STATES OF JERSEY

BUS SERVICES: PROPOSALS TO MAKE FREE OF CHARGE

Lodged au Greffe on 14th May 2019
by Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Infrastructure –

(a) to take the steps necessary to ensure that school bus services can be used free of charge by school students from the start of term in September 2019;

(b) to bring forward a plan to enable all bus services to be free of charge to people under the age of 18 and people in full-time education from the earliest date practicable; and

(c) to prepare a plan by the end of 2020 for working towards and then enabling free bus transport for everyone in Jersey.

DEPUTY R.J. WARD OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Background

This proposition aims to make buses free for the journey to and from school for all Jersey students. And then to make public transport free for all under-18 or in full-time education. It aims to give a clear message that we will enable and actively encourage the use of public transport above the car by removing the charge for the journey.

It also enables the development of a future plan for free bus transport for all those in Jersey. It is an opportunity for the States Assembly to create a shift in public transport policy. There are a number of significant drivers for this change.

Addressing the culture of public transport use

***Paragraph (a)**:*

There are numerous benefits to taking the bus to school. These include, but are not exclusive to –

1. Each bus can take up to 75 cars off of the road. The issue of morning traffic around schools is very real. Lowering levels of pollutants, particularly around our schools, is vital.

2. Lower Accident Rate. Many studies over the years have repeatedly stated that school buses have a significantly lower number of accidents on the roads compared to students travelling by cars.

3. Buses arrive on time. Particularly if traffic levels are lowered. Therefore, students can arrive on time.

4. Taking cars from the school-run will enable smoother traffic-flow for others.

5. Young people learn to organise their time and take responsibility. The building of self-reliance and resilience is enabled.

6. Free transport removes a financial barrier for those on the lowest incomes.

What is the advantage of a free bus service for under-18s and the wider population?

Paragraphs (b) and (c):

- Free public transport would reduce the number of cars on the road. Climate Change has been recognised by the States Assembly as an emergency and, if public transport was free, more people would use it, taking cars off the road. Some people would simply choose to not own cars, further reducing the number of cars on the road. The result of free public transport would be dramatic in cutting vehicle emissions and combating climate change as committed to by the States of Jersey. This would support the ambitious target of Carbon Neutrality by 2030.

- The Government's job is to provide services. This would be a service that could be used by everyone. Taxes already pay for health care, schools and roads, etc., so why not let taxpayers see the benefits for themselves, in a useful service that everyone can use.

- The environment would greatly benefit. Emissions from cars during times of high car use and beyond are discussed later.

- We would need more public transport workers. With increased and better public transport, we would need more bus drivers, creating jobs. And it would make it easier for people to get to their jobs – they could just get on a bus.

- The Government would be forced to improve public transport. With more users, bad public transport networks would be improved by the Government, to make it worthwhile using. Bad networks would be greatly improved, and the benefits could be used by everyone. It's definitely a worthwhile incentive.

- A zero fare maximizes the efficiency, convenience and attractiveness of public transport systems for both users and operators.

- Many people would be tempted by free transport. If free public transport was offered to everyone, of course they would use it. Yes, some people may stick to their cars, but the majority would think it was a great idea. If you had the choice of paying thousands each year to run a car, or to get on a bus every morning for free, what would you choose?

- A lot of people would already be using it if it didn't cost so much. For a lot of people, the only reason they don't catch public transport is because it costs too much. If it was free, they'd definitely start using it.

See also:
https://efficientgov.com/blog/2015/07/08/pros-cons-making-public-transportation-free/

Financial benefit to families

Paragraph (a) of the Proposition:

Current fare: 80p with Avanchi-card (£8 p.w. return), £1.10 cash (£11 p.w. return).

The current fares for transport to school range between £8 and £11 per week per child. That's between £290 and £385 per year for a full 38-week term. If a family has more than one child, the cost is significant.

By removing fares, we will directly impact the financial well-being of families. And do so proportionally more for low-income families. This targeting of income inequality is a key driver in the Common Strategic Policy. This addresses income by removing a specific expenditure that is disproportionately used by lower-income families.

Environmental benefit

The most obvious benefit is to lower peak-time congestion by actively encouraging the move from cars to public transport. Emissions from cars include the following:

NOx

A mixture of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and nitric oxide (NO) is emitted by combustion processes. The mixture of oxides of nitrogen is termed NOx. NO is subsequently oxidised to NO_2 in the atmosphere. NO_2 is an irritant to the respiratory system, and can affect human health. Ambient concentrations of NO_2 are likely to be highest in the most built-up areas, especially where traffic is congested, or where buildings on either side of the street create a 'canyon' effect, impeding the dispersion of vehicle emissions.

Hydrocarbons

There are many sources of hydrocarbon emissions.

A range of hydrocarbons are found in vehicle fuel, and occur in vehicle emissions. In most urban areas, vehicle emissions constitute the major source of hydrocarbons. There are 4 species associated with fuels and vehicle emissions. These are *benzene*, *toluene*, *ethylbenzene* and *xylene*.

Benzene is the one of most concern, as it is a known human carcinogen; long-term exposure can cause leukaemia. It is found in small concentrations in petrol and other liquid fuels; for urban areas, the major source for benzene is vehicle emissions.

Toluene is found in petrol, it can be used as a solvent in paints and inks; it is also a constituent of tobacco-smoke.

There are no EU limit values for ambient toluene concentration, although there are occupational limits for workplace exposure. The major concern associated with human exposure to toluene is its effect on the central nervous system: it is not believed to be carcinogenic.

Ethylbenzene has no set limits for ambient concentration, although there are occupational limits relating to workplace exposure.

UK situation: https://www.gov.uk/free-school-transport

Useful links:

https://libertybus.je/schools#.XGugtBrLehA

https://www.trackschoolbus.com/blog/important-benefits-of-school-buses/

http://schoolbusfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SchoolBusBenefitsCommunities-1.doc

https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2002/09/15148/9202

https://schooltransportservices.com/news-featured/6-benefits-ride-school-bus/

Financial and manpower implications

(a) The cost of free bus transport for students travelling to and from school is around £300,000. This is a similar figure to the amount returned to the States Assembly from LibertyBus. This money can be used to fund this part of the proposition.

(b) This proposition asks for a plan to be developed and costed for all transport for under-18s and those in full-time education to be made free. This would then have to be agreed.

(c) The proposition again asks for a plan to be developed through 2020 for free public transport across Jersey. The costing will be a key part of the process. The Government Plan is a key opportunity to develop this free service from paragraphs (b) and (c) of the proposition. It also supports the target of Carbon Neutrality by 2030.

In all parts of the proposition, a wider understanding of cost has to be considered. The cost to our health, infrastructure needs, and growing damage to urban environment; plus the impact on climate must be integral to these considerations. It is hoped that bus usage will increase with a free system. This will require greater investment, but in the long term. This will be balanced by longer-term savings from health, infrastructure and the culture change we require, as we and the world move away from a carbon-based economy.

Examples of free bus services worldwide

https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/oct/15/i-leave-the-car-at-home-how-free-buses-are-revolutionising-one-french-city

https://www.transport.tas.gov.au/passenger/passengers/student_travel/student_bus_fares/free_travel_bus_pass

https://qz.com/1442882/free-public-transit-is-gaining-popularity-in-european-cities/

A list of cities and countries offering free or partially free services:
https://freepublictransport.info/city/

https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/estonia-free-public-transit-for-all/