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Malta metro PPP up in the air

Rachel Adatto

17/05/2023

The future of Malta's €6.2 billion ($6.7bn) metro PPP project remains uncertain due to changes in the country's political landscape, IJGlobal has learnt.

Sources have indicated that the ambitious project has been on shaky ground since the Maltese general election in March 2022, when minister of transport Ian Borg left office and was replaced by Aaron Farrugia.

The incumbent minister claimed in December (2022) that the project has not been shelved, although IJGlobal understands that there has been no forward momentum and backlash about the lack of movement as Malta is heavily dependent on cars with major traffic problems.

There is also criticism of the project given Malta's population of circa 500,000, with limited tourist numbers to make a project of such scale worthwhile, it has been suggested.

Despite a lack of movement on the PPP, a project design plan has been completed and confirmed, alongside a market consultation and an initial feasibility study by Arup which was published in November 2021.

Arup's study was followed up by a second – €100,000 – feasibility study conducted in November last year (2022) by procuring authority Transport Malta, which assessed the scheme's economic feasibility after Arup's 2021 study said it would take 37 years for the project to break even.

Minister Farruglia said: "People in cars want less cars and less traffic – that's the paradox of the moment."

Farruglia previously said the government was exploring alternative options to bridge the gap, including the possibility of using EU funding to implement artificially intelligent (AI) traffic management systems (TMS).

If completed, the metro system will comprise 3 lines stretching over 35.5 kilometres:

- Red Line – 16km long with 11 stations from Bugibba to Pembroke
- Green line – 7km long with 6 stations from Birkirkara to Valletta
- Blue Line – 12.5km long with 9 stations from Mater Dei to Cospicua

Delivery is slated to take 20 years from approval, with the initial phase taking 5-8 years.

Adviser to Transport Malta:

- Arup – technical