

ALLIANCE OWNERS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT
c/o Mr. Roy Raphael, Eden Lodge, St. Michael

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS
Lee's Corporate Centre, Turner's Hall, St. Andrew

JOINT CORRESPONDENCE

22nd July 2016

The Rt. Hon. Freundel Stuart, Q.C. M.P.
Prime Minister of Barbados
Government Headquarters
Bay Street
BRIDGETOWN

Dear Prime Minister

RE: Request for intervention in a protracted matter between Associations representing the privately owned public transport industry and the Ministry of Transport and Works.

Several years ago, Public Service Vehicles, including those of the Transport Board, using the Cheapside Terminal, when leaving on their journey north were routed via Mason Hall Street and Baxter's Road. When road repairs were scheduled to be carried out on Baxter's Road, all PSV's including those of the Transport Board were rerouted to exit the terminal and proceed north via Fontabelle as a temporary measure to facilitate the road works.

When the road works were completed, the Transport Board buses were returned to the original route, but the privately owned vehicles were not allowed back. We have for several years been making representation to the Ministry of Transport that the privately owned PSV's should be allowed to return to the previously assigned route, as the Fontabelle exit takes them away from the customer traffic in the Baxter's Road / Tudor Street shopping area, causing a substantial loss of business. To compound this problem, the bus stop on Tudor Street was designated "Disembarkation only" so that potential customers were unable to board PSV's on the inward journey. Many PSV operators have been reported by the Police for taking on passengers at this stop, while the Transport Board buses on frequent occasions use this stop as an embarkation point with impunity. The PSV sector continues to be disadvantaged to a major degree in this way, the reason given being that PSV's cause too much congestion on Baxter's Road.

Prime Minister, given the above situation, we have noted that certain PSV owners over the past several years have been able to get their permits changed to allow them to return to the original route, that is, to exit the Cheapside terminal via Baxter's Road and in some cases, new permits have been issued with this route while other PSV owners, who were originally assigned

to this route have been denied return. The two bodies representing Public Service Vehicle owners, the Association of Public Transport Operators (APTO) and the Alliance Owners of Public Transport (AOPT), along with Officials of the National Union of Public Workers, (NUPW) met with the Minister of Transport and Works and representatives of the Transport Authority on 18th September 2015 to protest this situation and to discuss other challenges facing the industry. We adopted a position that either **all** PSV's would be allowed to exit the terminal via Baxter's Road or that **none** would be, as giving favor to a few constituted discrimination and unfair competition and was unacceptable. **The Minister agreed.** It was also agreed that PSV's would be allowed to exit the Cheapside terminal via Baxter's Road on a trial basis for a period to be determined. We left that meeting with the understanding that the Minister would reach a decision after consultation with other affected bodies and communicate it to us in the shortest possible time frame.

Prime Minister, for more than seven months, despite a follow up letter dated 10th February 2016, a copy of which is enclosed for your information, we had no communication from the Ministry. When talk of a withdrawal of service by PSV's in protest to commence on Monday 18th April surfaced, the Minister called a meeting on Friday 15th April, at which several matters affecting the industry were slated to be discussed. When we met on that date, the Minister restricted discussion to the Baxter's road issue only. Several other issues remain unaddressed. The result of that meeting was that a committee comprising Transport Ministry officials, Transport Authority officials, the Police and PSV representatives was established to examine means of reaching a mutually satisfactory conclusion, this despite agreement having been reached at the initial meeting in September on the "all" or "none" matter. We went along in the spirit of co-operation.

The committee met on Tuesday 19th April and again on Friday 22nd April. Those meetings served only to obfuscate the issue, instead of contributing to the implementation of a decision.

Prime Minister, despite follow up letters dated 25th May 2016 and 20th June 2016, copies of which we enclose for your information, we have still have had no further communication from the Ministry of Transport and Works. We are disappointed and dissatisfied with the lack of action on this pressing matter on the Ministry's part and feel that we are being treated with unwarranted and unacceptable disdain. The Public Service Vehicle sector consists in excess of six hundred units which provide transportation on a daily basis to an estimated 70% of the people who use public transportation for work and social purposes. It therefore makes a significant contribution to the country's economy. There are pressing matters other than that which is the subject of this letter that are affecting the industry negatively that have to be addressed and to date we have been able to make only minor progress. The Ministry's dilatory approach to these issues will not make them go away and in the interim, conditions in the industry are deteriorating steadily, with negative effect on the industry and the society.

Prime Minister, we have been extremely co-operative and patient and have followed proper protocol in our approach to these issues without receiving serious or appropriate consideration from the Ministry of Transport and Works over a period of nine months. We are therefore soliciting your intervention to bring a mutually satisfactory resolution to this matter and forestall any action by the sector that may have a negative effect on the economy and society.

Sincerely

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Roy Raphael
Chairman, AOPT

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Morris Lee
Interim Chairman, APTO