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Two more Valletta streets for pedestrians from Monday

Claudia Calleja



The section of St John Street between Merchants and Strait streets that will be earmarked for pedestrians from Monday. Photo: Chris Sant Fournier.

Walking through the heart of Valletta will be easier from Monday when the city's pedestrian areas will expand by another two streets.

That part of South Street between Merchants and Old Bakery streets, and the section of St John Street between Merchants and Strait streets will be reserved for pedestrians, Transport Minister Austin Gatt said yesterday.

The extension of the pedestrian zone, and other measures aimed at upgrading the city, were agreed upon following consultation meetings with the Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises-GRTU and the Valletta local council.

Other measures include redirection of vans and trucks that service the business establishments and the installation of a mechanical bollard in St John Street to allow residents to drive through.

The measures are also intended to reduce traffic. The government, the GRTU and the council also agreed that suppliers' hours ought to be changed to ensure that the capital is free from trucks and vans during the peak hours for pedestrians and tourists. Four new strategic loading and unloading points were also identified.

Loading and unloading will take place daily between midnight and 9.30 a.m., between 7.30 and 8.30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and between 2.30 and 4.30 p.m. Mondays and Saturdays. Vehicles will also be allowed to provide services on Thursdays between 2.30 and 4.30 p.m. until the end of year to allow outlets to adapt to the changes. These measures fall under the second phase of a long-term Valletta project.

During the first phase, spanning 2006 and 2008, Merchants Street was paved, the open-air market was relocated, the CVA and park and ride system introduced, and parking was rearranged, among other things.

One had to keep in mind, Dr Gatt said, that the different communities that lived and worked in Valletta had diverse interests and one had to find a balance.

For this reason a series of consultation meetings were held before the measures were introduced.

"We must increase business but keep loyal to Valletta's character as a world heritage city," he said, adding that the government was open to discussing and revising the measures in the best interest of the residents, business community and tourism. Dr Gatt said he envisioned a time when the trucks that serviced Valletta shops would be electric.

Valletta mayor Alexei Dingli said he welcomed the project that would entice more people to the capital.

"More people mean more life, which means more business and more employment", he said, noting that these measures could encourage owners to extend opening hours.

"The business community wants to make Valletta more attractive to entice people to the city," Vince Farrugia, GRTU Director General said.

Comments

M Xuereb (2 weeks, 5 days ago)

@ Albert Spiteri:

Kindly refrain from placing this gutsy Minister in the same basket as Lorry Sant. Austin might actually take that as an insult.

albert spiteri (2 weeks, 5 days ago)

What a minister! He's not likeable, but certainly very effective. He is definitely the best this minority NP government has. He reminds me very much of the late Hon. Lorry Sant.
