

A TRUSTED PARTNER IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Strandfaraskip Landsins

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Strandfaraskip Landsins (SSL) is a nationally owned transport company with the main objective of providing transportation for passengers and cargo throughout the Faroe Islands. The task is carried out through the SSL bus and ferry network with comprehensive routes across the country.

SSL owns and operates six ferries — Smyril, Teistin, Sam, Ritan, Sildberin, Ternan — all named after birds. While Smyril, Teistin, Sam and Ternan are car ferries, Ritan and Sildberin are passenger ferries only. The ferry to Mykines — the Jósúp — is privately owned and the route is operated by SL via contract with Mykines Spf (for more information about Mykines Spf see www.mykines.fo). The bus network — busses owned by various Faroese bus companies — is operated by SSL through a number of contractors.

The SSL is headquartered in Tvøroyri on the island of Suðuroy. The main ferry and bus terminal — Farstøðin — is located at the East Harbour in Tórshavn.

SSL also runs three cargo hubs situated in Tvøroyri, Tórshavn, and Klaksvík.

Approximately 120 people are employed on SSL's ferries, cargo departments, head office and route information.

SSL is a government agency under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The SSL bus and ferry network provides the backbone to the public transport service of the Faroe Islands, taking no less than an annual 1.2 million passengers around the islands primarily on work-related trips but increasingly for tourism.

SSL—STRANDFARASKIP Landsins, or National Coastal Ferries—remains a key link that holds the communities of the Faroe Islands together through affordable means of transportation. As successor of the country's fledgling ferry services of the early 20th century, the first and only public transport operator on the exclusively domestic level remains a prime symbol of increasing interconnectedness.

With a growing number of giant underwater tunnels interlinking the larger islands, however, SSL's network of ferries is slowly transitioning into their logical replacement by busses.

"As our remit is operating public transport by means of ferries and busses, we want to play a proactive and positive part in the development of these services and even in the face of structural changes in the business environment," said CEO Hilmar Eliassen.

"From today's vantage point, the overall direction in this area may entail the gradual dismantlement of some of our existing ferry operations. By the same logic, more public bus services are to be expected in the future. This has been the overall trend for a decade and is likely to remain so judging from current plans when it comes to road infrastructure including game-changing tunnels."

SSL ferries are showing no signs of decline, meanwhile; quite the contrary. Ac-

ording to the latest statistics from the operator, in 2015 figures, as many as 1.2 million passengers travelled with SSL ferries and busses around the islands. SSL's crucial role in enabling this high number of commuters to get to work on a daily basis can hardly be overstated.

UPGRADING THE FLAGSHIP

The flagship ferry, the Smyril—a newbuild delivered to SSL in 2005—connects the capital of Tórshavn with the town of Tvøroyri on the southernmost island of Suðuroy, with regular sailings every day. Enabling the flow of people and goods, the modern 135-meter RoPax ferry has a capacity of 975 passengers and 200 cars or 30 reefer trailers.

Offering a comfortable crossing of the two-hour distance, the Smyril is likewise a popular conference venue. Later this year, alongside the other seven SSL ferries, Smyril will have its internet connectivity upgraded, according to Mr. Eliassen.

"A leading telco is currently rolling out new 4G mobile internet technology and in this connection we are looking to upgrade the existing systems on all of the ferries," he said. "Things move fast in today's world and people expect wireless links to offer higher speeds and greater stability. We are pleased to be able to improve user satisfaction and expect this upgrade to make it even more



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CEO Hilmar Eliassen.

convenient to use, for example, the conference facilities on board the Smyril."

Serving the sparsely populated areas outside of Tórshavn and on the outlying island communities—some 60 percent of a total population of 50,000—SSL is primarily tasked with providing transportation for domestic travelers and cargo, with visitors from abroad increasingly added to the mix in recent years.

GROWING TOURISM

"Tourism, both domestic and foreign, is a growing source of traffic," Mr. Eliassen said. "Especially during the summer, people like to visit the villages out in the countryside, and many enjoy the view from the sea while aboard the ferry. Our routes are perfect for such occasions and, subject to time and availability, we offer some customized trips as well."

While the Faroese in general are known to be flexible and understanding when faced

with delays in travel, whether caused by weather conditions or technical issues, they tend to be more rigorous when dealing with SSL ferries and busses—which is not surprising, after all.

"As long as it's an overseas flight or a ferry crossing from abroad, people seem to accept disruptions to their scheduled trip," Mr. Eliassen said.

"You hear it on the radio that such and such trip has been delayed by this or that amount of hours, and people hardly raise an eyebrow. Now, have a rare delay on the Smyril's schedule—and you're bound to become the subject of criticism. So our customers and constituents are relatively demanding on punctuality, and we're proud of keeping a high standard in that respect. It most probably has to do with the fact that many of our passengers are commuters who rely on our service to arrive at work on time."

Arriving at Krambatangi in the Port of Tvøroyri (below); Busses parked next to the Farstøðin terminal in Tórshavn (opposite, left);

The ferry Ternan serves the Tórshavn-Nólsoy route (opposite, right).

