

Bus terminus at Valletta to make way for pedestrians

Matthew Xuereb



Valletta in the 1950's showing buses at the terminus outside the city and at Castille Place (right) close to the then Vernon Club which building now houses the Central Bank. Buses are parked at St James counterguard where currently the open-air market, Il-Monti is held on Sundays. One the left just inside City Gate is a parcel of land now taken up by government apartments. Further in on the left, but closer to the centre is a vacant plot on which the law courts were built.

Photo: Private collection.

The shabby bus terminus outside Valletta will be moved down the road to St James Ditch, clearing out the "cemetery of old buses" as part of the project to give new life to the capital city's main entrance.

Transport Minister Austin Gatt said moving the terminus to the area currently used as an open-air market on Sundays would pave the way for the space around the Tritons Fountain to become pedestrian-only.

Rather than six bus lanes, described by the minister as a "cemetery" for the aging vehicles, the approach to the city would be upgraded to become the entrance worthy of a World Heritage Site, Dr Gatt said.

He said the space would undergo a complete transformation, looking more like the newly-restored St George's Square and would complement the Renzo Piano project for City Gate. In fact, the terminus area was added to the brief of the world-renowned Italian architect when the Prime Minister and Dr Gatt met him in Paris a few days ago.

If the planning authority issued the permits by May, the new terminus would be completed by the end of the year when the new public transport system started to operate, Dr Gatt said.

It is planned to have spaces for 15 buses, as opposed to the current 41, because the reformed transport system will mean fewer buses will be idle. It will also have better facilities, with rest areas for drivers, passengers and transport officials. The kiosks will be relocated and upgraded.

Idle buses will be parked around the corner in the ditch that runs parallel to Ġilormu Cassar Avenue.

The project is expected to cost €3.3 million, or 60 per cent of the cost of Mr Piano's original option to have the terminus relocated underground. The new terminus will cover about 3,500 square metres, down from the present 9,500. Dr Gatt said discussions were still to be held with the hawkers with the aim of finding a suitable alternative location for the Sunday open-air market.

Comments

Anthony Pace Gouder (1 week, 5 days ago)

A careful scrutiny of this 1950 historic aerial photo also shows the old residential buildings that occupied Freedom Square . Unmistakenly also the previous City Gate with the garrison quarters on Queensway . Just visible to the left of St.James Cavalier is the still FAIRLY intact rear section of the Grand Opera House , that survived the bombing .

Reverting to the Proposed 15 Bus Terminus . Yet another careful look , and Dr.A .Gatt will be boasting that the New Terminus is not only 60% but even as much as 35-40% of the previous underground proposal's cost . I will not go into detail , but just indicate the innermost Phoenicia side existing bus lane and its adjacent shoulder , that with SIMPLE INTELLIGENT PLANNING can accomodate the 15 Buses .

The Ancillary Facilities and pavement-aligned Bus-Bays can be built (sunken) at an acceptable level to conserve and even enhance the view towards Marsamxett Harbour as far as IMDINA , from the Triton pedestrian Esplanade .The Offices , rest Areas and Waiting Passengers will even enjoy this backdrop Stand-by Buses can park sheltered under the Terminus in St. JOHNS DITCH . There ! The Hawkers' Transfer Problem Solved !

Anthony Pace Gouder (1 week, 5 days ago)

@Sylvia Sammut " much thought and planning seem to have gone into this "

I beg to differ to your statement as the plans clearly expose technical and planning shortcomings! HASTY DECISIONS (ejja hammorru type b'hall tal-linja) contrary to the above.

Joe Azzopardi (2 weeks ago)

Wow great idea SAVE THE OLD BUSES PLEASE DONT SCRAP THEM - Yes please do!!!!

smifsud (2 weeks ago)

SAVE THE OLD BUSES PLEASE DONT SCRAP THEM >>>>USE THEM IN ANOTHER CAPACITY TO SERVE TOURISTS>>>>DONT SCRAP MALTA'S CULTURE AND BEAUTIFUL HISTORY >>>WHAT A SHAME TO THIS GOV IF YOU DO SCRAP THEM ++++NEVER WILL SUPPORT THE PN AND GONZI!!!!

Sylvia Mizzi (2 weeks ago)

Why not have buses with destination on them not just numbers? Sylvia

Jesmond Micallef (2 weeks ago)

Dear Mark Sammut, whilst I do feel that you might be right in promoting a couple of those vehicles as tourist attractions, but only after heavy modifications of course, as the intention still remains, fare paying passengers after all. They have to be compliant with the safe passage of people.

They are history. Fine examples of "handicraft", if you like. Technology has moved forward for the benefit of the all public and the environment. All the Public includes persons who use a wheelchair, people with pushchairs, young children, old pensioners and so on.

Anyway, I hope that maybe a Malta Transport Museum will one day be set up somewhere. A Maltese bus will certainly be a well deserved attraction there. So people of Malta, think about that. There are also remnants of the Malta Railway in Birkirkara, they might need sheltering from the elements somehow ! Valletta was its point of departure after all !!

With my sincere very best wishes.

J.Kawash @ Lawrence Fenech (2 weeks ago)

@ Lawrence Fenech, boy how right you are some of the old bus haters here say they're junk and are dirty, well the new ones are much dirtier and scruffier and uncomfortable, and FYI the oldest bus in service in Malta is from 1932 and is nicer to look at, ride on and use than the 2003 imports.

Regarding thanks, mela ma jghidux thanks, dawk mux karozza biex xufier isibu !!!

Joe Grech (2 weeks ago)

@ Minister Austin Gatt - I think it is a good idea to upgrade the area around the Triton and to move the buses elsewhere. Please remember that there is no real need to spend too much as this specific area, located just outside Valletta, will never really become a "pedestrian area" in my humble opinion. But it certainly cries out for a good refit!

However your (or government's) declaring that "discussions were still to be held with the hawkers with the aim of finding a suitable alternative location for the Sunday open-air market." is a wrong thing to say. Don't you think that such discussion should have been agreed upon BEFORE the issuing of the new plans.

There seem to be plans for government to offer ten hawkers at the Valletta open air market the possibility to trade in their operating licence for a handsome financial bail out. Ostensibly government wishes to reduce the number of hawkers further. Is this really true or is it just hearsay?

Arrogant behaviour is so infuriating to the Maltese - please remember that. Do try to be more considerate Why choose the road leading to confrontation?

Sylvia Zammit (2 weeks ago)

Much thought and planning seems to have gone into this. But I have 1 question; what about the karazzini horses? Are there plans for them too if not at the terminus, somewhere else in this 'World Heritage ' site?

Mark Sammut (2 weeks ago)

Those old buses are one of the things that attract tourists and make people think fondly of these islands. Don't just scrap them. Someone with a little imagination should buy, refurbish and make a killing taking tourists around the island.

Jesmond Micallef (2 weeks ago)

What an extremely interesting photograph !! The description right underneath relates to war damage of course. The current Law courts were built on the site where Auberge of Alvernia used to stand. I might be wrong but does it not show the GWU Workers Memorial Building construction site on South Street, too, top left ?? The Carmelite Church in Old Mint Street is also missing, but it does show the St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral.

An aerial photograph of course !!!

Thank you timesofmalta.com

With my very best wishes to Valletta and all its residents - "Il Beltin" Forza Valletta City !!!

Lawrence Fenech (2 weeks ago)

"Cemetery of old busses" gave us a good service from prewar and postwar to today. The least one can do is say thanks.

Alfred Grima (2 weeks ago)

Why on earth we need a bus terminus in the first place! If the buses use the drop off system on a non-stop journey (using ring roads) we do not need a bus terminus. Bus drivers will change buses on a roaster. This system is implemented in UK.

M Borg (2 weeks ago)

whilst I am 101% in favour of this development..I have one question. Since next year we are expecting development to start at city gate we expect a number of heavy equipment to be mobilised on site...therefore wouldn't it be best to postpone this project the city gate is ready? I believe that the heavy plant and machinery would damage the pavements etc that are going to replace the terminus.
