

Changes in the Ways We Travel

Commuting



We all have stood waiting in traffic long enough to know that we should change our way of travelling from private transport to a better

alternative way. We should use other ways of transportation like walking. In around one hour, you can cross the island of Malta in one direction by bus or car, covering around 27km long and 14.5km wide.

Safe and efficient options



With Malta being such a small country, having efficient bike trails, an underground railway, and an efficient bus system would cut the need of using your own car. We have public transport, though many people in

Malta don't use it because it is less convenient than taking your own car. Maltese people seem to prefer walking the least possible. Bus stops must be closer within easier reach and buses should pass by more frequently. People can't risk being late for work or school, so bus schedules must be reliable.

Another good thing about bus fares is that they are very cheap, and as of October 2022, if you have a *Tallinja* card, you can use the public bus for free. Malta Public Transport carried 4.5 million passengers in the first month of 2023, an increase of 59% when compared to January 2022,

which indicates that we are learning to use our cars less. It would be nice if we could cycle from one place to another, but, sadly, road construction has not really taken this into consideration over the years as most bike lanes end abruptly and dangerously and require people to continue their cycle on the busy roads.

Lately, we have seen major roads being reconstructed, but then again, bicycle lanes were not taken properly into consideration. Infrastructure architects are coming up with greener road designs that could cater better for pedestrians and cyclists, but unfortunately, some good ideas have been ignored, and the result isn't always close to plan.



However, we can always learn from our mistakes and fix what we have. We do not need wider roads to cater for the growing number of cars, but we need to invest in better, alternative transport. Wider roads can very likely to lead to speeding. That means teaching people to change their style of travelling. Using a car should not be the first option we think of.

We will all have to make sacrifices whilst changes are being made to our roads, but this wait will be enjoyed by us and the ones coming after us. We will have to invest in our fitness; we need to be ready to walk more but then again, we will be saving time to commute from one place and another while helping the environment in the process. In Malta, we have recently

seen the very first segregated bike lane. This is ideal as people can feel safe when travelling by bike. Another option is to have bike lanes pass through our countryside. There are always possibilities. It's only a matter of caring.



Action and hope

One interesting piece of information I found on the World Wide Web is that it takes 12 minutes to pedal from Naxxar to St Julian's, and 21 minutes from Għargħur to Valletta. It takes 42 minutes to travel from Mellieħa to Three Cities by electric scooter. Comparing these times to what it would take to do it by car or by bus, one should not even think twice of using a bike. If only everyone would feel safe enough to do it, wouldn't Malta and the Maltese be living a much better and healthier life? My hope is that this change takes place soon, and that people with the power to make these changes, take alternative transport seriously. Are you up for a game changer?

References

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