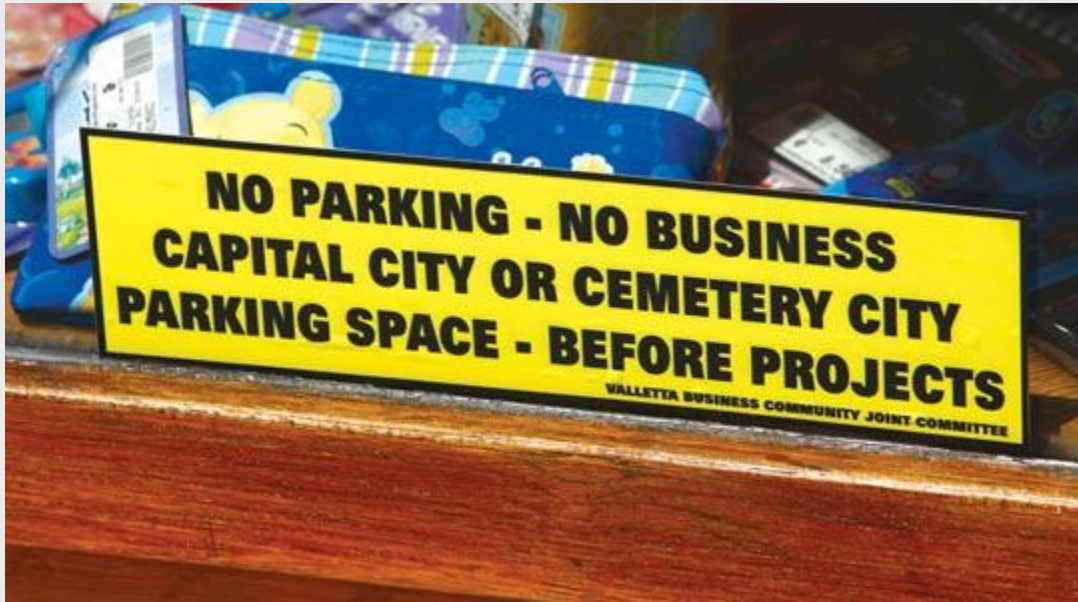


No parking, no business

Kurt Sansone



The president of the newly formed Valletta retailers' committee insists that after the loss of parking bays at St George's Square, which is being remodelled, the city cannot afford to lose more spaces.

The new committee brings together representatives of the Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises, GRTU, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Republic Street Business Committee.

Paul Fenech, who heads the committee, said the demand for parking spaces in and outside the city in the morning was bigger than the supply.

"Valletta shops are functioning below their potential. Apart from this, the extra driving to find a parking space simply creates more pollution and noise. We believe the number of parking spaces has to increase," Mr Fenech said.

Valletta retailers have for the past weeks stuck notices on their shop windows calling for a solution to their parking concerns before work starts on the Renzo Piano plans for City Gate early next year.

City Gate's regeneration would mean the loss of around 400 parking spaces in Freedom Square and St James Ditch.

"The aim of the sticker campaign is to raise awareness about the fact that Valletta cannot lose more parking spaces. The campaign has got the government listening to our concerns," Mr Fenech said, emphasising that shop owners should not be the ones to pay the price of change.

He said they were not against the rehabilitation of Valletta but along with the major projects, short and long-term solutions had to be found for parking.

At the beginning of August the Investments Ministry had told The Times the number of parking spaces that would be lost because of Renzo Piano's projects would be replaced by increasing the capacity of the park-and-ride parking area in Blata l-Bajda.

Mr Fenech agreed with this solution but ventured one step further. "It might be time to review the CVA system for access into Valletta to encourage a healthier turnaround of shoppers and visitors and discourage day-long parking by people who work in the city," he said.

However, parking is not the only concern linked to Valletta's major regeneration projects.

Mr Fenech said a solution had to be found for traffic flow within the city once the street above City Gate was removed.

"Access to Valletta is as important as parking and we hope the Piano projects are accompanied by serious studies that take into consideration the reform of public transport, parking spaces and traffic arrangements in and outside the city," he said.

The committee is also supporting the shop owners at City Gate and the old theatre, who stand to lose their outlets because of the projects.

"Although discussions are being held between the government and the individual shop owners, we are offering our support and we hope a solution is found to the problem," Mr Fenech said.

Comments

Galea. L (4 days, 18 hours ago)

L Bonnici

Why should anyone who needs to park somewhere be prevented from doing so because parking is reserved for residents when we all pay the same road tax? This is DISCRIMINATION and ILLEGAL Bonnici.

Alex Brincat (4 days, 22 hours ago)

Adding a short comment:

My comments below applies to the majority but not all of the Valletta shops. However most offer substandard products.

Also the Sliema area should have more parking spaces. This, together with a free water taxi service would improve business in both Sliema as well as Valletta.

Alex Brincat (4 days, 22 hours ago)

No Parking, no business??? Come on, get real!!! I believe that the problem lies in one ounce of poor planning from authorities coupled with two teaspoons of poor choice in shops, most often selling imitation brands such as "Versaci" or "Roberto Cavallo" and trying to pass you for a fool. This is a good recipe for failure. No parking??? With the available space at the park and ride??? Please. The planning process in the new city gate and the rest from Renzo Piano??? Please. Why not introduce free watertaxi service from Sliema and Birgu where parking is a little more convenient and a pleasant ride (especially in evenings). It is not state-subsidy you know! It is permitted in the EU :) Take for example free shuttle service in the UK when trains do not operate in weekends (eg: The Balckpool to Bolton free BUS service). It would bring more people to Valletta, thus generating more revenue, more profits and hence more taxable income. This of course if the shop owners start offering better quality products. You get cheaper and better quality prodcuts from the internet any time.

monica muscat (4 days, 23 hours ago)

I think that the only solution to over-parking in Valletta would be to make 24/7 parking RESIDENTS ONLY, and visitors not to park for more then 3/4 hours. This will stop the business community (and the professional community) from expecting to park in Valletta for a whole day and to hell with the clients! I think their attitude will eventually kill our City!

Monica Muscat

D Attard (4 days, 23 hours ago)

@ L Bonnici

I work in Valletta every single day and I have no choice but to work there. I use the car to get to work for a lot of reasons, one of them is that I'm comfortable doing so. The system might be discouraging me from using my car to work, but the system cannot change the fact that I have a full time job in Valletta!

Anthony Bonnici (4 days, 23 hours ago)

This about the parking and no business is a farce. If you go to Valletta after 8.00am you will find that it is all full up and no place to park your car. For sure these parking places are not filled up by customers. They are all filled up by the same persons who owns the businesses and persons working in offices. Last Tuesday I was in Valletta at 7.30am all the shops were all closed to consumers but there was not one single place to park, in fact I drove back to the park and ride and parked there a thing I should have done in the begining. So please do not go on with this FARCE of no parking no business.

Janet Bayes (5 days, 2 hours ago)

Simple solution. Especially designed for the Maltese islands. How about drive through shops. Then no need to park, no need to update the transport system, and no need to be re-educated in the ability to walk to some places. No more squeezing into the shop that is crammed with a car parked in the doorway. Simple.

The alternatives may involve

1. Updating the public transport system and running it to suit the passengers,
2. provision of car parking outside of places like Valletta.
3. education of the masses in the skills of walking short distances.

Nigel Lawrence (5 days, 3 hours ago)

Valletta shops are functioning below their potential----

Maybe, more people shopping on the internet contributes to their downturn. Personally, the ONLY things I buy locally are my groceries.

Wilfred L Camilleri (5 days, 3 hours ago)

The Valletta retailers' committee has it all wrong! More parking and more cars is not the answer. I suggest less parking and fewer cars is the solution to making Valletta a truly people city. Cars, including those belonging to people who work in Valletta, should be parked outside of Valletta. After all, walking a couple of blocks or taking a shuttle to Valletta never killed anyone! The underground parking garage outside of Valletta can be expanded to accommodate more cars. It's not as if Malta has extreme weather conditions that prevent people from walking from the parking garage to Valletta. Exercise will do everyone good after all. The park and ride area outside of Floriana can also be expanded to accommodate more cars.

Joseph Galea (5 days, 5 hours ago)

Removing cars will result in a much improved environment, will draw more people and generate more business. The scaremongering by businesses goes on everywhere in the world where pedestrianisation and curtailment of parking is introduced. Eventually businesses come to realise that people prefer places without cars and that their doomsaying was unfounded.

M. Gauci (5 days, 5 hours ago)

Sliema, St. Julian's, Hamrun, Mosta and other retailers wake up and join this movement before it is too late and you have lost your business. It is already looking pretty grim and you just cannot afford to stand by and do nothing. Ask yourselves this question, would retailers let this happen in France? No they won't, we saw only too well how they deal with incompetence such as this.

Marisa Bugeja (5 days, 6 hours ago)

When I had pointed out the parking problem upon commenting on the Renzo Piano project I distinctly remember a reply that Valletta is a medieval city with no place for cars!

Well, dear sir, no place for shops either apparently. May I suggest jousting competitions with Ivanhoe as a star attraction?

Tonna J. (5 days, 7 hours ago)

It is planned that St James' Ditch be converted into a public garden. I wonder how 'public' it will be, who is going down there for fresh air? Cannot this area be more organised as a parking area and upon it build the, so called, public garden? We see many roof gardens so it is no wonder if we see another one on top of a parking area. It will be more reachable from Main gate area.

Julian Zarb - Tourism Journalist (5 days, 7 hours ago)

It is good to see that a number of people are in favour of re managing the present parking arrangements. We have certainly become a "Legless Society" and, if we could, we would park our cars at the very doorstep of the shops we visit! We need to see that the Public transport reform is completed soon (please no more discordant comments from those who suffer from the local habit of "Gem Gem") and enhance the park and ride service as well as the existing MCP parking in Floriana...it takes just three minutes to walk across the Triton Square into Valletta from here! We need to give dignity to Valletta not create one big car park at the entrance!

L Bonnici (5 days, 7 hours ago)

@ L. Galea If people are too suckers to fall for that trap then it's their problem... You cannot say that Valletta is inaccessible by a different modal splits. I for one work in Valletta and go there by bus. It takes me the same time to get there as if I had to drive there myself. I know there are million arguments against using buses, but for the purpose of reaching Valletta they're ok-ish... CVA is still better than the previous system whereby a lucky few paid ridiculous tips (I think LM35 for a whole year) to get a permit and occupy a parking space for a whole day. The problem with Malta is that people are either only in favour or against new schemes being introduced. Very few venture in the middle ground and try to think outside the box. People are too lazy to try new things and improve their knowledge. People are happy with complaining and expect the OTHER to do the first move, then perhaps they'll do something. That's why we're still stuck in 1900...

R.Gauci (5 days, 7 hours ago)

The site where its is the park and ride today should have been used better by excavating more storeys underground and connecting it to Valletta by a subway tram that could make easily shuttle trips let say every 10 mins. That would had gave more parking spaces and solved the problem of vehicle emmissions in the City hence the mini vans that take people to Valletta pollute too ! I am really surprised how this option wasn't used since now in Malta in every project you see they tend to dig underground to put garages and parking spaces!! Business activity is crucial to our capital and the business men demands should be heard That's the only solution to this problem or else we are going to keep on spoiling our capital in every sector!!

Galea. L (5 days, 7 hours ago)

L Bonnici

What the government should do is SCRAP the system because it is only taxing people for the benefit of a private company.

john mangion (5 days, 7 hours ago)

have we ever considered the possibility of building a multi-storey carpark in lascaris ditch?

covering top storey as a sunken garden + cafes as proposed by piano?

both ends of the ditch give great advantages, because of different and various levels. the two ends, marsamxetto and customs house will serve as entry/exit.

Anthony Mercieca (5 days, 7 hours ago)

Rather than insisting for more parking space, shopowners' "unions" should work to create a system whereby they can provide shoppers with a transport service especially helping those loyal customers in carrying their purchases that are difficult to handle to their means of transport. Such a system could be privileged, if well organized even to use restricted zones

M. Vella (5 days, 8 hours ago)

The new committee is surely protecting its interests, ignoring completely the general sentiments of the public and needs of our nation.

May I make the following remarks on their notice.

1) "Cemetery City" is a very short sighted forecast. With the regeneration of Valletta, they are mostly to benefit.

2) "Before Projects" would have sounded more positive if phrased "Concurrent with Projects"

L Bonnici (5 days, 8 hours ago)

Well parking is limited and the provision can NEVER meet the demand, unless there is a parking space for every single car. The whole purpose of the CVA was to reduce the number of day-long parked cars from the city and increase the number of short stay visit. However, people (especially those who work in Valletta) didn't seem to get the gist of it and still park their car in Valletta. CVA is capped so there's only a maximum one can pay for a day-long stay. In my opinion what the government has to do is increase rates for day-long stays (i.e. discouraging people to occupy precious parking space for a whole day), encourage a modal split, improve public transport and raise people's awareness about the problem!

I sure hope the parking issue will not make the whole Valletta regeneration project another broken promise. And besides I don't think anyone likes to see that all those cars littering city gate. Old walled cities abroad (like York and Durham) are thriving with business and they're smaller than Valletta ... why can't we do anything right in the little spec of dust?

Robert Caruana (5 days, 8 hours ago)

Let's stop all projects and make all Valletta available as parking space.....poor businessmen

they need more customers to make more money.....is it not enough that some of them

are getting prime locations rented out for a pittance from the government? or maybe they are renting them out again to others at market prices?
