



Ministerial Statement
by
The Hon. Wayne Furbert JP, MP
Minister of Transport
Digital Fare Media – Launched 8th July 2024
12th July 2024

Mr. Speaker, in the 2023 Bermuda Government Throne Speech we made a commitment to deliver digital fare media. This initiative aimed to modernize our public transportation system, making it more efficient, user friendly, and aligned with global technological advancements. I am pleased to report that this commitment has been fulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, on July 8th, 2024, we launched Phase I of the digital fare media initiative, namely, our new brand...Shorelink. This phase

marked a significant milestone in our journey towards a more integrated and technologically advanced public transportation system. The launch was a success, and we are immensely proud of the progress we have made. This initial phase laid the groundwork for future developments, setting a solid foundation for the enhancements to come.

Mr. Speaker, the successful implementation of Phase I involved the introduction of digital fare payment options for passengers to conveniently buy tickets using their mobile phones through an app. This innovation not only streamlined the fare collection process but also enhanced the overall passenger experience by providing a more convenient and efficient payment method.

Mr. Speaker, as with any large-scale project implementation, we have encountered some challenges.

Mr. Speaker, we are not deterred by these initial challenges, as integrating new technology with existing systems often comes with unforeseen issues. We see them as opportunities to learn and improve our service, not as setbacks or failures. We are confident that we have the capacity and the resilience to overcome any obstacle and deliver a world-class public transportation system for our citizens. We are committed to innovation, excellence, and customer satisfaction. We are not afraid to try new things, to embrace change, and to adapt to the evolving needs of our passengers. We are proud of what we have achieved so far, and we look forward to the next phases of this exciting project.

Some of the challenges encountered are:

- 1) Card Selection by Seniors: Some seniors were inadvertently selecting a special card instead of the senior card, resulting in rejections. We have resolved this issue. Our call centre now reviews and corrects these applications in the back office, ensuring seniors receive the correct card. Impacted seniors

have been contacted, and their applications have been corrected, or they have reapplied with the correct selection. We will no longer reject applications; instead, we will ensure they are corrected for seniors.

2) Map Display of Bus Locations: Similar to many apps, the map's information becomes less sharp when zoomed out but becomes clearer and more precise when zoomed in. We encourage users to utilize the zoom feature to adjust the view to their preference.

3) Some correspondence in French: The system vendor is a French company, and their systems' default language is French. During the Quality Assurance and User Acceptance Testing phases, this issue was identified and corrected to ensure the system would operate in the desired language. However, during the Go-Live process, the system unintentionally reverted to its default French language setting. This caused some confusion among users. We have since addressed and rectified this issue,

ensuring that the system now correctly displays in the intended language.

However, **Mr. Speaker**, our team is dedicated to addressing and resolving these issues as swiftly as possible. Our priority is to ensure that the public has access to the best products and services, and we are committed to making the necessary adjustments to achieve this goal.

We have received valuable feedback from users, which has been instrumental in identifying areas for improvement. Our technical teams are working tirelessly to troubleshoot and enhance the system based on this feedback. We are confident that through continuous monitoring and refinement, we will overcome these initial hurdles and deliver a seamless digital fare experience. I encourage the public to continue to provide your feedback as it is the public we aim to serve and ensure we deliver the best product we can. Customers who need assistance please contact the Shorelink App support by phone at 441-292-3851 or through the contact form on our website shorelink.bm. The call centre is based at the Department of Public Transportation, and customer

service representatives are available to assist from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Sunday. **Mr Speaker,** I had the opportunity to visit the call center this Wednesday, where I encountered exceptionally pleasant customer service representatives. I am proud to report that the public is receiving the same high level of service that I experienced during my visit.

Mr. Speaker, it is crucial to remind the public that the continued use of current physical media, such as tokens, tickets, and passes, will remain in place for the foreseeable future. The Government is committed to ensuring that no one is left behind as we transition into a more digitalized environment. We are dedicated to providing accessible transportation options for all segments of the population, including seniors, individuals with special needs, and children. This commitment ensures that everyone, regardless of their ability to use digital platforms, will have access to transportation services.

Mr. Speaker, building on the success of Phase I, we are excited to announce the upcoming launches of Phase II and Phase III of the digital fare media initiative. These next phases are estimated to be launched in September 2024, and we are optimistic about achieving similar successes with these new implementations.

Mr. Speaker, phase II includes the launch of the real time passenger information application. This application is designed to provide passengers with up to date information about their bus or ferry location and estimated time of arrival. By offering real time data, we aim to enhance the passenger experience, reduce waiting times, and improve overall satisfaction with our public transportation services. This application will be accessible via smartphones and other digital devices, making it easier for passengers to plan their journeys and stay informed.

Mr. Speaker, Phase III will introduce the use of use credit and debit cards and installation of validators which will enable digital tickets and passes to be automatically read by validating machines. This innovation will further streamline the boarding process, reduce the need for manual ticket checks, and increase the efficiency of our public transportation system. The validators will be installed on all buses and ferries, ensuring comprehensive coverage across the entire network. This phase represents a significant step towards a fully automated and integrated fare collection system.

Mr. Speaker, as a little background, a comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued in March 2020, attracting interest from 12 different vendors. After a thorough evaluation by a team of technical officers, Paragon ID was selected as the vendor for implementation of digital Fare media. All procedural and procurement protocols were adhered to which led to the finalization and contract signing. The contract is valued at \$1.9 million to be paid in annual instalments of

\$320 thousand apart from the initial cost of \$604 thousand in the first year.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Bermuda Government is dedicated to delivering the best possible digital fare media to the public. We are proud of the progress we have made with the successful launch of Phase I and are eagerly anticipating the launches of Phase II and Phase III. These advancements represent our dedication to modernizing Bermuda's public transportation system and enhancing the overall passenger experience.

We understand that the journey towards full implementation is ongoing, and we remain committed to addressing any challenges that arise along the way. Our focus is on continuous improvement and innovation, ensuring that Bermuda's public transportation system remains at the forefront of technological advancement.

Mr. Speaker, we thank the public for their patience and support as we work towards these ambitious goals. Together, we are creating a more efficient, reliable, and user friendly transportation system for all. We look forward to sharing more updates as we progress through the subsequent phases and continue to deliver on our promises.

Mr Speaker, Thank you.