

**4.11 Deputy J.H. Young of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the recent increases in bus fares:**

Will the Minister inform the Assembly whether he was consulted by CT Plus before the recent increases in bus fares and is he satisfied that the company's decision not to review their fare bands A and B and to continue to set a universal fare, previously £1.20 now £1.30 on all short journeys between any 2 bus stops, is both reasonable and likely to produce the increase in bus usage required?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):**

I was indeed consulted by Liberty Bus about the revised bus fares effective from 1st February 2014. As a result, the initial proposal that was presented by Liberty Bus has been further developed. Now that the AvanchiCard electronic booking ticketing system is available to all customers, prices of the most popular prepaid unlimited travel tickets have either been left unchanged or even reduced and although on-bus cash fares have gone up, this is for the first time since January 2012. I can confirm that the fare bands currently applied to Liberty Bus services remain identical to those inherited from the previous operator. However, I agree that once the rollout of AvanchiCard is complete, it would be worthwhile reviewing the existing arrangements. It may be desirable to refine these fare bands in future so that the price of a bus journey more closely reflects the distance travelled.

[11:00]

**4.11.1 Deputy J.H. Young:**

I thank the Minister. Could he give us an estimated timescale on this next stage review which I think he has suggested?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Liberty Bus are trying to roll out the AvanchiCard as soon as possible. It is a modal shift which is encouraging a shift to the AvanchiCard prepaid tickets by discounting their prices compared to the bus single fares which will minimise cash handling and reduce boarding times. This is exactly what happened in London over the last decade where the Oyster card is now practically universal.

**4.11.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

If I may, could he clarify whether this change in London has produced a marked increase in bus usage?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I believe it has and also bus efficiency because the boarding and alighting times are, in fact, much quicker.

**4.11.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Will the Minister confirm that the pay-as-you-go AvanchiCard offers a discount to cash paid fares? Is this currently the case, the pay-as-you-go AvanchiCard as opposed to the *abonnement* that you get for the month?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

Indeed. The AvanchiCard unlimited travel tickets being reduced in prices are the weekly AvanchiCard, which was £20 is now £19.50 and the monthly £52 card is now £49.

**4.11.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I was asking specifically about the pay-as-you-go which you do not buy for a period but you use it as and when you want to. Is there any advantage for users apart from not having to use cash? Is there a price advantage to using an AvanchiCard pay-as-you-go rather than paying cash and if not, why not?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I have not got that exact band with me but I would be more than happy to clarify that with the Deputy.

**4.11.5 Deputy J.H. Young:**

Would the Minister not accept that given the public cost of meeting infrastructure, investment in our roads, the fact that our road network is at critical capacity, that there is a real case here for some out-of-the-box thinking and, in fact, thinking about fare reduction to achieve a major switch on to our buses rather than this kind of piecemeal sort of incremental approach to an old out-of-date fare. We should have some new out-of-the-box thinking with price reductions being considered.

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

We are well and truly out of the box. As I have just illustrated, prices for the cards have gone down and they promote greater efficiency on the buses. As I mentioned previously, bus fares have not gone up for 2 years but pegging the prices for the AvanchiCard will increase bus ridership.

**4.11.6 Deputy J.H. Young:**

I think the Minister is relying obviously on the AvanchiCard but is it not true that there is no real difference between what you end up paying on an AvanchiCard that is not time-limited. It is only 10 pence now. That is the only difference, 10 pence per journey as a result of this change. Could he not confirm that, that there is no real substantial difference between a prepaid AvanchiCard and a cash card and is that not what he should be looking at changing and then providing a better discount as in London?

**Deputy K.C. Lewis:**

I would like to roll-out the AvanchiCard over the entire system, be it car parks and buses together. There is money to be saved here and that is what we are progressing.