

TRANSform Scotland

the campaign for sustainable transport

Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill

Written evidence to Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Bill Committee
22nd October 2004

1. Summary

TRANSform Scotland is strongly supportive of the development of a tram network as part of a city strategy to deliver road traffic reduction and improvements to sustainable transport services. For a city the size of Edinburgh, trams are the correct public transport technology to augment the existing well-developed bus network.

2. Why trams will work in Edinburgh

Tram systems are a key component in the best transport networks around the world. They combine the frequent stops and on-street accessibility of bus services with the speed of train travel. They emit no fumes at street level and so do not damage the health of the people or the buildings they run past.

Trams offer four key qualities that make them more versatile than conventional "heavy rail" trains in an urban context:

- lighter weight vehicles
- ability to negotiate sharp curves and steep gradients
- lower track construction costs
- fast acceleration and deceleration, giving stop-start capability ideally suited to urban operation.

Trams are perhaps best suited for medium-sized cities where full metro systems would not be justified. In the largest cities, metro systems tend to be the mainstay of public transport although such cities might use a light rail solution to supplement the metro system. While a number of Europe's largest cities (e.g. Berlin, Milan or Vienna) feature extensive networks, trams more often form the backbone of the public transport network in cities similar in size to Edinburgh's 450,000 population (e.g. Helsinki, Dresden or Zürich). As such, we take the view that trams are the correct public transport technology for a city the size of Edinburgh.

3. Integration with public transport services

We take the view that three key factors must underpin the creation of the tram network:

- segregated running should be provided wherever possible
- trams should provide the backbone of the local public transport network
- tram services should be integrated into the bus network

3.1 Segregated running should be provided wherever possible

Trams, like buses, benefit from the provision of segregated running, wherever possible. Edinburgh has an advantage in this area in as much as the success of the Greenways shows how road space reallocation to the sustainable transport modes can be achieved.

3.2 Trams should provide the backbone of the local public transport network

Trams are well suited to higher-volume public transport corridors where bus services cannot provide sufficient capacity in a satisfactory fashion. Bus services are ideal for lower passenger flows. With larger passenger flows, tram services become more appropriate until a point where bus services are not suitable. For moving large numbers of people, heavy rail services are best.

Remodelling of bus routes will be necessary in order to provide feeder services into the tram routes, and in order to free up road space on the City Centre sections where tram segregation is desired.

3.3 Trams should be integrated into the bus network

There will be clear benefits if the delivery of tram services can be integrated into bus services. The horror stories of damaging bus-tram competition in cities such as Sheffield must not be repeated in Edinburgh: *it would be a major political failure should this be repeated*. The failure to integrate tram routes into bus service provision would raise the prospect that existing, commercially viable, bus routes could be undermined. This would have clear social justice and economic efficiency implications.

It is worth noting that the most recent British tram system to be introduced, Croydon, has had no problems with damaging and counter-productive competition. This is because London retains public transport route franchising.

There may be benefits in the same company operating both trams and buses (see Nottingham). There may be opportunities to use the Quality Contract provisions of the Transport Act 2001 to ensure service quality and integration.

<h2>4. Design and service quality issues</h2>
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The Bill primarily addresses route alignments yet the success of the tram system will depend as much upon design and service quality issues. These include:

- availability of multi-modal ticketing (bus, tram, train)
- fare levels
- quality of vehicle design (e.g. vehicle interiors, level access)
- quality of tram stops (e.g. ticket sales, service information, security features, shelter design & lighting, cycle parking)
- quality of pedestrian and cycle access routes

There will need to be much effort put into innovative and high-quality rearrangement of streetspace on the street running sections. This will be especially important at locations such as Shandwick Place where available road space is scarce.

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Lamb's House, Burgess Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6RD

Tel: 0131 467 7714 Fax: 0131 554 8656

Email: info@transformscotland.org.uk

Web: <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk>