



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
To the House of Assembly**

**by
The Hon. Owen K. Darrell, JP, MP
Minister of Tourism & Transport, Culture & Sport**

Modernisation of the Motor Car Act 1951

Friday 27th February 2026

Mr. Speaker,

It is with both purpose and responsibility that I rise today to table in this Honourable House the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Amendment Act 2026.

This legislation provides for the introduction of a regulated ridesharing service designed to augment and complement Bermuda's existing taxi industry. It seeks to improve island-wide accessibility, reduce passenger waiting times, and strengthen the reliability of our transportation network across our twenty-one square miles. This is measured modernization, not disruption.

Bermuda must continue evolving its transportation framework to meet the expectations of today's residents and today's visitors. One of the commitments outlined in the 2022 Throne Speech was the modernisation and

harmonisation of the Public Service Vehicle industry. That commitment was not aspirational; it was responsive.

Transportation availability and reliability remain the single greatest area of concern within our visitor experience.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear.

The 2019 Transport Green Paper represented one of the most extensive consultation exercises ever undertaken in this sector. Between November 2017 and December 2018, 21,567 participants contributed to the process. This included 2,402 residents who completed the Public Transport Survey, generating over 533 pages of written feedback; 2,705 middle and senior school students; 15,468 air visitors; and 837 cruise passengers who provided transport-specific input through Bermuda Tourism Authority surveys. The Ministry also conducted interviews with 137 key managers representing 76 organisations, including public authorities, business stakeholders, and members of the taxi and broader Public Service Vehicle industry.

The feedback was consistent and clear, including:

- Unreliable bus service due to an ageing fleet;
- Taxi availability challenges, particularly outside Hamilton and during peak periods;
- Outdated cash-based fare systems vulnerable to fraud; and

- Limited evening and weekend service.

The 2019 Green Paper was unequivocal ... it stated that for visitors, transportation service was a primary area of concern in terms of reliability and went so far as to describe Bermuda as having a crisis in transportation availability and reliability. That was not hyperbole, it was data.

Gap analysis data from 2024 and 2025 confirms that transportation reliability and availability remain the largest service gap in our tourism product. In 2024, the availability and reliability gap measured 26.6%, and in 2025 it remained elevated at 25.2%. Quarterly figures show that the gap has consistently hovered between 21% and 30%, rising during peak summer months.

For clarity, a “gap score” reflects the percentage of visitors who consider a factor critically important but are not completely satisfied with it. The higher the gap, the more we are not meeting their expectations. 48% of visitors identify transportation reliability and availability as critically important. 25% of visitors said variety of transportation options is critically important. Of the 31 factors measured in Bermuda’s visitor experience, transportation reliability and availability ranks as the highest gap by a significant margin, with variety of transportation options ranking third.

While 86% of visitors report being satisfied overall in 2025, transportation remains the most persistent friction point in an otherwise exceptional visitor

experience. If we are serious about protecting Bermuda's brand, strengthening repeat visitation, and safeguarding the livelihoods that depend on tourism, we must act where the gap is greatest.

Mr. Speaker, taxi service continues to be the most widely used mode of transport, utilized by 83% of visitors in 2021, 87% in 2022, 84% in 2023, 89% in 2024, and 87% again in 2025. Year after year, taxis "touch" nearly nine out of ten air visitors. That reality is not changing.

However, complete satisfaction levels hover around the 50% mark, sitting at 50.1% in 2025. Visitors consistently report difficulty securing transportation outside Hamilton and major hotel zones, particularly during peak demand and cruise ship arrivals. Introducing ridesharing provides complementary lift during high-demand periods and in underserved areas. It strengthens capacity without dismantling the existing taxi framework.

Mr. Speaker, transformation is already underway.

The Department of Marine & Ports Services delivered two new 550-passenger fast ferries, *JL Cecil Smith* and *Warbaby Fox*, on schedule and on budget. Phase II of the Shorelink programme introduced real-time passenger information for buses and ferries. Twenty new buses are being procured to replace ageing diesel units that contributed to cancellations and are expected to arrive in 2026.

We are strengthening the existing system. Now we must responsibly expand options within it.

This Act introduces a regulated, cashless ridesharing model through approved digital dispatch platforms. It is important to clarify that:

- Taxis will receive first preference within the approved dispatching application when a ridesharing service is requested;
- Only those licensed to operate a Public Service Vehicle may apply;
- There will be no street hailing, and all trips must be digitally dispatched;
- Vehicles must undergo enhanced inspections by the Transport Control Department;
- Approved vehicles must display identification plates and decals;
- Operators must have a public service vehicle badge which is to be displayed in a prominent location within the vehicle;
- Operators must connect to an approved digital dispatch network; and
- The Public Service Vehicles Licensing Board will serve as the oversight authority.

Passenger safety, accountability, and traceability remain paramount.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not about replacing taxis. It is about reducing waiting times, improving reliability, strengthening economic competitiveness, and responding to sustained, measurable data.

The Ministry of Tourism & Transport, Culture & Sport is acting not on anecdote, but on evidence collected over years of consultation and analysis.

Bermuda cannot afford stagnation. We must evolve in step with global standards while protecting the integrity of our local industries.

The data is clear. The need is clear. This Government will continue to listen and to act accordingly.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**