

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

RESPONSES TO THE ELEVENTH REPORT OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT ON MINISTRIES, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES (GROUP 2)

ON

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE WATER TAXI SERVICE

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations with regard to the operations of the Water Taxi Service:

Recommendation 1- FEASIBILITY STUDIES

- 5.2** In the absence of market based research and statistics, every effort should be made by the administrators of the Service to gather institutional knowledge and information based on the operations of the service over the past three to four years to assist in guiding the future operations and initiatives of the Service.
- 5.3** The Committee strongly recommends that any proposal for the expansion of service to other routes including that of Port Fortin and Chaguaramas must be informed by valid research. In Addition, Proposals for regional and private ventures must also be informed by valid research.

Recommendation 2- INFRASTRUCTURE

Facilities for the expansion of the Service

- 5.4** The Committee recommends that submissions for the design for the Port Fortin and Chaguaramas facilities be comprehensive and must make provisions for a Terminal Building with adequate accommodation and amenities; adequate parking facilities supported by the necessary shuttle services.

Recommendation 3- PARKING FACILITIES IN SAN FERNANDO

- 5.5** Officials from the WTS alluded to a special arrangement with the San Fernando City Corporation to utilize a portion of the Board walk that would provide 50 to 60 additional parking spaces.
- 5.6** The Committee recommends that the WTS assess the feasibility of utilizing the car park at SAPA, San Fernando for the operation of a park and ride service.

Recommendation 4- SEATING ACCOMMODATIONS AT TERMINALS

- 5.7** The Committee recommends that the Service should explore the possibility of increasing the seating capacity at existing terminals.

Recommendation 5- SHUTTLE SERVICE

- 5.8** The Committee recommends that shuttling services be scheduled to accommodate all sailings into Port of Spain.
- 5.9** It is also recommended that smaller sized buses be utilized to allow for easy manoeuvring around Port of Spain

Recommendation 6- FINANCES

- 5.10** The management of the Water Taxi Service should move with alacrity to reduce the operating cost as far as possible in order to reduce the subsidy.
- 5.11** The Committee recommends that the Service should develop a comprehensive plan for generating supplemental revenue, including advertising revenue and revenue derived from vending machines.
- 5.12** The Water Taxi Service should explore expanding its services to include cultural activities, national festivals and heritage sites.

Recommendation 7- CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING MARINERS

- 5.13** The Committee was pleased to learn that collaborations with the Caribbean Maritime Institute have resulted in the establishment of a Maritime training programme at the UTT. The Committee recommends that a structured recruitment process be instituted to facilitate a seamless transition of trainees from UTT into the operations of the WTS.

RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Response 1- FEASABILITY STUDIES

- 5.2** Records of all aspects of key operations such as financial records, customer demographics and ridership, capital project reports, technical records, etc. are currently maintained by the Service. These, along with lessons learnt from each new initiative, currently inform decisions on the way forward.
- 5.3** Expansion proposals will be duly accompanied by valid research including passenger demand studies, and once the feasibility of expansion has been determined, all new facility designs will be subject to engineering studies. It is to be noted however that the Chaguaramas service expansion has been implemented under charter arrangement with the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA) and continuation of this service upon contract expiration in October 2014 will be subject to the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and CDA's intentions in this regard. All regional and private ventures undertaken by the Service are pursued only upon demonstrated technical capacity and are subject to full financing by the (private) chartering agent or agency.

Response 2- INFRASTRUCTURE

- 5.4** All service expansion designs currently include provisions for terminal and berthing facilities, with accommodation facilities also included to cover parking facilities as well as vending concessions.

Response 3- PARKING FACILITIES IN SAN FERNANDO

- 5.5** The WTS has been in frequent contact with the City Corporation in order to obtain final approval to proceed with this initiative.
- 5.6** Discussions will be held with officials of SAPA and PTSC in this regard.

Response 4- SEATING ACCOMMODATIONS AT TERMINALS

- 5.7** The seating capacity at the Port of Spain terminal is earmarked to be upgraded under the Service's FY 2015 / 2016 capital program, subject to funding approval. Additionally, note is made that the seating capacity at the San Fernando terminal was recently upgraded in 2012.

Response 5- SHUTTLE SERVICE

- 5.8** Implementation to be undertaken subject to availability of shuttles by PTSC.
- 5.9** The Service currently uses 33-seater PTSC buses on its routes, similar to that used by PTSC to service its city routes, and which, it is our understanding, would be the smallest size operated by PTSC. Notwithstanding, the possible introduction of a smaller sized shuttle will be explored.

Response 6- FINANCES

- 5.10** This is currently in effect as seen by the declining annual subsidy requirements: \$45.6m FY 2011, \$41.0m FY 2012, and \$36.8m FY 2013.
- 5.11** The Service is currently finalizing a plan for Management review and approval.
- 5.12** The Service has partnered with the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism in providing ferry services to cultural activities at Nelson Island, and is presently in talks with the Ministry regarding avenues to expand this collaboration.

Response 7- CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING MARINERS

- 5.13** NIDCO / WTS will seek to develop an internship program in collaboration with the UTT, subject to funding availability.