Scottish Association for Public Transport

Trams from Granton to Edinburgh Bioquarter / Royal Infirmary

This short response to the Edinburgh Tram consultation from the **Scottish Association for Public Transport** gives our overview of the issues, followed on subsequent pages by views on the route options.

1 Active Travel Growth

Congestion drives up costs and puts a cap on city productivity. Lothian Buses average around 9 mph. This is slower than Glasgow, London, Manchester and Liverpool, which also have extensive rail-based systems.

Edinburgh's population growth is forecast to reach +15% by 2041. To maintain Edinburgh's economic competitiveness, transport plans must overcome problems of slow journeys and worsening congestion. The Granton-Bioquarter tram line is a key development which will cut travel times and boost public transport capacity in Edinburgh. Improving connectivity will enhance economic activity within the city, generating more footfall and economic attractiveness for business and inward investment. The tram line is of particular importance given the major developments in the north and south of the city.

Transport policy seeks to encourage more active travel and less car use. Active travel includes walking, cycling and using public transport. Edinburgh's Public Transport Action Plan stipulates that public transport should be accessible for all. So the city's active travel strategy must include the elderly and people with mobility problems as well as walkers, cyclists, commuters and other people. In fact all members of society.

Decisions on the tram route should aim to balance the needs of all these travellers, keeping in mind that the Granton tram route is predicted to carry 4.25 million people of all ages and levels of mobility per year, while the Roseburn cycle path is used by 0.6 million cyclists and walkers per year (12 % of the total predicted tram+cycle usage). The priority should be to expand active travel while resolving any conflict between different modes of travel.

2 Environmental Impact

Electric trains and trams are energy-efficient and carbon-free forms of public transport, with a track record of attracting motorists to switch from using their cars, reducing road congestion and emissions.

Design of the tramway through the city is an opportunity to upgrade the city streets, creating a much better environment for pedestrians and cyclists as well as reducing car traffic and providing a high quality, fume-free public transport service.

Use of the former Granton railway for the section of tramway from Haymarket towards Granton was approved by the Scottish Parliament in the Edinburgh Trams Act in 2006. The disused railway, which has become a rather overgrown green corridor (photo below left), is now popular with cyclists, walkers and joggers along the section of former railway which is now known as the Roseburn Path.

Co-existence of cycle tracks with tramways has been shown to be perfectly feasible in other parts of the world, including the Netherlands. An example of a pleasant green corridor incorporating a tram line is illustrated below right.

Left:

Rosebank path with cycle track and trees

Right:

Green corridor with cycle track, tramway and trees.

3 Granton needs good public transport

The proposed Granton Tram Line is a ground-breaking opportunity to provide a high-capacity and faster public transport link from Granton to the city centre and beyond. Granton's £1.3 billion waterfront development of 3,500 new homes will need a step change in transport to enable the expanding community to access jobs, education and health facilities in Edinburgh. The bus journey from Granton to the Royal Infirmary takes 56 minutes averaging only around 7.5 mph. The alternative to the tram development would be unacceptable ever-increasing road traffic and worsening conditions for motorists, bus users, cyclists and pedestrians using city streets.

Orchard Brae option: The Orchard Brae route would mean excavating busy streets causing massive and unpopular disruption for residents, car drivers and the many buses using Queensferry Road. Excavating the road across the Dean Bridge would potentially be a can of worms (and wires and pipes) and could escalate construction costs unpredictably.

The resulting route would involve trams sharing the route with heavy road traffic including many buses. Congestion would be exacerbated by the trams. The street tram tracks would increase skid risk for cyclists.

The Orchard Brae route misses the Haymarket connection, extending journeys from Granton to the Airport and Edinburgh Park and to destinations on the rail network.

Roseburn Path option: The Roseburn Path is an important part of Edinburgh's active travel network, with 0.6 million trips annually (about **1600 trips per day).** For comparison, Edinburgh Tram Line 1 is used by 12 million annually (**33,000 journeys per day**).

Built to rail standards as the Caledonian Granton branch, it would cost less to lay tram lines than on the Orchard Brae route, and would give the trams a fast and reliable route free from road congestion

The option of having a single tram track section with cycleway alongside is suggested in the consultation as the best compromise to improve public transport while continuing to encourage cycling and walking.

The Roseburn cycleway is currently around 4 metres wide. The proposal for a shared tram/cycle route would reduce this to 3 metres width. (This is the same width as the Airdrie-Bathgate cycleway which was provided alongside the Airdrie-Bathgate railway line at a cost of £7.3 million in 2010). The cycleway would be separated by a fence from the tram track, making it safe for cyclists. Use of the combined route by trams would heighten the sense of security for many walkers and cyclists particularly in the evening.

The full width of the Granton railway corridor was in some places wider than the existing path. We recommend that the feasibility of providing a **passing loop or longer section of double track** on the proposed single track section between Craigleith and Roseburn should be fully assessed, **improving tram reliability.** This could also allow an important **tram stop at Ravelston Dykes to be provided.**

Routing trams via the Roseburn line will reduce traffic on Queensferry Road, benefiting buses, cyclists, pedestrians and cars.

Conclusion: We strongly support using the Roseburn route to provide a quality public transport tram link from the Granton developments to Edinburgh city centre and beyond. The Orchard Brae option would be slow, increase congestion, and cost more to build, and should be rejected.

In the future, building a connecting line between Granton and Newhaven (Phase 2 of the original tram strategy) should be evaluated. This would open up new transport connections and provide resilience against any interruptions on either the Newhaven or Granton tram routes.

4. Bioquarter Line: Bridges Route or Lothian Road

Princes Street is now at full capacity in terms of bus volumes. The planned City Centre to Bioquarter section of tram line is a major step towards providing higher capacity public transport through the most congested streets in the city.

Bridges Route:

The Bridges route passes through the busiest parts of the city centre.

The Bridges route would need the streets, and particularly the narrow pavements, to be improved, with cars banned: a big improvement on the existing layout, but no doubt an expensive project.

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Lothian Road Route:

The Lothian Road option looks better as a tram route with wider carriageway and potential space to provide reserved track on the section of route alongside the Meadows. Busy road junctions on Lothian Road would require redesign to avoid traffic congestion. This should not be insurmountable if a major re-organisation aimed at reducing car traffic is undertaken.

The section through the Meadows looks pretty sparse for attracting customers, compared with the busier Bridges route. Also the route misses the busy areas near Waverley station including connections to trains.

A Granton-Bioquarter tram line via Lothian Rd therefore looks less promising than the Bridges route.

However, if it is decided to adopt the Lothian Road route, a hybrid service pattern could alternate destinations as follows:

Granton-Haymarket-Lothian Road-Bioquarter	Airport-Haymarket-Princes St-Newhaven
Granton-Haymarket-Princes St-Newhaven	Airport-Haymarket-Lothian Rd-Bioquarter

The timetable for this would be more complex but direct tram services between all tram stops on the network would be available without having to change, an advantage for passengers.

Conclusion: The Bridges route looks the most promising option for tram usage but is also likely to be more expensive to construct.

But the Lothian Road route could have some advantage if a hybrid service pattern is adopted: alternating Airport departures to Newhaven via Princes St and Bioquarter via Lothian Rd, and alternating Granton departures to Bioquarter via Lothian Rd, and Newhaven via Princes St.

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