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PRESS RELEASE

Public Transportation Protocol for COVID-19

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The Department of Transport (DOT) continues to work closely with the Ministry of Health to address the challenge of COVID-19 to safeguard and protect the health of the public.

Even though Belize is not in a heightened state of emergency, the public is still encouraged to plan ahead and consider travelling outside rush hours, where possible, in an effort to promote social distancing. As recommended by the World Health Organization, passengers must keep three to six feet apart from each other when standing in line. This can reduce the possibility of person-to-person transmission of the virus.

While the Department has increased monitoring and has mandated bus companies to increase cleaning efforts in response to the COVID-19 threat, the Ministry urges commuters to take extra personal precautions.

Persons experiencing flu-like symptoms or a sudden high temperature or fever are strongly encouraged to stay home and avoid travel.

Additionally, the DOT has implemented the following guidelines for public transportation:

1. Daily commuters are advised to take alternative buses in the morning and evening to avoid travel during rush hours. **Note that the peak hours for workers are from 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

2. With immediate effect, commuters are required to board and exit buses in an orderly fashion. Each passenger must wash their hands with soap and water or sanitize their hands before boarding the bus.
3. Every person travelling on public transportation **must** wear a face mask or other face (mouth) covering for the duration of the travel. Anyone who is not shall not be allowed to board any public transportation.
4. All transportation operators **must** also wear face masks and are required to clean and sanitize their buses, vans, boats, etc. before and after each run. Upon arrival at the bus terminal along the prescribed route, all passengers are to disembark the bus and the conductor/driver must sanitize the interior of the bus prior to allowing passengers to board the bus.
5. Public transportation is limited to seated passengers only. Bus operators/drivers shall not transport excess passengers. ***Transporting standing passengers is a traffic violation and the DOT will enforce the law to its fullest. Anyone standing will be taken off the bus and the driver will be ticketed.***
6. Bus Operators are required to provide additional buses during rush hour.
7. These rules also apply to water taxis.

The public is advised to report over-crowding of public transportation, including buses, busitos, dalla van, water taxis and taxis. Report all cases to 610-8163.

The Ministry's priority is the safety of all passengers and staff, and the continuity of services. Therefore, practicing good hand hygiene by washing hands frequently is crucial for the protection all. Commuters are also encouraged to take the other necessary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Ends