



Consultation on proposed relocation of Douglas Bus Station

Submission from TravelWatch-Isle of Man:

1. TravelWatch IOM welcome the Government initiative to address the lack of a proper bus interchange/bus station in Douglas, something we had first called for in 2008. The proposal is for a number of bus stands on Victoria Street, installation of weather protection canopies, improved paving and the provision in a rented building of some facilities for passengers and for bus drivers. We understand that this initiative is partly prompted by the likelihood of imminent development in Lord Street that would prevent the continued use of the current bus stops and bus stands.
2. We note that in Jersey's capital, a modern "Bus Station/interchange" known as "Liberation Station" is provided, consisting of good passenger facilities; buses only stop to set down and pick up passengers.
3. The present line of bus stops in Lord Street provides an area for some buses to stand for a short period, together with bus shelters - the only passenger amenity on that site.
4. Bus Management also wish to provide bus drivers with a convenient base for their rest breaks.
5. The proposal appears to have attracted very little public or institutional support. TravelWatch are also critical of the present plan. As regards Passenger Facilities, our main concerns would be:-
 - Weather protection – as described/illustrated appears very inadequate. Victoria Street is something of a wind tunnel and in bad weather the proposed weather protection would be ineffective: significantly worse than that provided by the present bus shelters in Lord Street. The Island's weather requires decent weather protection for passengers.
 - By contrast, exhaust fumes can be a problem in quiet weather – which could be exacerbated by more bus traffic on Victoria Street
 - Victoria Street seems quite narrow for what is proposed and will have to lose existing facilities including car parking and a taxi rank.
 - The amount of space for the movement of pedestrians, shoppers and bus passengers seems very limited.
 - Provision of seating by each bus stop/stand would be very difficult
 - There is no detail yet of what will be provided in the passenger/driver facility so we reserve the right to comment on it when the detail is known. However, the danger is that unless it is central to the bus stops/stands people interchanging – or even waiting for buses - will be reluctant to use the facility for fear of missing their bus.

- More detail is needed of the proposed routing of the buses to establish if all incoming and outgoing buses are to call at Victoria Street. There may also be increased traffic generated - and therefore potential congestion - if all buses are to loop around Lord Street and Ridgeway Street to reach their pick up points on Victoria Street.
6. As regards Location, the argument advanced for using Victoria Street is that research indicates that passengers will not walk far from the Town Centre – defined as Marks & Spencer’s – to board a bus. Other options are seen to be too far away from the Town Centre (e.g. Sea Terminal) or in even more exposed locations –(e.g. on the Promenade).
 7. TravelWatch agree that bus loading facilities in central Douglas need to be as convenient as possible for shoppers and others.
 8. Decent interchange facilities are important for those who have to or choose to rely on public transport. This includes people with disabilities, the elderly and young families. Some passengers need to change buses to continue their journeys around or out of Douglas – for example attending the hospital or students accessing the College.
 9. In these difficult economic times, a new purpose built Bus Interchange/ Bus Station may be unaffordable. However, the present situation in Lord Street is not acceptable for passengers and any change must provide significant improvements – not worse conditions. And a new purpose built bus station/interchange should remain as an important future requirement as soon as economic circumstances permit.
 10. One of the possible locations for a Bus Interchange is the Sea Terminal Buildings. During the winter when arrivals are fewer and the weather protection for passengers is more urgent, an experiment in using the Sea Terminal as an interchange might be worth further study and consideration.
 11. Given the wide criticism of the Victoria Street proposal, TravelWatch consider that other options should now be reconsidered and fresh options developed. The feasibility of separating out the various functions grouped together in the Victoria Street proposal – interchange, town centre boarding facilities and drivers rest facilities – should be examined again to see if separation of functions might ease the problems.
 12. We suggest this proposal needs to be radically reconsidered.

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