

City Busses

19 Mar 2011

We live on the Edge of Sulemaniya, probably close to a one hour walk from the city centre where the protest goes on each day. We can purchase most of our household needs just 100 metres from our home but we also need supplies from the large bazaar also located at the city centre.

Usually we take a city bus into the city centre. Buses run right by our door, but infrequently, so usually we walk about 500 metres to the main street where buses run very frequently. A bus ride costs about 40 cents no matter how far one goes. The whole system is completely private. The drivers own their own buses and they are assigned a certain route to follow. Many buses go to city centre but they take different routes to get there.

The first thing you learn about riding these buses is to sit at the back if at all possible because of the way in which fares are collected. Everyone who gets on the bus simply passes their fare to the driver at the front, indicating the number of people being paid for. Riders make change with each other as the money is passed along and the driver makes any change he needs to make as he drives along. Then change gets passed back to those who need it. How the riders who are doing all this passing back and forth can keep track of all the change, and for whom, totally escapes me. The whole system is certainly based on a lot of trust and honesty on everyone's part. Of course as long as one sits at the back of the bus, the required change eventually gets handed back without having kept track of anything. Invariably one gets correct change too.

On leaving the city square for home one gets a bit more of a sense of how the system works. Drivers do not leave until they have a full load. Buses that go right past our house fill up slowly so we might easily sit for 15 or 20 minutes waiting for that bus to leave. As soon as one bus leaves the city centre another one pulls right in to start loading again. The buses that run along the main street close to our house fill up almost instantly so there is almost a steady stream of buses that we can use to get to and from the city centre if we are willing to walk that half kilometre to the main street. With this transportation system the number of buses on any route changes automatically with the number of people using the system at any given time. It certainly appears to be a very efficient and effective public transportation system.

love to all, Allan S.