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AD about mobility and Public transport

Upgrade public transport, work towards an underground system - AD

In a press conference held in Sliema, Alternattiva Demokratika - The Green Party presented a set of proposals for reform in mobility and public transport, issues that the parties described as the most neglected by both government and opposition. Chairperson Dr. Harry Vassallo said that "it is a complete shame that transportation and mobility are almost completely neglected by our political adversaries. Malta has experienced considerable economic development ever since Independence, however almost negligible development in mobility. Unfortunately government has no vision in this sector, and believes that things will improve by simply building more and more roads. The Labour opposition offers no ideas and even seems to have abandoned the Connections project that it had so rightly conceived when in government. The country requires a serious rethink in this sphere. We are here to make our proposals."

Party spokesperson on Energy and the Environment Ralph Cassar explained AD's proposals. He said "we are today presenting a number of proposals that deal with the challenges of transportation and mobility over the short, medium and long term. **Specifically we are proposing that over the short term government remove all taxes and licences on low-powered motor-cycles to encourage more people to adopt this mode of transportation.** However we recognise that many people are weary of using this means of transport due to road safety; and rightly so."

"Therefore we are also proposing that there is to be a nation wide expansion of special lanes, in which motor-cycles can be driven. Both these proposals should encourage people, particularly youth, to adopt this mode of transportation, which will become both safer and more affordable. The second proposal we are making that can be implemented in the short term is **the introduction of free weekly and monthly bus passes** for all those who do not possess a driving licence or are willing to give-up their driving licence."

The Green proposals for transportation in the medium term are: "over the next five years it is vital that the next government embarks on a serious expansion and upgrading of public transport. **We believe that this should be done primarily by a process of liberalisation, that includes not only public buses but of all other controlled means of transport like taxis.** There is no reason why public transport should remain in the hands of a private monopoly. Competition will improve the sector considerably. It would then be government's role to ensure that the service is adequate and affordable. Unprofitable routes will

have to be subsidised. We insist that any **new buses should work on clean fuel like gas and electricity**. It is no longer acceptable to have public buses spurt out black fumes all over the country. It is a shame that the government recently chose to buy old-technology diesel buses from China."

The Greens are also proposing that over the next five years, **residents' parking schemes** are introduced in more and more areas, particularly those areas that are suffer from incoming traffic due to heavy retail and tourist business in the area. Mr. Cassar stated that "that government should prioritize improvements in public transport as well as grant all residents parking priority. The residents' parking scheme in Valletta has benefitted residents there. There is no reason why not to expand such schemes in other towns where residents have to battle daily for parking. Residents must be given priority over those who visit the locality for work or shopping."

Dr. Harry Vassallo then referred to AD's proposals over the long term. He said that "what the Greens will bring to the next parliament is a change in political mindset. What we need is for our politicians to think beyond the life of one parliament. We need to think about this country's challenges in mobility and transportation for the next 20-30 years. For this reason we are proposing that the next government embarks on a serious study to introduce a mass transit system. This country cannot continue relying on the dependence on private vehicles and the construction of more roads to solve its transport problems. We have to look at this country like it is one town and envisage a system that can transport people from one side of these islands to the other in a very short time at a reasonable expense. **All options must be evaluated, including that of building an "Underground system" that could truly revolutionize this country and bring it into the 21st century. Government should also consider reviving the connections project that would also make use of water transport.** These systems will require heavy investment, we are therefore proposing that part of the reserves of the central bank, if these are to be released following Malta's adoption of the Euro, are earmarked for this purpose."

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