

Local

Lack of public transport has made life difficult for many

By Ben Garcia

Public transport is a basic necessity wherever you are in the world today. However, when the lockdown began, all public transport in Kuwait was ceased. Since June 1, the first phase of a five-phase program by the government to return to normalcy is being implemented. In some sectors, work has resumed. But resumption of public transportation is not included in the first phase. Taxis can begin plying the streets only in phase three, tentatively scheduled to start on July 12, and buses can resume services on Aug 2 (again, depending on the health situation at that time).

The suspension of public transport is meant to slow the spread of coronavirus in

Kuwait. But for commuters whose work has resumed, the lack of public transport is a nightmare. "This should have resumed in the first phase because how can people go to work, especially those who are using public transport?" asked Ronnie, a Filipino commuter.

Since the reopening of his company on May 31, he claims he walks to work daily from Kuwait City to Shuwaikh. "I need to get up by 5 am to be able to arrive for duty at 8 am. I start walking from 6 am from Kuwait City. I walk slowly because I still need energy when I get to my worksite. Also, if you leave early from home, the climate is still cool. I only have to endure the 2 pm heat after work. It's an unforgettable experience," Ronnie told Kuwait Times.

"Maybe I will die not from the coronavirus, but from heatstroke. I looked for private transport, but it costs me KD 4 daily," he said. "When I use the bus, I only spend half a dinar going back and forth because it's only 250 fils for each way. I cannot work only to give my income for transport," he added.

Ronnie's company doesn't provide transportation. "Our agreement is just for the basic salary and transportation will be under our expense. It is up to us if we want to report to work or not. I need the job and money, so I endure and accept this fate," he said.

For Sam, the stoppage of public transport is a great advantage for him. "Now my commute to work is free. My boss required us to report to work, so I am ferried by the com-

pany car every day for free. Before COVID I spent money on the bus. It's a bother because it's hot and also it takes a lot of time on the road before you reach your destination. Now there are no hassles, because the driver will come to my doorstep and bring me to work. I hope this will continue even after corona," Sam told Kuwait Times. By not taking the bus, Sam saves around KD 13 every month.

An Egyptian taxi driver explained how he has circumvented the taxi ban. "Since taxis are not allowed, I rented a car so I can still take my wife to work at a money remittance office in Kuwait City and can accept passengers, especially those who are my regular customers. I still earn money – it's not much, but at least it's regular income," he said.

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