



Press Release

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Cabinet discusses the strategic plan which will be implemented for the unprecedented improvement of the local infrastructure

New roads and the Malta-Gozo tunnel were among projects discussed during the cabinet meeting held in the Transport Malta building as part of the series ‘Gvern li Jwettaq – Kabinett man-Nies’.

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat explained how the face of our country is changing for the better thanks to strategic decisions in the infrastructural sector. Dr Muscat said that the emergency situation this government found during the first legislature with regard to infrastructure needed the putting together of a holistic vision towards a positive change which would lead Malta and Gozo to build a foundation for future infrastructure.

The Prime Minister said that Minister Ian Borg is doing an exceptional job so that, together with all officials and employees within the respective authorities, the coming years will see the people acknowledging that our country could never get by without this new infrastructure which will become part of Maltese and Gozitan life.

Meanwhile, Minister Ian Borg delivered a detailed presentation on the projects that are being implemented as part of the government’s strategic plan for this sector. Among the greatest infrastructural commitments of the Government is the tunnel between Malta and Gozo which, for a very long time, was a dream that is now becoming a reality. He announced that the prior information notice which announces that next year will see the publishing of a tender for the tunnel’s DBMO (design, build, maintain and operate), has been published. He reminded those present of the call for offers published a few weeks ago for companies interested in offering professional services for project management and the supervision of construction work, as well as services of architects and engineers which Infrastructure Malta needs to implement the final planning and construction of this project which is essential for the Maltese Islands. This tunnel will be around 13 and a half kilometres long and will extend from the area of Limbordin in Mellieħa to Nadur in Gozo.

Borg described this project as one which will transform the lives of Gozitans by facilitating the way in which they can travel between the two islands, a project which also means new employment opportunities and economic growth in Gozo, such as in the service and tourism sectors.

“The dream of a permanent connection between Malta and Gozo as a quicker and safer alternative to travelling by sea has been around for a long time. The development of this permanent connection is among the Government’s main promises,” said Minister Borg.

“While most of the time countries enjoy economic success because of infrastructure which anticipates this success, in the case of Malta economic gain came about in spite of the state of infrastructure and not because of it. This government immediately recognised the importance of addressing and investing in infrastructure to continue maintaining and complementing this wealth and the sectors which serve as pillars of the economy,” said Borg.

He explained the way in which infrastructural works are being planned and implemented, which works include interventions on busy junctions such as Lija, Żebbuġ, Qormi, Gudja and Luqa, as well as large capital projects such as the Marsa Junction Project and residential roads. The Minister reminded those present of the government’s commitment to invest €700 million in national funds in all of the country’s roads, including the 160 roads which were never done before. He explained how these funds do not include multimillion investments such as the Marsa Junction, which are investments apart from this commitment. The Minister also made reference to the setting up of Infrastructure Malta earlier this year and said that, among the changes we are experiencing in the infrastructure sector, we have overnight works and the processes involved in starting a project. As an example, he mentioned the collective tender published for the first 120 residential roads to be done in 2019.

Minister Borg spoke about the commitment towards alternative means, including infrastructural interventions for more efficient public transport and better safety for cyclists together with pedestrian facilities and cycling facilities, charging points for electric vehicles and financial schemes led by Transport Malta to incentivise the people to invest in cleaner and more sustainable private vehicles. He explained that the government invested more than €2.5 million in such schemes. Borg also reminded those present that the government continuously supports sharing initiatives, while strengthening public transport on land as well as through the ferries, where our country has experienced great success in the past years. With more than 50 million passengers using public transport in 2018 instead of the 34 million passengers using it in 2012, together with 1.3 million passengers using the ferry services when compared with the figure of 66,000 in 2012, it is clear that the public transport service is gaining popularity. He stressed that the Government will continue working hard to incentivise this means, and as an example mentioned the free public transport incentive for youths between 16 and 20 which benefitted more than 21,000 youths in 2018 and which will be extended for all youths between 14 and 20 and full-time students of any age in 2019.

Borg also reminded those present that studies for mass rapid transportation have continued, with the first phase concluded and the second phase expected to start, which will finally lead to a public consultation on the proposal which will be prepared.

“In spite of the efforts we are making to incentivise and improve collective transport services, the reality of private vehicle dependency remains, and we will therefore continue working on solutions such as the Marsa Junction Project, the Central Link Project and other interventions on arterial routes and main junctions in our country. We will work towards more parking solutions and will continue to commit ourselves towards safe infrastructure for all our road users,” said Minister Borg.

The Minister stressed the fact that the government’s infrastructural commitment does not stop with roads, but also extends to other sectors such as maritime and aviation, towards the strengthening of these industries which are among the main pillars of the economy. He said that Malta currently has the largest register in Europe and the sixth in the world, with more than 8,300 vessels registered in our country, which amount to more than 77 million gross tonnes, and almost 800 superyachts

registered under the Malta flag. He said that it is essential for us to maximise the use of the Grand Harbour and our other ports, with infrastructural interventions, as well as yacht marinas to be able to welcome the influx of superyachts our country is experiencing.

He said that this trend of success is also being reflected in the aviation sector, where the register has exceeded the record of 300 aircraft, with the register growing by 134% since 2012.

Borg said that while focusing on the infrastructural endeavours of the government, he could not but express his appreciation for the hard work being done by other departments such as the Licensing Department and those who offer different services to clients within Transport Malta, as well as the Planning Authority and Lands Authority which have important roles in the running of the country. He also thanked the departments working within the ministry itself for their work which supports these commitments, while reminding those present of the hard work being done towards the setting up of new authorities and agencies such as the Malta Construction and Building Authority and the Transport Safety Investigation Agency.

He concluded by once again thanking all those involved in the infrastructural and transport successes our country is experiencing and reiterated his commitment to see that the government's vision towards an infrastructure befitting the country becomes a reality in order to achieve an improved quality of life for Maltese and Gozitans and all the residents of our country