



REMARKS

By:

**THE HON. W. LAWRENCE SCOTT, JP MP
THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT**

DPT PROVIDES UPDATE PUBLIC AND SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

11 JANUARY, 2021

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for coming.

Many will all be aware that the public schools are scheduled to resume this week Wednesday, 13 January.

In preparation for this, the Department of Public Transportation (DPT) has been working with the Bermuda Minibus Association (BMA) to arrange transportation for public school students.

I believe it would be helpful for the public to note that in 2017, the DPT contracted with private minibus operators to provide service on 11-afternoon school bus routes servicing CedarBridge Academy

and Berkeley Institute. This was done to supplement the regular bus schedule and ensure a reliable service for the students at a rate of \$200 per trip. This proved a success, as it decreased the demand on the DPT buses for school runs and allowed the service to allocate these buses to other routes.

Three years later in September 2020, DPT was faced with capacity restrictions due to COVID-19. In light of the previous success utilizing the minibus service, the DPT negotiated a contract with the BMA to use minibuses with 22 seats or more, to provide 23-morning runs and 23-afternoon school runs for a total of 46 one-way trips per day.

It should be noted that in the first instance, the BMA requested \$250.00 per trip. The DPT returned with an offer of \$125.00 per trip, which amounted to a total payment of \$402,500.00 for the first school term. Furthermore, the \$125 per trip was down from the \$200 per trip offered from 2017 through June 2020.

Included in the offer were the following conditions:

- Adherence to the Ministry of Health COVID guidelines;
- An option to renew for the second school term January to June 2021

Due to demand, the runs were increased to 24 in the morning and 32 in the afternoon. This is a total of 56 runs per day, which was up 25% from the previous 46.

In November, negotiations for continuing the service for the second and third school terms began.

In these negotiations, the BMA advised the Government that due to the \$125.00 per trip rate, its members operated at a loss. As such, and going forward, the membership requested \$250 per trip, subsequently reduced to \$210 per trip.

The public will know that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Government's revenue and spending in support of unprecedented unemployment levels has brought about severe financial challenges for the country. This led to the Government's inability to accept the request.

The BMA was advised, however, that due to the aforementioned challenges facing the country, and taking into consideration the needs of the minibus operators to cover their operating cost, and people of Bermuda, particularly those who rely on public

transportation, the DPT was able to increase the amount of \$125.00 accepted in the first school term, to \$175.

In an effort to encourage a mutually beneficial agreement, I can advise that myself, the DPT Director Roger Todd and his senior management team met with the BMA to discuss and understand their position. Unfortunately, despite extensive negotiations, the offer was rejected.

Unfortunately, the BMA remain steadfast in their demand for \$210.00 per run which amounts to \$60,900 per week which is money this Ministry does not have.

As a result of the inability to agree, the DPT will focus on our most precious commodity, our children. And so, when school starts this Wednesday, the DPT will be prioritizing school runs to ensure our children can safely and reliably arrive at school and back home.

The Government can only offer the BMA what is reasonable to meet their operational needs. Most importantly, without the support and sacrifice of the BMA, the DPT is unable to provide the full public bus schedule and must prioritize its services by ensuring a reliable

school bus service so that students continue receiving their education.

We will continue to explore other forms of transportation, i.e, community service vehicles, airport limousines, etc. However, if we are unable to secure alternative transportation, this could result in cancellations and disruptions in service.

-end-