**5.8.2022**

**Improving Public Transport in Malta**

**Malta Budget 2023 proposal Association for Consumer Rights**

Following the Survey conducted by The Association for Consumer Rights (ACR) Malta, inviting the public to have their say on the quality of public transport in Malta, based on the findings of the survey, **ACR Malta is putting forward the following Budget 2023 proposals which represent the public's submissions and proposals to the Malta Public Transport and relevant authorities.**

ACR Malta has undertaken this initiative in collaboration with the Civil Society Committee of the Malta Council for Social and Economic Development (MCESD).

1. Improving public transport to convince many more Maltese commuters to use public transport instead of private transport.
2. The relevant regulatory authorities need to request the Malta Public Transport bus operator, to make certain modifications so that buses will become much more punctual, reliable and to shorten journey times for commuters.
3. Particularly, ACR proposes that the bus operator in Malta is requested to:
4. **Uncouple departing buses from arriving buses.**  That is, the bus departing from a specific location must not be the bus that has to arrive shortly before.  In this way, if a bus is delayed for example because of traffic congestion, this will not also delay the departure of the next bus.
5. It is recommended that a bus should be at its **initial departing point at least five minutes before departure time.**
6. **Routes particularly to and from high-commuter destinations should be as shortened as possible.**  Many buses currently meander through three-four towns before arriving at a destination.
7. While there should be some buses which continue to go through many towns**, there should also be many buses that go directly to their destination**.  For example, a bus from B'Bugia to Mater Dei Hospital should not have to go through Sta Lucija or Tarxien and Paola first.  But should go straight from B'Bugia to Mater Dei Hospital.
8. **More express buses are needed**.  Otherwise, commuters will refuse to ditch their private vehicle.
9. **Small buses (for about 14 passengers) need to be introduced.**  If we keep getting large buses, then short express routes will be deemed by operator as not financially feasible/profitable and will keep preferring long meandering routes so as to fill up large buses. This would however undermine the main objective of public transport - it would not be serving commuters well who in turn would not take up the service, resulting in government paying operator for a service which is not being used to a maximum by Maltese commuters.
10. **The substantial grant government and EU are planning to give to Malta Public Transport to buy buses needs to include condition that most of the buses purchased would be small buses** so as to be used on express routes and will not have to wait to fill up with many passengers before it becomes financially worthwhile for bus to depart.

**Concluding comments**

The Association for Consumer Rights believes that the above proposals should be part of a more comprehensive plan to include

* issues concerning upgrading road conditions,
* regular road maintenance,
* measures to minimise traffic congestion, due to road works and public events.
* safety measures including maintenance of culverts early before the rain season to ensure heavy rainfall does not cause disasters.
* adequate provision of protective public shelters in all areas – in rural areas, villages, and towns.

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Environment and Sustainable Consumption Affairs