

3.11 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding monitoring the current usage of the Route 18 bus

Would the Minister advise whether he has requested that Connex monitor the current usage of the Route 18 bus, which currently runs on a circular route 3 times an hour between 9.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. daily, in order to assess the potential to extend this bus once an hour to the top of Mount Bingham and, if not, would he give an undertaking to do so?

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

This has not been done as, during my preliminary investigations, I was advised by the operator that it would not be physically possible to use their buses to run to Mount Bingham because the underside of the bus would scrape the road as it turned from Pier Road up on to the steep incline of South Hill, thus damaging the vehicle and the road.

3.11.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I observe, and I am sure being the Minister for Transport and Technical Services he observes as well, that there are many small white buses that do the school run every day and they are quite capable of going up Mount Bingham. Now, I, Senator Le Main and other Deputies have been trying to get a bus up to this area for 10 years and every operator has come up with an excuse. This route is running 3 buses an hour on a 20-minute loop and it is earlier than 9.00 a.m. - the time I want monitored is 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. - but there is not enough pressure and it is a waste of money. I watch these buses in that time of day with about 3 or 4 people on them. One an hour is not rocket science to get up that hill, they need the smaller bus, and they have the smaller bus. So will the Minister undertake to go back and tell Connex they are talking out of the back of the bus? [Laughter]

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

While the vehicles mentioned by the Deputy are considered unsuitable for this and they are not wheelchair accessible, the Route 88 operated by operators in 2000 did so in this area using smaller vehicles and I am led to believe that there was low passenger demand from this area. This is a view supported by the fact that T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) have no records of any requests from the residents for services to South Hill over the last few years. However, even if it were possible to run the Route 18 bus up to South Hill to provide an irregular service, a 30-minute round journey via Le Marais to town is unlikely to prove an attractive option given that there is an existing bus stop just 250 metres away on Green Street which is served every 20 minutes in both directions providing a 5-minute journey to town. While I am sceptical about diverting the popular Route 18 buses delaying one in 3 of the clock face journeys which 850 weekday passengers use and disrupting its regular "turn up and go" timetable, this is something I would wish the rest of the Island timetable to emulate. I would, however, agree that this is the type of area which might be served by a smaller vehicle on a town hopper-type service or other transport options which I plan to introduce from 2013. Notwithstanding that, I am prepared to discuss with the bus operator a trial based on an outbound journey via commercial buildings in South Hill or an inbound journey via Havre des Pas and Mount Bingham. I am happy to involve the Deputy with those discussions to further her concerns.

3.11.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister not accept that if he had read the *History of Jersey Double Deckers Part 2* he would be aware that in the late 1960s double deckers operated up Mount Bingham when the tunnel was not available to them and that therefore his reasons do not amount to an awful lot?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Briefly, the double decker did not go up South Hill; it certainly went round the corner but the argument is that those living at Mount Bingham will not want to do a long journey around Le Marais to get to town. It will be a downhill walk for them which will be much easier. The concern I think is probably getting back up the hill with their shopping.

[11:00]

3.11.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I think if the Minister cared to work out: 800 passengers use this popular route 3 times an hour, 7 or 8 hours a day, it is popular between 7.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. and it is popular between 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. for people getting home. It is the middle of the day you have 3 to 4 people on the bus, and the Minister has not given me enough assurance and he has not done his homework. We are paying a lot of taxpayers' money to this company who keep pulling the wool over consecutive Ministers for Transport and Technical Services' eyes.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are we coming to the question, Deputy?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes. I really want him to stand on Connex and get this bus operating as soon as possible and give me a date when I can expect a bus to come up Mount Bingham ... and down Mount Bingham. [Laughter]

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

As I suggested before, I think there will be value in the Deputy joining in discussions with my officers to decide on a practical solution to this. I do not think it will be practical to run it both ways to satisfy this one area but I would be keen to involve the Deputy in discussions.

3.11.4 Senator T.J. Le Main:

I was pleased to hear the Minister just make the last comments because I totally agree as a user of number 18 bus daily that further discussions should take place. I urge the Minister and would ask the Minister will he seriously take into consideration the representations made by Deputy Martin, the Deputy of St. Helier No. 1, in view of the extreme amount of elderly people that are now living up on the top end of that road?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes.