

Why not a Year-Round Park and Ride?

A few persons have asked me how come I am not commenting on the parliamentary debate on CNG versus Hybrid vehicles. My response is that I consider other things more of a priority, such as (a) fuel subsidy transfer from user-based to transit-based and freight-based, (b) promotion, development and management of transit, (c) parking management, and (d) transport-based carbon emission reduction. Today, I publish an article on parking management submitted to me by my company chairman and business partner, Kenneth Snaggs.

I have had the honour of working closely with Ken and the distinction of having him as my mentor. He is qualified as both a civil engineer and a land-use planner. He has been Director of Town and Country Planning. He was the first CEO of the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited (PLIPDECO) for 13 years and carried direct responsibility for managing the detailed planning and successful implementation of the Estate and Port to accommodate heavy energy-based industry. He was the first chairman of the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDECO), and chairman of the Housing Task Force appointed to conduct a comprehensive review of the housing sector.

“The authorities must be commended for introducing a Park and Ride service for downtown Port of Spain for the Christmas Season.

“There is general agreement on the need for solutions to the problems of traffic congestion and conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, competition for limited parking space between long-term parkers (who are generally workers in downtown establishments) and short-term business and commercial clients, the resulting difficulty of

access for shopping and business, avoidance of downtown and a negative impact on the health of business and commerce.

The objectives of the service are laudable – reduction of vehicular traffic in downtown POS, easing of access for people and pedestrian movement and overall improvement in the interaction of people with the commercial and business establishments in the city centre. The elements of the service have clearly been well-thought out and implemented; the promotion and publicity have been attractive and effective and the stakeholder support clearly demonstrated. It is also commendable that consideration is being given to introducing park and ride services in other urban centres.

“The degree of success will be indicated by the level of utilization over the Christmas shopping period. In addition to simple recording of the volume of users, data should be collected on the performance of the service to determine its effectiveness in maintaining the schedule, the quality of service and the reactions and levels of satisfaction of users and the beneficiaries, the business operators. PTSC, the operator of the service and the other stakeholders will also be interested in the viability of the service.

Permanent Park and Ride Services.

“Regardless of the degree of success which may be achieved, it is appropriate at this time to start planning for permanent park and ride services for Port of Spain and other urban centres. The objectives will be similar to those for the Christmas park and ride, but some features will be different.

“The differences arise from a different interpretation of the causes of the problems. In spite of differing comments, an objective assessment

will confirm that the physical provision of road space and parking spaces is adequate to satisfy the demands for vehicular movement and parking in the city centres. The problems are due to the misuse of the physical facilities, especially parking.

“The problems would not be solved nor will the unsatisfactory and unattractive state of the city centre be improved merely by the provision of more parking spaces. As an alternative a permanent park and ride service is proposed.

“The park and ride service will be used primarily by the workers in downtown establishments. Consider the increase in availability of road space and parking spaces if the majority of the downtown workforce used a park and ride service. Consider also the enhancement in the environmental conditions and appearance of the downtown streetscape and the ambiance of the streets if parked vehicles were absent.

“The following features of the service for Port of Spain illustrate the basic requirements of a permanent park and ride service.

1. The Queens Park Savannah is not an ideal location for the parking facility in Port of Spain.

Apart from it not being available year-round it is too close to the city centre. Remote locations such as Mucurapo, Westmoorings, Maraval, Barataria are preferred.

2. Instead of the privilege of a reserved parking space in a downtown parking garage (or searching for an on-street parking spot), a downtown worker will be given a similar privilege of a reserved place in a park and ride facility.

3. Through collaboration between business owners and the operator (PTSC), seats on buses can be reserved and they can operate on firm schedules. Clearly the viability of the service will increase and be

guaranteed. It is also possible that such an arrangement can be operated on a private basis.

4. The potential for expanding the service is obvious.

5. Infrastructure cost will be minimal. Operating cost will be covered by the user charges.”

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