

3.11 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding latest figures for peak hour traffic statistics on certain roads:

What are the latest departmental figures in respect of peak hours, which I have identified as 7.45 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. in the morning and 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. in the evening, and off-peak hours traffic volume in numbers and maximum queue lengths in St. Peter's Valley, La Route de la Haule between Beaumont and Bel Royal, Route de Haut, Victoria Avenue and Mont Félard?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

I regret that due to the way statistics are collated, I do not have a precise match to the Deputy's timing requirements. However, from 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m., 1,200 cars travel along Route de la Haule between Beaumont and Bel Royal east-bound. Between 9.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. the number drops to 940 and between 5.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. in the afternoon, the number is 920. La Route de la Haule between Beaumont and Bel Royal west-bound, Route de la Haule, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m., 950 vehicles; 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., 910; and from 5.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m., 1,130. St. Peter's Valley by Tesson Chapel, south-bound, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m., 730 vehicles, 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., 320; 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., 350. St. Peter's Valley, Tesson Chapel, north-bound, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m., 290 vehicles, 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., 240; 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., 530. Sir, if you forgive me, I would not carry on all the way through these figures, but I will pass the contents of this over to Deputy Le Fondré.

3.11.1 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I was just going to ask could you give the figures once from Le Mont Félard, please?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

On a certain lengthy question basis, I am happy to cover that, Sir. Le Mont Félard, south-bound, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m., 380; 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., 200; 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., 260. Le Mont Félard, north-bound, 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m., 150; 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., 220; and 5.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m., 240.

3.11.2 Deputy S. Power:

Could I ask the Minister as to when this information was collated and this information, to what period does it relate in terms of collection?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I regret I cannot tell the Deputy the precise time that this figures were collated, in terms of the dates or month of the year. They have been presented to me simply as the latest figures available.

3.11.3 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Given the Minister's answer and his previous answers, that his department thinks there are no traffic engineering solutions to this congested area, does he retain

confidence in his department's guidelines used by planning regarding traffic flow and density guidelines for new developments, and will he undertake an urgent review?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I regret that I appear to have quite seriously misled Deputy Gorst. There are, of course, engineering solutions to any problem. It simply depends on how much money you want to throw at an engineer. Yes, there are traffic engineering solutions to the problem down at Bel Royal-Beaumont, and one of them would be to build an enormous dual carriageway along the beach to relieve the flow on the main coast road. But, yes, traffic solutions and engineering solutions exist. I am sure that we could construct a highly effective tunnel or underpass to go right under Goose Green and come out somewhat along the Inner road. The question is, are these at all feasible, and is it something that we would ever wish to pursue? I suggest no. What I can assure the Deputy, is that I will strive, along with my department, to find sensible and reasonable solutions to these problems.

3.11.4 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Given the outrageous suggestions of the Minister regarding possible solutions, will he then answer remainder of the question?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I am deeply sorry, Sir, but I have forgotten the remainder of the Deputy's question. [Laughter]

3.11.5 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Will he undertake to review the current guidelines issued to the planning department regarding traffic flow and density for new developments? Thank you.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

Yes, I am very happy to undertake that task.

3.11.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister not accept that, given our continuing addiction to the motor car, that there is no real solution to this problem other than declining population growth? If faced with growing population growth, shifting people more to public transport, which means a more attractive public transport system. Sir, could he tell us, does he agree with our sentiments? Secondly, when will the transport strategy be out with a new approach?

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

The transport strategy is due to be published in the next few weeks. I agree largely with the Deputy's sentiments. However, I think it is worthwhile informing the House of, for example, the scale of the problem that faces the Transport and Technical Services Department, and to accept that public transport services can only go so far to assist. For example, in peak time in the morning between 8.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m.,

over 8,000 vehicles travel into St. Helier. This contrasts with the roughly 750 to 800 people who use Connex Buses at that precise same time. The Connex fleet is roughly 45 to 50 vehicles. It does not take a mathematician of great stature to work out that even if I quadrupled the size of that fleet, I would still be only dealing with roughly 3,000 passengers, or obviously roughly 8 times the 750 currently carried. The cost of rolling stock would be very substantial. What I would do with 20 bus vehicles for the rest of the day is a matter that I barely wish to consider, and even if every one of those represented the removal of a car driver from the roads, we would still have over 5,000 vehicles coming into St. Helier. Our traffic situation is a problem of very substantial proportions, but I do hope to address it as best as we can.

3.11.7 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Both the Minister and the previous speaker made reference to the draft traffic strategy. If I recall correctly, there was a proposal to require lower levels of parking in new estates, which appears to be in order to implement the level of car ownership. Is the Minister likely to continue with this policy, and if so, does he seriously expect us to believe, given that these are generally family estates, that a 17-year-old, having just passed his or her driving licence, is not going to want a car, and if they cannot park it outside the house, is not going to just park it either on the road to the estate or on the public roads in the vicinity. In other words, it would just then shift the problem around and increase congestion on the estate as well as on the roads. I will add briefly that I do support the principle of addressing car usage, but I do not think the solution is car ownership.

Deputy G.W.J. de Faye:

I broadly agree with the sentiments of the Deputy. That will be an aspect of the policy that I will be looking at. It has, in fact, been in place for some time and some developments, as I am sure Members will be aware, have been constructed with limited parking provision, and in some cases, virtually no parking provision at all, quite deliberately to see what impact this has. It may well be a strategy that is relevant for certain developments, particularly those possibly in the town area. It may be an aspect of planning and planning advice that is wholly inappropriate for other types of development. But I will revisit the matter and give it my due consideration.