



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
To the House of Assembly**

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

Department of Public Transportation Updates

Friday 4th September 2026

Mr. Speaker, today I give an update on the continued progress of the Department of Public Transportation's (DPT) bus fleet renewal program, on the advancement of the Digital Fare Media project, and on the Department's readiness to support the travelling public, including our school children, as the new school year begins.

Mr. Speaker, DPT remains committed to building a modern, reliable, and fully electrified public bus fleet by 2030. This latest delivery represents the third order of electric buses placed with Golden Dragon Bus Company. This follows an initial order of 30 buses in 2022 and a further 40 buses in 2023. Of the current order of 20 buses, 10 arrived in Bermuda on 18 August, with the remaining 10 having arrived shortly thereafter. With this delivery complete, DPT's electric fleet now totals 90 buses.

Mr. Speaker, a final order of 20 electric buses will be placed later this year and is expected to enter service in early 2027, bringing the Department's fully electrified fleet to a total of 110 buses and completing the electrification program. As these new buses are commissioned, DPT will retire older diesel buses that have reached the end of their service life. This is a deliberate and necessary step and allows the Department to reduce reliance on ageing vehicles that have been a significant source of mechanical breakdowns and service cancellations, while lowering long-term operating and maintenance costs.

Mr. Speaker, DPT recognizes that the public has experienced periods of service disruption this year, including instances where mechanical issues reduced the number of buses available for service and resulted in a significant number of cancelled runs. DPT technical staff, supported by manufacturer representatives, have worked to address these issues directly. The arrival of newer, more reliable electric vehicles, together with the phased retirement of older diesel buses, is central to resolving these challenges going forward. An expanded and modernized fleet gives the Department greater flexibility to maintain scheduled service even when individual vehicles require maintenance, thereby improving reliability for commuters across all routes

Mr. Speaker, the start of the school year places significant additional demand on our public bus network, as students join regular commuters during peak morning and afternoon periods. DPT continues to prepare and be ready to support the increase in demand and remains in a position where we do not require the use of supplementary minibuses to satisfy the Winter schedule. This is a direct result of the introduction of the 20 new electric buses, coupled with increased maintenance efforts and focused recruitment of bus operators. Together, these measures ensure the Department now has sufficient capacity and reliability within its own fleet to complete the full schedule of work, including school runs. This represents a meaningful improvement in the Department's operational resilience heading into the new school year. The Department will publish the Winter schedule on the Shorelink app and will continue to provide real-time updates on cancellations and service alerts throughout the school year.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry continues to modernize how passengers pay for and experience public transportation through the Digital Fare Media project, branded Shorelink. Phase One launched in July 2024, enabling passengers to purchase and manage fares through the Shorelink mobile app. Phase Two followed with the introduction of

real-time passenger information, allowing commuters to track the live location of buses and ferries directly on their phones, a feature that has since been extended to school bus routes, giving parents and students greater certainty and peace of mind.

Mr. Speaker, we are now closing in on the completion of Phase Three, which introduces contactless Tap-to-Pay validators across the bus and ferry fleet. This final phase will allow passengers to board simply by tapping a debit or credit card, removing the need for cash or exact change, and significantly speeding up boarding times, particularly during peak periods. The advantages of this system are significant: faster, more reliable boarding; reduced administrative burden and cash-handling for operators; improved data on ridership patterns that will help DPT plan routes and schedules more effectively; and a more convenient, modern experience for residents and visitors alike.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, DPT also introduced offline fare validation within the Shorelink app, allowing eligible mobile fares to be validated even without an internet connection, a practical enhancement that further strengthens the reliability of the system as we move toward full Tap-to-Pay capability.

As with previous phases, traditional fare payment options will remain available throughout the Tap-to-Pay rollout, ensuring no passenger is left behind during this transition.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**