

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET
BY THE HON. PRIME MINISTER

Reorganisation of the Public Transport Service

As Ministers are aware, the public transport service has for some years now left much to be desired in more ways than one. Apart from the generally shabby appearance of many of the buses and of their crews, whose language and behaviour is even shabbier, there is a patent disinclination to put service to the public first. Buses persistently resort to the irritating, and illegal, practices of dawdling, poaching, speeding, overtaking and overloading. The General Transport Union, which is supposed to represent the bus owners, who nonetheless frequently make their own individual representations, periodically threatens strike action to obtain increases in fares, to stop the prosecution of under-age conductors and for other reasons. Generally, however, the Union's perpetual argument is that the bus owners do not make enough money to maintain an up to standard bus service.

2. Clearly, some fairly radical change is necessary if any improvements are to take place and in fact the Traffic Control Board, who have examined, with the Police, what measures are called for, have now recommended either (a) the amalgamation of all bus services into five different groups, or (b) as an alternative a complete integration of all routes with a redistribution of buses, on the basis of rosters drawn up by the Police, and designed to ensure an equable allocation of buses per route. A copy of the detailed recommendations is at Appendix "A".

3. The present archaic system of public transport consists of a kaleidoscope buses owned by individuals or partnerships, running on routes which are either over-bussed but highly profitable, or over-bussed and unprofitable, or under-bussed and profitable.

4. The proposals for a reformation of the bus service on a group basis would mean the amalgamation of the various bus services into five different groups. Those bus services which have a common way as part of their route and which also run subsidiary services between the same towns and villages or special summer services, would form a group as follows:

- Group A: Kalafrana, Gudja/Ghaxaq, Zejtun, Cottonera and Zabbar.
- Group B: Mosta/Maxxar, Attard/Lija and Mellieha.
- Group C: Birkirkara, Zebbug/Siggiewi/Qormi and Rabat.
- Group D: Sliema and Birkirkara/St. Julian's.
- Group E: Zurrieq.

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The Board further recommends that, irrespective of whether the grouping takes place or not, 12 buses from the least 3 profitable routes - 2 Cottonera, 4 Rabat and 6 Birkirkara buses - should be transferred, after open application from the owners of buses on these routes, to the Zurrieq route which at present is unable to cope with the requirements of the route, even though all Zurrieq buses are on the road during the rush hours. The Board feels that if the number of buses transferred to the Zurrieq Route is less than 12, this Bus Service will not have the necessary flexibility to cope with the demands of the public.

5. Grouping as proposed would have the advantage of a more equable distribution of buses within the same group to meet public demand, and it would facilitate the extension of service, or the introduction of new services to developing areas. It should likewise go a long way towards eliminating the common practice of dawdling, poaching, speeding and overtaking, if, as is hoped, members of each group are encouraged to form themselves into profit-sharing undertakings. The alternative of one integrated service, run on a Police roster is expected to have the same effect. The grouping strength of buses is shown at Appendix "B".

6. The Board's proposals have been made public, and the reaction from bus owners has been as anticipated. Routes like Siggiewi/Zebbug and Zabbar, which have been doing quite well, are strongly opposed to the proposals, whilst the poorer routes like Birkirkara, Cottonera, Rabat and Kalafrana welcome them.

7. The difficulty about getting to the truth of assertions that this or that route is not viable, is the haphazard manner in which routes keep their accounts. Unless there is a proper system of audited accounts and an accurate record of the number of tickets sold, viability or otherwise will remain largely a matter of conjecture and calculation. In fact, only those routes which are run as companies keep any sort of accounts which, whilst indicative of the general trend of profit and loss, must be accepted with some reservation. The Government committee which considered the claim for an increase in fares, which resulted in an increase of -/1d in the Sunday fare, endeavoured to arrive at an assessment of the financial position of those routes which keep accounts, and this is enclosed at Appendix "C". To illustrate the uncertain accuracy of this statement, the Commissioner of Police, although he has no positive proof, does not consider that the books shown to the committee reflect the true position. From hearsay, he reports that the Zurrieq Bus operators bound themselves by written agreement not to divulge any information with regard to the earnings of the Zurrieq Bus service, and to be liable to a fine of £100 in default. From confidential information which he has, the net earnings per Zurrieq bus are in the region of £90 per fortnight, or roughly £2,340 per annum.

8. Be this as it may, primarily as a public service the bus transport system should be such as to give the travelling public satisfactory service, with the owners getting a reasonable return individually or corporately for the service they provide. The Traffic Control Board's proposals for grouping are designed precisely for this purpose, since they would (a) reinforce routes where more buses are required to meet the public demand, and (b) ensure that earnings are more equitably distributed amongst operators through the amalgamation of the profitable routes with the less remunerative ones.

9. The Commissioner of Police is therefore seeking Government authority to proceed first with a re-distribution of buses as proposed, and then to reorganize them into groups as indicated in paragraph 4. The Commissioner further seeks authority, irrespective of a general redistribution and subsequent grouping, to transfer 12 buses to the Zurrieq route, as shown in paragraph 6, likewise.

10. No amendments to existing laws or regulations are required to implement the above proposals as in terms of section 5 of the Traffic Regulation Ordinance, the Traffic Control Board can establish routes and allot the service on such routes to any company, or to any person or persons to the exclusion of any other or others, upon such conditions as the Board, with the approval of the Minister, may direct.

10th March, 1969.

APPENDIX A
POLICE HEADQUARTERS,
FLORIANA,
MALTA.

14th June, 1968.

The Chairman,
Traffic Control Board.

Sir,

With reference to the decision taken by the Traffic Control Board during the 20th meeting held on the 6th June, 1968, regarding the proposed regrouping of Bus Services, the "ad hoc" committee for Improvements in Public Transport recommends the following grouping of Bus Services and redistribution of buses.

Group A

This group will be made up of the Kalafrana, Gudja/Ghaxaq, Zejtun, Cottonera and Zabbar Bus Services. This grouping is suggested because:-

- (1) All these Bus Services have a common way for part of their route.
- (2) They also run subsidiary bus services between these towns and villages.
- (3) The Cottonera Service is overbused and the Gudja/Ghaxaq, Zejtun and Zabbar Services are underbused.

It is recommended that 2 Cottonera Buses be transferred to Group E on the implementation of the proposed grouping, because they are no longer required as a result of the decrease in the number of Drydocks and Naval Base employees and the introduction of the shift system at Malta Drydocks.

The present number of buses in the proposed group and their daily utilization is shown hereunder:-

GROUP A

<u>Routes</u>	<u>Total No. of Route Buses</u>	<u>Normal number of Buses on the roads daily including buses detailed during the rush hour period</u>
		<u>No.</u>
Kalafrana	25	19
Gudja/Ghaxaq	7	7
Zejtun	24	19
Cottonera	74	45
Zabbar	23	19
	<u>153</u>	<u>109</u>

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As a result of this grouping and the reduction of 2 buses from the Cottonera Route there will be 151 buses serving the following towns and villages:- B'Bugia (Kalafrana), Gudja/Għaxxaq, Zejtun/Marsaxlokk, Cottonera/Marsascalea and Zabbar/Xgħajra/Marsascalea.

Group B

This group will be made up of the Nosta/Naxxar, Attard/Lija and Mellieha Bus Services. This group is suggested because:-

- (1) All these Bus Services have a common way for part of their route.
- (2) During the summer months the number of buses operating on the Valletta/Mellieha route is not sufficient to cope with the requirements of the route and consequently buses from the Nosta/Naxxar and Attard/Lija routes have to be detailed to operate a service between St. Paul's Bay and Valletta on Sundays and Public Holidays.
- (3) In view of the Touristic and Residential development of this area it is essential to introduce new bus services and increase the existing ones.

The present number of buses in the proposed group and their daily utilization is shown hereunder.

GROUP B

Nosta/Naxxar	31	21
Attard/Lija	15	10
Mellieha	38	26
	84	57

When the suggestions for the grouping and the envisaged extension of the Bus Service are implemented there will be 84 buses serving the following places:- Nosta/Naxxar, Gharghur, Attard/Lija, Mellieha and Ngarr, Għajn Tuffieha, Marfa, St. Paul's Bay, Bugibba, Paradise Bay and Armier (Summer only).

Group C

This group will be made up of the B'Kara, Rabat and Zebbug/Siggiewi/Qormi Bus Services. This grouping is suggested because:-

- (1) All these Bus Services have a common way for part of their route.
- (2) The B'Kara and Rabat Services are overbused and the Zebbug/Siggiewi/Qormi Services will in a short time become underbused because of the Industrial and Residential development of the area.

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- (3) It is considered essential to introduce an extension of these Bus Services to outlying villages such as Mtaħleb, Kuncizzjoni and Bahrija.
- (4) It will eliminate the present controversies regarding Bus Stops along the route especially in St. Joseph High Road, Hamrun.

It is recommended that four Rabat buses and six B'Kara buses be transferred to Group E on the implementation of the proposed grouping. The first recommendation results from the decrease of the number of Service Personnel from the Mtarfa and Ta' Qali stations as well as the closing down of two Civil Hospitals in Rabat. The second recommendation is put forward because it is felt that the B'Kara Bus Service has been overbused for a considerable period of time as it caters mainly for the Hamrun and Fleur de Lys area, and not for B'Kara proper.

GROUP C

B'Kara	73	30
Rabat	36	24
Zebbug/Siggiewi/Qormi	41	30
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	150	84
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>

By means of this grouping and the reduction of four and six buses from the Rabat and B'Kara Services respectively, there will be 140 buses (instead of 150 as at present) serving the following towns and villages:- Siggiewi/Zebbug/Qormi, Hamrun, part of B'Kara, St. Venera, St. Luke's Hospital, Rabat and its outlying villages (including Dingli).

Group D

This group will be made up of the Sliema and B'Kara/St. Julians Bus Services. This grouping is suggested because:-

- (1) In the Msierah area these services have a common way for part of their route.
- (2) The Industrial and Housing development at Msierah, the inauguration of the new University and the opening of the Sliema Regional Road require the improvement of Public Transport in the area.

Although the Sliema Bus Service seems to be overbused, no alterations are recommended in view of the fact that the rapid development of Hotel and House-building, will increase the travelling population which will then absorb the apparently high number of idle buses.

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The present number of buses and their daily utilization is shown hereunder:-

	<u>GROUP D</u>	
Sliema	105	48
B'Kara/St. Julians	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
	109	50

When this grouping is implemented there will be 109 buses serving the following towns and villaged:- St. Patricks, St. Julians, Paceville, Sliema, Gzira, Msida, Ta' Xbiex, B'Kara, Isicrah. Other occasional services are also performed.

Group E

This route will consist of the present 36 Zurrieq buses with the proposed addition of 12 buses, i.e. 2 from the Cottonera Service (Group A), four from the Rabat Service and six from the B'Kara Service (Group C).

The increase in the number of buses is justified as at present the Service is unable to cope with the requirements of the route even though all the buses are on the road during the rush hours. There is also a case for improving the existing service and for an introduction of subsidiary services, e.g. to Wied iz-Zurrieq.

This Bus Service will serve the following localities:- Marsa Industrial Estate, St. Vincent de Paul Hospital, Luqa, Safi, Kirkop, Zurrieq, Mgabba and Qrendi. When the access roads are widened the Service could be extended to Nigret and Bubaqra.

In conclusion the considered opinion of the "ad hoc" committee holds that the proposed grouping will eliminate lingering, poaching, speeding, overtaking and overloading. Moreover the proposed groupings have the advantage of making possible the use of the existing Bus Stops and Fare Stages by all the buses on a particular group, increased flexibility of operation, more frequent departures, together with the easier introduction of new bus routes and new services both in existing and developing areas.

The Committee maintains that the above recommendations are the best solution to the present chaotic public transport system, and would automatically solve the problem of a general redistribution of buses. Failing the implementation of these recommendations, general redistribution of buses will have to be resorted to.

For smooth operation it is recommended that the respective Bus Services in one particular group amalgamate into one Bus Company. If the forming of a company does not materialize buses of each group will have to run the different routes of each group on a roster prepared by the police from time to time.

(Sgd.) J. Mercieca, Chairman
Members: Alex Chetcuti
" H.E. Galea.
" O. Agius
" J. Spiteri.

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BUS STRENGTH IN EACH GROUP

Route	Present Strength	Proposed Strength	Normal number of buses on the roads daily including those detailed during the rush hour period
Group A: Kalafrana			
Gudja/Ghaxaq	25	25	19
Zejtun	7	7	7
Cottonera	24	24	19
Zabbar	74	72	45
	<u>23</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>19</u>
	153	151	109
Group B: Mosta/Maxxar			
Attard/Lija	31	31	21
Mellieha	15	15	10
	<u>30</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>26</u>
	24	24	57
Group C: B'Kara			
Rabat	73	67	30
Zebbug/Siggevi/Qormi	35	32	24
	<u>41</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>30</u>
	150	140	84
Group D: Sliema			
B'Kara/St. Julian's	105	105	48
	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
	109	109	50
Group E: Zurrieq			
Transfer from Cottonera	26	26	
" " Rabat	-	2	
" " B'Kara	-	4	
	<u>-</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>-</u>
	26	32	38

Reduction in total number of buses to transfer of buses to Group E.

PRESENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF BUS COMPANIES (Prior to -/1d increase in the Sunday fares)

	<u>Cottonera</u>	<u>D'Kara</u>	<u>Slima</u>	<u>Zebbug/Sirejwa</u>	<u>Zurriog</u>	<u>Posta/Maxxar</u>
a) No of Buses on Route	74	73	105	41	26	21
b) Average Annual Gross takings	£106,700	£66,505	£194,098	£73,402	£52,758*	£59,010
c) Average Annual Administration Expenses of Company	£ 7,064	£ 4,939	£ 13,717	£ 4,657	£ 4,500*	£ 4,655
d) Net Amount Shares by Bus Owners	£ 99,636	£81,566	£180,361	£60,745	£40,250	£55,155
e) Average Annual Share per Bus	£ 1,345	£ 1,120	£ 1,715	£ 1,675	£ 1,555	£ 1,760
f) Board's Estimate of Annual expenditure per Bus	£ 1,245	£ 1,245	£ 1,245	£ 1,245	£ 1,245	£ 1,245
g) Net Profit/Loss per Bus per annum	£ 100	£ 125	£ 570	£ 430	£ 610	£ 535

* Annual figures based on a 4 month period only. No other records available
 Expenditure as estimated by the Union is £1,345 p.a.