

19th November 2013

3.13 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the possibility of Liberty Bus introducing a transfer fee:

Will the Minister advise whether a transfer fare will be introduced by Liberty Bus so that passengers needing to change bus in St. Helier will not be required to pay 2 fares, and if not, why not?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

I can confirm that although such an initiative has been trialled in the form of the rugby special on match days, Liberty Bus do not have any current plans to permanently introduce a transfer fare. Instead the company is developing a range of ticket products based around the Avanchi electronic smart-card system which is currently being rolled out. Once fully implemented, regular Avanchi users will benefit from either unlimited travel season tickets for a fixed price, offering a significant saving for frequent travellers, or a pay-as-you-go fare which will represent a discount relative to the standard cash fare. The Avanchi system aids passengers and drivers by reducing the need to handle cash transactions on board the bus, helping to speed up journey times by ensuring that buses are stationary for shorter periods while passengers board. It also allows lost or stolen season tickets to be cancelled and reissued with remaining credit preserved.

3.13.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for the very detailed explanation of how the Avanchi card system works, which I already know about, but which was not related to the question. The question was simply about transfer fares. Will the Minister explain why it is that a passenger, perhaps somebody with mobility issues, would have to pay 2 fares to get from Le Mont Felard, let us say, to Georgetown, so they will be paying £3.40, where someone travelling from L'Étacq into St. Helier - which is probably a longer distance, maybe even twice the distance - gets to do that journey for only £1.70. Does he think that is fair and if not will he make representations to the bus company so that they can introduce a transfer fare, which would sit very well with their Avanchi card system?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Although established on some transport networks in other countries, transfer tickets are rarely available in U.K. towns and cities. The concept can be prone to abuse and cause difficulties for the operator in accurately gathering passenger journey data. The U.K. bus industry has largely adopted unlimited travel day, week, month, and yearly tickets rather than promoting transfer or return tickets. The rugby special available on match days, for those people who need 2 buses to travel to the rugby club the cost is £2 compared to £2.40, and £3.40 for separate journeys. Avanchi is now available from Liberation Station, Liberty Bus have introduced an online top-up facility so that users do not need to make repeat visits to the bus station. They are rolling out the Avanchi to help visually impaired persons and people with mobility problems. That is the whole point.

3.13.2 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

Deputy Tadier mentioned Mont Felard and I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of the impact on Liberty Bus services with the current traffic delays on Mont Felard?

The Bailiff:

A good attempt to bring in Mont Felard. [Laughter]

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

May I congratulate the Constable of St. Lawrence, very nicely woven in there. Liberty Bus and T.T.S. are well aware of the problems on Mont Felard. It is a private area that has crumbled and has dropped into the road. The road is restricted on health and safety grounds and the owner of the land assures me that everything is being done to remediate the problem as soon as possible. I have asked the land owner to communicate directly with the Constable of St. Lawrence regarding its progress.

3.13.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Why oh why is it always either/or, and never both? Will the Minister explain exactly why he is referring to his Avanchi system instead of introducing through ticketing which obviously has advantages for many travellers?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The system is not mine. Liberty Bus is a completely independent company, but we do liaise with them and they are bringing in lots of initiatives to make it more convenient and cost effective for passengers.

3.13.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

I think the Minister is making heavy weather out of the Avanchi card system. Does the Minister not accept that rather than being an obstacle to transfer ticketing, that the Avanchi card facilitates and makes transfer ticketing possible and therefore, does he first of all see the advantage and the fairness in having transfer tickets, and will he simply ask the bus company if they would be willing to bring this forward. If not, I will do that myself.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Deputy is free to speak to whomever he wishes. Liberty Bus is gradually revising their ticket product range to be more appealing to bus users. The commuter pass, permitting one return journey per day, costs £50.40 per month. Liberty Bus are now offering the Avanchi card for £52 a month which allows the holder an unlimited number of journeys on the bus network.