

STATES OF JERSEY



LIBERTY BUS: REINSTATEMENT OF ROUTE 18 TO LE SQUEZ AND LE MARAIS – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 12th March 2013
by the Minister for Transport and Technical Services

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement has proposed the reinstatement of the No. 18 bus service to Le Squez / Le Marais as soon as possible.

There are several reasons why this is not a good idea.

1. Transport and Technical Services does not run the bus company, it regulates the bus company. As the Regulator it ensures that the bus company adheres to the contract and follows all the proper procedures that are required in order to provide a public bus network that services the whole of the Island.
2. Piecemeal interference in the network timetable will not incentivise the bus company to perform, it will have knock on effects on the rest of the service and will cost the States to resource.
3. The bus company should be allowed to operate its contract. It analyses the ridership, conducts consultation and puts forward proposals to the Regulator for consultation with the public that are measured and reasoned. The public have the opportunity to influence the proposals before they are finally agreed with the Regulator. The bus company and the Regulator look at what is best for the network as a whole.
4. The patronage on the No. 18 had declined by 25% between 2010 and 2012. Of the 60 comments received in response to the consultation on the timetable that took effect on 2nd January 2013, only 3 related to Le Marais. In light of this, Liberty Bus felt that rather than reduce this important service to Le Marais it would be more useful to try and boost passenger numbers by increasing the choice of destinations served and providing a faster journey time to town.
5. Although the proposition states that there might be a saving from withdrawing the extended No. 15 service and replacing it with the old No. 18, in fact the extra cost would be £180k.
6. As there is a fixed budget for the bus services this would require resource to be reallocated from other locations. To provide context, this would be the equivalent of withdrawing 9 Monday to Saturday daytime and evening services from both the No. 25 and No. 27 to St. John, St. Mary and St. Lawrence, leaving those areas with only 3 peak hour journeys.
7. To implement the proposition would also effectively leave Georgetown without a service, unless services 1 and 1A also reverted back to their old routes. To do so would lose the benefits of the quicker No. 1 service, where positive comments have been received from passengers. Liberty Bus had intended to increase this service to every 20 minutes, because of its success. It is believed that this improvement would have been popular with the hotels and guest houses at Havre des Pas.
8. All these changes would require extensive consultation.
9. When reviewing this service, in particular the routing down Marina Avenue, TTS and Liberty Bus reviewed patronage, consulted with the Connétable and

discussed the matter with the Housing Department with reference to their Le Squez development.

As already mentioned patronage was declining. They learnt that some residents of Marina Avenue had expressed dissatisfaction with large vehicles such as buses coming along their road because there wasn't much space with parked cars. The Liberty Bus new routing benefits Housing's Le Squez redevelopment project through a reduction in infrastructure costs and an opportunity to increase the number of homes provided, it also negates the need for temporary rerouting during the extensive building project.

10. Measures to improve the service for passengers in the affected area are waiting to be put in place (subject to the outcome of this proposition). Improvements can be made to the frequency of both the 1 and 1A services and Liberty Bus would consult on the introduction of better services to Green Road, possibly using the 1a, for the summer timetable. Also, Liberty Bus would investigate structuring the timetable to allow boarding at Snow Hill for services to Le Marais.

Implementing these improvements for a trial period, would allow Liberty Bus to collect the reliable ridership and customer feedback data it needs to make an informed decision as to what service changes would provide the greatest overall benefits to residents. The important thing is to allow Liberty Bus to consider all of the options and not just go back to how it has always been.

The new bus contract has been developed cognisant of lessons learnt from experience with previous bus contracts. In his report 'Management of the Bus Contract July 2011' the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) concluded "*there was insufficient risk associated with the contracts from the contractor's perspective. There was insufficient benefit for the contractor to justify investing in improved performance and, as a result, there has been little incentive for improvement*".

Operational change stagnated in the previous contract. While the States has never directly operated the bus service, by necessity, TTS moved from regulator to become the driving force for service developments such as the introduction of double-deckers and early morning services, because the bus company did not retain the revenue and there was a lack of incentive for the operator of the 2002 Contract to bring about significant improvement.

When TTS was drawing up the 2013 Contract, it was recognised that in order to bring about improvements and meet the ridership targets set by the States Sustainable Transport Policy (STP), TTS needed to shift the risk profile and provide the real incentives that would allow a bus operator the freedom to apply their commercial acumen to grow patronage at no burden to the public purse. Moving TTS away from operational aspects closer to the regulatory role for which it is best suited. Therefore Liberty Bus is now responsible for network development to meet the needs of the STP and bears the revenue risk. This is the principal means of ensuring the operator seeks to deliver the improvements required.

The Liberty Bus bus contract already gives a 12.5% increase in bus mileage, more frequent services to meet proven demand, new rolling stock, and a reduction in annual subsidy. This equates in total to approximately a £1 million year on year improvement in value for money against the previous contract.

There have been teething problems in these first few weeks of the new contract. Change is seldom an easy process. However, these issues are being resolved; some of them are taking longer than others because of scheduling and resourcing. Liberty Bus is consulting with the public and specific stakeholders as necessary and reacting to what they are hearing when appropriate. We still have some way to go and we are certainly not complacent to the issues. However, once we come through this difficult initial period, we will have an improved bus service that will lead to increased patronage and customer satisfaction.

Accordingly, the Minister for Transport and Technical Services urges States Members to reject this proposition.