

23.06.13

4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding Town Link ‘Hopper’ bus service (OQ.125/2023)

Will the Minister state whether it is his assessment that the Town Link “hopper” bus service is operating effectively and what his plans are, if any, for improving the service?

Deputy T. Binet (The Minister for Infrastructure):

The Constable may well know this, but the operation of the current Town Link service is based on historical data and it is currently providing transport to the central areas of town. It has recently been extended to Grands Vaux, Trinity and to the Waterfront area. I can confirm that there is a certain amount of data being gathered from the existing operation and this will be used to reassess the service later in the year. I would be very happy to update the Constable and the Assembly once that data has been reviewed. In terms of whether the service is operating effectively, it is probably a little early to tell. For one, I am aware that the average cost per user certainly appears on the surface to be relatively high at this point.

3.4.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister state when the service started and whether the general impression one gets of the buses going around empty could be linked to the fact that people do not really know much about the service, when it is available and where it goes?

Deputy T. Binet:

That could be a factor. I am quite happy to look into the advertising promotion of the service and see if that can be improved. But I am not entirely sure that there is much call for it. But we shall see. I am certainly happy to look at that.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

When the service started, I did ask.

Deputy T. Binet:

Sorry, what was that last question?

The Bailiff:

I think the Connétable also asked did you know when the service started.

Deputy T. Binet:

I could not put a precise date on it, no.

3.4.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

We all enjoy the productions of the ever-expanding Comms Unit and I just wonder whether the Minister has thought about using the ever-expanding Comms Unit to promote the Town Link so that people are much more aware of it and what it does?

Deputy T. Binet:

I think I may just have answered that with the previous question, but, yes, I am very happy for them to look at doing that.

3.4.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Will that include the sort of media clips which have been used to promote electric bikes while Ministers are there promoting active travel, et cetera? Can I ask the Minister whether he is willing to do a piece perhaps on the bus - I can join him if he wants - so that we can promote the Town Link and the importance of it for cutting down traffic in the centre of town?

Deputy T. Binet:

I think I have already said, yet again, that we are prepared to look at various angles and whether that includes videos or not I think is relatively immaterial. I think we need to look at it in the first instance and see what we come up with.

3.4.4 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

In the answer to the initial question I heard the Minister refer to the review that is currently being undertaken looking at historical data. Will the Minister confirm whether or not it is the intention to consult with parishioners living within St. Helier, in particular my constituents living in St. Helier Central, and also the Town Deputies about how the service could be improved?

Deputy T. Binet:

It is all possibilities. They all sound like very good ideas. I would say that we are 18 per cent understaffed at the moment and there are limits to what we can do because we handle a wide variety of affairs at Infrastructure. But I am certainly happy to look at the possibilities.

3.4.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Would the Minister concede that consulting with local Deputies who do have feet on the ground and do speak with their constituents would in fact save his department's resources and aid the quick production of a review that is likely to deliver the best possible service?

Deputy T. Binet:

Yes, very happy to do that.

3.4.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister was able to give us the average cost per passenger, which he said was high, is he in a position to say what the overall cost of the bus service is

Deputy T. Binet:

To the best of my knowledge, in the past completed 12 months is £220,000.

3.4.7 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I wonder if the Minister would consider extending the route of the Town Link hopper bus service a little further to include the ferry terminals and the Pier Road car park, both of which would add appreciable numbers to the currently somewhat empty buses that are travelling around the town?

Deputy T. Binet:

There have been so many helpful suggestions today. I know that there will be people taking notes of all of the suggestions and all of those things will be a part of the review that we carry out later in the year.