

Editorial

Car ride to Valletta must have a cost

Transport Malta has confirmed that the possibility of charging users of the “park and ride” facilities at Blata il-Bajda for the mini-van ride into Valletta forms part of the current negotiations with Arriva Consortium, the preferred bidder for the new public transport operation in Malta. The park and ride system, which shuttles people to Valletta, has been free since it was introduced four years ago.

At the time of the inception of the park and ride scheme, the intention was to give commuters to Valletta a choice of access and parking options, including a mix of free parking close to the city, traditional car parks manned by “parkers”, the private MCP car park, public transport, electric cabs and the “controlled vehicle access” (CVA) scheme through which people paid to park inside the city itself.

The government is in the final stages of concluding an agreement with Arriva for the 10-year public transport contract. This would apparently include three park and ride sites, including Blata il-Bajda, which would be integrated into the new bus network.

There is a lot riding on the success of the new public transport network. If the Maltese driver is to be weaned away from his heavy reliance on the private car and encouraged to use public transport to get to work, to shop and to socialise, the level of service and convenience of public transport must be of a commensurately high standard: attractively priced, efficiently run, frequent and accessible.

For Arriva the kind of income it might generate from three park and ride sites, including Blata il-Bajda, will affect the level of charge they will raise on their buses. Make the public transport charges too high and the whole scheme could be still-born. It is in this context that the talk of charges for the park and ride site at Blata il-Bajda should be seen.

Three immediate questions arise. Should a charge for using the park and ride be levied? If so, at what rate? And what might be the knock-on effects?

There is a cost to all park and ride schemes, not only in the transport means used to get drivers from the site into Valletta, but also in providing security (currently not provided) and maintaining its physical state and cleanliness.


The case for raising a charge is therefore tenable. But, if so, it must be set at a rate which is seen as reasonable by those prepared to use it. If it is not pitched at an acceptable level (say, on current figures, €1 to €1.50 per trip), it will not be used and this will negate the very purpose for which it has been established.

The knock-on effects of any tampering with the whole delicate balance of parking in Valletta lie not only in the need to ensure as many available car parking spaces as possible are provided for residents, workers and visitors through efficient maximisation of the current mix of means, but also that the vibrancy and viability of

commercial and business life are safeguarded. This means the number of parking spaces lying in or around the city must be increased while the cost of their long-term use by visitors should be gradually raised, helping nudge more commuters onto the buses.

It is crucial that the effects on Valletta of the introduction of the new public transport network are considered as a coherent whole, including the park and ride aspects, before final decisions are taken.

Comments

Carmel Cilia(3 hours, 10 minutes ago) 


This has been the way things have been managed under this capitalist government. Today nothing is for free. Those days under the Socialists terror when everything was for free must surely be forgotten. Some examples. We used to have T.V. reception for free(through an arial) Now we have to pay and through our noses to Capitalists. We used to pay a set fee for a telephone call to Telemalta. Today we have to pay by the minute again to capitalists. Then we could park for free anywhere we liked. Today we have to pay to capitalists. Then the beach concessions were very restricted and one could go to a beach with his own umbrella; today concessions mushroomed to such an extent that one cannot even see the sand on the beach. Then one could expect to have free hospital visits and free medicines; today one is referred to private clinics;of course against payments. It is a never ending story of achievements by capitalists and private individuals to the detriment of the common worker.

B Sant(2 hours, 36 minutes ago)


the problem (in my opinion) is that even under Dr Fenech Adami we were given that we will remain a socialist state forever. Now suddenly the govt woke up and decided that we no longer live in a socialist world and eveything has a price. If things where done properly years ago today we wont be in for such sudden stocks

J.Sciberras(2 hours, 3 minutes ago)

@ C. Cilia. You present the past as if it were paradise. Because things were free does not mean they were adequate. Far from it - it was, and still is to a great extent, of poor quality standards, needs to be rationed - creating a whole culture of pjaciri and dependencies, and a false illusion that one can get things for free and tax the 'capitalists'. At the time you so nostalgically refer to, income tax was at 65% ad there were no more than 10 registrants declaring an income of over Lm 30000 a year! Paying for services , means that people can demand quality, sustain the service in the long run, use the service wih moderation (not wastefully), and ultimately depend less on political whims and fancies but on sustainable and well funded services. It also makes society more responsible for the way things are provided and much more sensitive to important decisions relating to public goods. I hope for the sake of Malta that we never return to the days you remind us of.

Carmel Caruana(8 hours, 32 minutes ago) 

The editor has been scrying, seeing th shape of things to come. Why didn't he sign his article 'Lorodamus'?

J.Borg(9 hours ago) 

@ J. Brincat:

What did you expect, that this would remain free for ever.

The government didn't want to introduce the charge for the park and ride before, so as not to look bad.

But now, since the transport is being privatised, the excuse is that Arriva want to introduce a charge. Other wise public transport fees would have to increase. This when we were told by Minister Gatt, that public transport fees were going to remain the same.

So, this is a good excuse for the government, so that the governemnt will say that it wasn't him that introduced the park and ride fee.

a attard(3 hours, 42 minutes ago)

As it is said " the world is a stage and every one must play his part " (@ another' s man expense)


A Attard(9 hours, 12 minutes ago) 

The park and ride should remain free.

Operate it and finance it from the public coffers.

This was intended as a service to public parking congestions in Valletta, liberating it of excessive parking, utilization of unused public places to the service of all citizens. Please leave it free of charge for the common good.

We need no more additional money hungry sharks.

Maureen Ehlinger(10 hours, 12 minutes ago) 


It's ok & fine to pay a reasonable fee for parking a car in a car park. However any fee income from public car parks should be controlled & directly payable to local council or gov. revenues, not to the parker manning the car parking space. All it takes is a couple of ticket machines & the will to install and monitor them.

Igalea(9 hours, 6 minutes ago)

Maureen Ehlinger we already pay an exorbitant license tariff for our cars and parking should be provided for free of charge. We do not need any more sharks making private profit from public property.

Do not bite at the bait of pleasure, till you know there is no hook beneath it.


Thomas Jefferson

Sue Mercieca(10 hours, 36 minutes ago) 

I would like to see more spaces where to lock bicycles in Valletta and some more space on the roads for bicycle lanes. I hope this is taken into consideration too. I


take the bus to Valletta and rarely use the car as it is more convenient with less hassle of parking or waiting for 'park n ride'.

The mentality that we have to park right outside our offices needs to be weaned considering that most people that use their car to go to work in Valletta - lead sedentary lifestyles. Then we read statistics about how overweight people are becoming and express surprise. I guess its time for a rude wake up call.

Ramon Casha(10 hours, 40 minutes ago) 

"€1 to €1.50 per trip" is NOT acceptable. People will require either two trips (office workers, consumers and some shop workers) or four trips (most shop workers), which adds up to a daily tax of €3 or €6 just for working or conducting business in Valletta.

A lot of effort has gone into making Valletta a vibrant city. Only a few years ago, Valletta would transform into a ghost town every day at 7pm. Measures like these could see Valletta returning to those times - a place that people avoid unless absolutely necessary.

J Brincat(11 hours, 27 minutes ago) 

So have been taken for a ride all along when we were led to believe that would remain for free?