus fleet	
		No. of buses	Total seats	No. of buses	Total seats
Single Deck					
Mercedes (schoolbus only)	27	3	81	x	x
Mercedes (schoolbus only)	31	6	186	x	x
Plaxton Pointer	41	10	410	10	410
Plaxton Pointer	37	6	222	6	222
Caetano Nimbus short	29	33	957	13	377
Caetano Nimbus long	41	2	82	2	82
Caetano Nimbus long	37	16	592	16	592
Caetano Nimbus long	34	1	34	x	x
ADL Enviro200 10.8m	35	5	175	x	x
Bluebird Orion Plus	17	x	x	4	68
Optare Solo SR	33	x	x	33	1089
Double Deck					
ADL Enviro400 2009	68	1	68	x	x
ADL Enviro400 2010	62	1	62	x	x
ADL Enviro400 2013	65	x	x	6	390
Totals		84	2869	90	3230

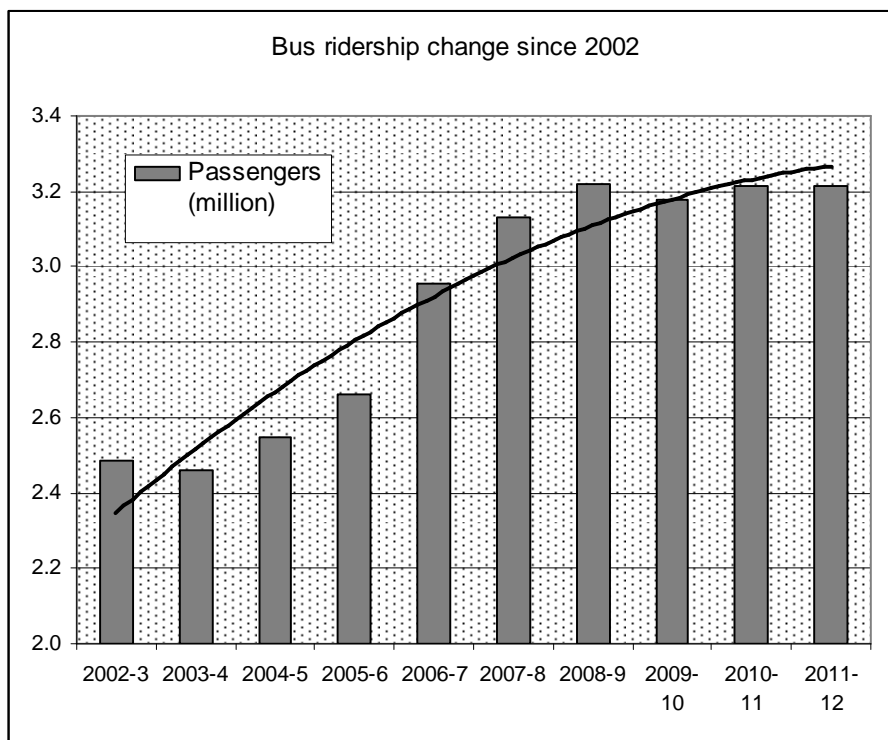
x = Vehicle type not operated

- c) I am acutely aware of the problems that unreliable buses can cause to the travelling public, particularly those travelling to work. This is why I as Regulator impressed upon LibertyBus that addressing punctuality is of the utmost priority. Since then, most of the teething problems which occurred at the start of the service have been addressed by LibertyBus through the Easter and forthcoming Summer timetable changes.

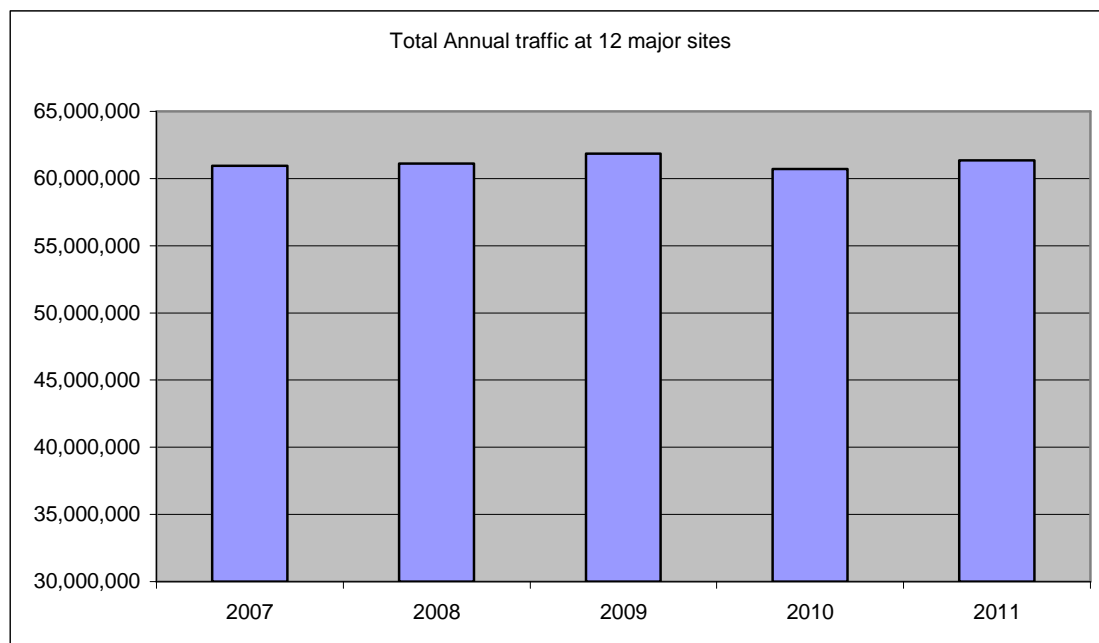
Initiatives such as the split in the Service 15 from a through route into two separate services, the 15 and 16, and the new and very popular X12 express service from the West have contributed significantly to improving reliability.

Further to this, following a contractual period of grace to allow LibertyBus to establish itself, I have incorporated into the Contract significant penalty clauses where unreliable services are identified. This information will be gathered automatically using GPS tracking equipment within the vehicles.

- d) Notwithstanding statistical fluctuations between some years, the overall trend for recorded passenger journeys on the bus network continues to rise as set out in the Chart below:



While contrary to what is asserted in the question, car use has remained static, despite the Island's population having increased by around 10,000 during the period 2001-2011:



To ensure that this trend of increased public transport patronage continues, I have instigated various initiatives as follows:

- The fleet operated by LibertyBus under the 2013 Contract is required to be one composed of high quality vehicles on all public routes, which provide a fully accessible, comfortable and modern environment for the passenger. This includes the provision of more leg room and both buggy and wheelchair spaces on the single deck buses used on the majority of the network, with luggage racks on the double deck buses serving the Airport
- LibertyBus are contracted to provide a 14% increase in journey miles by 2015, ensuring a higher overall level of service
- Introduction of earlier morning services
- Additional Sunday and late evening services
- Express services on routes where the highest demand exists
- Over 25 new bus shelters installed between late 2010 and spring 2013, compared to 6 in the previous decade, along with additional roadside timetable information display sites
- The provision by LibertyBus of more accurate ticketing data, to allow unmet demand to be identified and new routes instigated
- The introduction of electronic smartcard ticketing this summer to allow cashless transactions, both speeding up bus boarding times and allowing more attractive commercial offerings to be made to the public
- Extended opening hours of the passenger concourse at Liberation Station, to 10:00 pm since the start of 2013
- Improved consultation process, including regular parish meetings with passengers
- On-board audible and visual next stop announcements expected to be implemented across the fleet this summer
- Telematics systems to monitor and improve driving standards, facilitating more comfortable journeys, due to be installed this summer

This list is not comprehensive, but intended to highlight the kind of initiatives being undertaken.