



GUG investigates any concerns that Gozitan students might be suffering due to the new transport system.

2011/2012

Sub-committee Members:

These are the members that formed part of the sub-committee and contributed to the formation of this study.



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GUG's Study on the routes from Cirkewwa to University/Mater Dei.



GUG investigated the concerns and difficulties that Gozitan students are suffering due to the new transport system; with specific reference to the bus route from Cirkewwa to University/Mater Dei and vice-versa.

GUG – as the only organisation that supports Gozitan students in Malta – has sent a very short questionnaire to all subscribed members regarding the new transport system: Arriva.

GUG has already contacted Arriva coordinators in many occasions, to ensure that the best possible bus route and timetable is issued; one that caters for our every need. Many questions and difficulties have been posed to us by Gozitan students regarding the new bus route system, in particular the X1 bus route. As a result, GUG decided to conduct a study to make sure that the responsible authorities immediately tackle such difficulties and concerns and thus the Gozitan students no longer have to encounter additional difficulties when continuing their further studies.

Underneath, one can find the questions identified and discussed with our members to enable the formulation of this study and to highlight the situation with its pros and cons with the direct experience of our members.

Following it, there will be a detailed description of what was concluded and suggestions to mediate and solve this problem. GUG strongly believes that this recurring issue must be amended immediately. That is why GUG intends to keep on prying and working hard on this troubling matter until the adequate and reasonable service is concurred.

Questions discussed with our members:

- **Is the new bus system convenient from Msida to Cirkewwa?**
- **Is the new bus system convenient from Cirkewwa to Msida?**
- **Have you missed any lectures due to bus delays?**
- **Do buses leave/arrive on time from Msida to Cirkewwa and vice-versa?**
- **What about travelling time? How long does it take to reach your destination?**
- **Are there any other difficulties?**

Description of feedback received via email:

GUG would like to point out that the quality of the buses, drivers and dispatchers in general has improved greatly from the previous service. However, after evaluating the feedback of our members, it seems that the current transport system calls for other **numerous and immediate** improvements. We divided each question accordingly with a brief summary of what needs to be improved according to Gozitan students.



1. Is the new bus system convenient from Msida to Cirkewwa?

After evaluating each and every response from the correspondents, it was concluded that the new bus system from Msida to Cirkewwa is still lacking in its efficiency. This is due to several factors, which may be **easily resolved**. The main difficulty encountered by students is the **time wasted in waiting for the X1 bus to arrive**; if you are lucky, you might find yourself only waiting for five minutes, if you are not so lucky, for a whole hour. Some of the students actually believe that the X1 timetable on the bus stops is incorrect because the **buses are almost never on time**.

Another problem is that the X1 bus, especially on Fridays, is **always full of people** travelling to Cirkewwa. Therefore, there is not enough space on the bus for all the people travelling with luggage. Many students proposed more **frequent trips on Fridays or more than one bus doing the route** since most of them cross over at weekends to visit their families in Gozo. An additional important issue is that the buses are **still not scheduled with the Gozo Channel** ferry and students end up missing the ferry by a few minutes, having to wait another 45 minutes for the next ferry; the **main cause of this is due to bus delays**. Last but not least, students agreed that if this goes on it would pose a **big problem during the winter months' weather and during exams**. They put forward their wish for this issue to be settled as soon as possible and hope that the service improves.

2. Is the new bus system convenient from Cirkewwa to Msida?

The service from Cirkewwa to Msida seems much better than vice-versa. Only a few number of students complained about the X1 bus service, while others suggested more frequent bus trips and **better scheduling in afternoons and evenings**; since this is the time when most students encountered problems. The situation is that a student who catches the 14.15pm ferry arrives at 14.40pm but this is too late since the Arriva bus leaves at 14.35pm. **Thus such problem is being created for 5 minutes**. Other scenarios that arose were that the bus leaves after the ferry arrives, but students might still not find enough space in the bus because there would be students still **waiting to board the bus from the previous ferry trip**.

So students recommended the use of the larger buses, especially on Fridays and Sundays, since this is the time when students are travelling most back and forth. **Students also would like a bus after each ferry trip so that no one has to wait for another ferry to arrive before the bus they are on leaves.** Students state that transport Malta should not have scrapped the previous routes completely.

3. Have you missed any lectures due to bus delays?

From our respondents' answers it can be easily concluded that students find the bus system convenient from Cirkewwa to Msida to a certain extent, but not the other way round. So only a few number of students have lost lectures because of bus delays. **However, most students do not miss any lectures because they find it in their best interest to think beforehand and catch an early ferry just in case there is such an expected delay. This clearly reflects that the service is not trust worthy.**

Those who travel every day, **still lose lectures due to constant bus delays.** It would be ideal to have buses from Cirkewwa to University that leave after every ferry trip and arrive and depart from the University/Mater Dei Station. Furthermore, it is recommended to have more frequent use of bendy buses, especially on Fridays and on Sundays to accommodate a good considerable number of students.

4. Do buses leave/arrive on time from Msida to Cirkewwa and vice-versa?

There is an apparent inconsistency in the X1 bus arrivals and departures from Msida to Cirkewwa and vice-versa. In relation to the time pattern from Cirkewwa to Msida, it seems that it is better than that from Msida to Cirkewwa. From Cirkewwa to Msida, the buses leave approximately on time, but it is not the same when it comes to the other way round. **Buses rarely follow the assigned timetable which can be accessed online and sometimes students are left waiting for almost two hours for a bus to get to Msida.** Moreover, buses usually arrive full with people with hardly any available space left; so students are still left waiting. This is totally unacceptable since this is further creating problems to Gozitan students continuing their studies in Malta.

From Msida to Cirkewwa it is **usually around 40 minutes behind schedule.** This does not mean that the bus does not leave on time from the Airport but **that it takes a long time to arrive at Msida mainly because of the heavy traffic. This clearly indicates the necessity to have a direct route from University to Cirkewwa.** Many students end up **calling a minibus** to take them to Cirkewwa because they have been left waiting for a whole hour on the bus stop because the bus never appears.

5. What about travelling time? How long does it take to reach your destination?

From the responses gathered, it can be stipulated that the destination time of the X1 bus mainly varies between 45 to 60 minutes; that is from Msida to Cirkewwa and vice-versa. According to Gozitan students this could be considered quite acceptable and travelling with the X1 bus is not at all terrible. Travelling time is very convenient since the new route which the bus takes makes it possible to travel from Msida to Cirkewwa (and vice-versa) in a shorter time. Furthermore, it has also been stated that if you are lucky, you can reach Msida from Cirkewwa and vice-versa in less than 40 minutes.

The only argument, which arises here, is why some drivers make it in such a short distance time, while **others take an hour to make it to their destination**. Students understand that traffic can easily affect destination time; that is **why there should be a direct bus from Cirkewwa to University**, and not one, which goes to the Airport. In conclusion, the main difficulty is that there is not a fixed time for the X1 buses when they pass from Msida.

6. Are there any other difficulties?

This section had various suggestions and recommendations from Gozitan students that make frequent use of the Arriva buses to travel to and fro from Malta and Gozo. Many mentioned the old bus route (450) which was very convenient to Gozitans and it had a stable timetable which was respected and followed daily and students were never left waiting for an hour until the bus left. Even when it comes to travelling from Cirkewwa to Msida, students were never left waiting for the bus to leave, but left soon after the ferry arrived at the harbor and it accommodated all the students.

One can see that whilst the older buses may not have been as comfortable as the Arriva buses, their service was actually far better. In fact, students find it hard to understand why the new bus route is not as convenient as it should be; although it has its obvious **aesthetic benefits it lacks better service**. That is why the old route should not have been easily scrapped by the new Transport Malta coordinators. It should be given its due consideration and maybe should be even re-applied accordingly in the new transport system - with some obvious minor alterations to the route, because most students prefer the new bus route.

The main difficulty is that Arriva X1 bus does not work according to the bus schedule. Students end up waiting, sometimes even end up standing for the entire ride since due to bus delays, one bus has to carry the load of two buses. As a result there is not enough space in the buses and most of the time Gozitan students go home or to University heavy loaded with two or more bags to carry. **This is even worse on Fridays and Sundays, especially on Fridays.**

Timing must be improved immediately and time schedules must be followed. Moreover, there should be an X1 bus after every ferry and it should not leave immediately while students are still disembarking the ferry. There is no point of having a bus leaving before it is loaded with people to carry somewhere; it seems only logical. Finally, on Fridays and Sundays there should be more use of bendy buses as students travel mostly on these particular days.



Points of Suggestions:

GUG suggests the following suggestions in order to make the current transport route a far better one, which is convenient and effective:-

1. **Arriva buses should have a direct bus from Msida to Cirkewwa, which starts and stops at University and/or Mater Dei not at the Airport. (Like the 450 route was)**
2. **Arriva buses should be more frequent (ex: every 35 min).**
3. **Arriva buses should be on time and students should not be left waiting for a very long period of time. A fixed time should be scheduled to the bus route X1 and enforced: especially from Msida to Cirkewwa, so there will be no delays. Such delays are being experienced since there is no direct route.**
4. **We still emphasize that the route from Cirkewwa to Airport should be kept but not linked with the University/Mater Dei.**
5. **The old bus routes ought to be brought back with its needed alterations.**
6. **There should be more frequent use of bendy buses, especially on Fridays and Sundays when most Gozitan students travel back and forth. Therefore more than one bus doing the route on the above mentioned days.**
7. **Buses should follow their time schedules. Due to bus delays, students still miss the corresponding ferry and are left waiting for the next ferry to arrive.**
8. **X1 buses should make it a priority not to leave Cirkewwa before students have boarded the bus. It does not make sense to have an empty bus leave a good number of students waiting for the next bus to arrive.**
9. **We believe that better management of the route and coordination with Gozo Channel the service could be severely improved. Several number of Gozitan students travel daily from Gozo to Malta and vice-versa. A delay in bus arrivals might mean going late to lectures or even missing the ferry; thus arriving home later than anticipated.**
10. **Day tickets bought from Gozo should be valid in Malta.**

Conclusion:

For concluding this report we call for the concerned authorities to take this study seriously and immediately follow and implement our suggestions as such comments are being forwarded by the students, which at the end are costumers who are paying for the service. Such suggestions come from firsthand experiences and thus their reliability and validity is to be considered as highly recommended. **It was also concluded from this study that not only Gozitan students are suffering from the lack of adequate service but also Gozitan families who have their relatives as patience at Mater Dei and also the patience themselves.** Therefore this situation is directly affecting a far more number of people that one might expect and creating a critical and unnecessary situation for many.

