

TRANSform Scotland

the campaign for sustainable transport

Trams for Edinburgh

23rd May 2007

Briefing from TRANSform Scotland

1. Introduction

As Scotland's capital, Edinburgh faces a crucial decision on the future of transport provision in the City. This decision will send important signals about how Edinburgh and Scotland are planning for its long-term future development.

We believe that it is essential to proceed with the Edinburgh tram scheme because:

- Quality of life is an important factor in attracting a high quality workforce and visitors to Edinburgh. A **modern public transport system** centred on trams will help to maintain a high quality of life in the city.
- **Congestion** poses a serious threat to the city and its future growth. The existing bus system has coped well in the past but buses inevitably become caught up in general traffic congestion.
- Trams are very **efficient** at carrying large numbers of passengers and are proven to be much more attractive at persuading car drivers to change mode. Modern trams are **accessible** to parents with pushchairs and by those using wheelchairs.
- We face very demanding **local air quality targets**: electric trams generate no emissions at the point of use.
- By providing **electrically-powered** trams we are investing in a transport system that is not dependent on future oil supplies, which are now the subject of numerous global threats. Electricity can be generated from many sources, including a variety of renewable options.

The unique character and setting of the City have made it a World Heritage Site. Trams will help to reduce the overall level of traffic in the city; they are already a common sight in historic cities around Europe.

Our Capital's competitor cities internationally have already made significant investments in high quality tram and metro systems, and it is imperative that Edinburgh takes steps to ensure that it too can pride itself with one of the best public transport systems in Europe.

Who supports trams for Edinburgh?

The following organisations, or leading individuals from them, are among those who have expressed their support for the introduction of trams to Edinburgh:

Education sector

Edinburgh's Telford College
Heriot-Watt University
Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
The University of Edinburgh

Retail sector

George Street Association
John Lewis plc
Marks & Spencer, Edinburgh

Other businesses & business groups

Edinburgh Airport plc
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise
Edinburgh City Centre Management Company
Edinburgh International Conference Centre
Forth Ports plc
Institute of Directors, Scotland
Oracle
Scottish Council Development and Industry
Standard Life

Health and disability organisations

Asthma UK Scotland
Capability Scotland
Voluntary Health Scotland

Heritage organisations

The Cockburn Association
National Trust for Scotland

Environment and transport groups

Capital Rail Action Group
Friends of the Earth Edinburgh
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Light Rail Scotland
RSPB Scotland
Scottish Association for Public Transport
Scottish Environment LINK
Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign
Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
Sustrans Scotland
TRANSform Scotland
WWF Scotland

2. Why trams work

Light rail 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 buildings or the health of the people they run past.

The high quality environment, reliability, low levels of noise and vibration, smooth ride and permanence of the service represented by the tracks means that motorists can be attracted out of their cars and on to light rail.

England is ahead of Scotland in implementing light rail systems. Successful light rail schemes are already in operation in Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Croydon, London Docklands, Tyne & Wear and the West Midlands. Some of these are now being extended, while most continental countries are making substantial investment in light rail networks for their towns and cities. Indeed, across Europe over 250 towns and cities now have light rail systems.

Edinburgh now needs to catch up with the best practice across Europe. It is important to remember that, for many visitors, Edinburgh is the gateway to Scotland and their view of transport across the country will be formed by their experience of its capital city.

3. When to use trams

Buses, trams and trains are appropriate for different transport situations. Bus services are ideal for relatively low passenger flows. For busier routes, tram services become a more appropriate public transport technology. For moving very large numbers of people, a metro (underground) or conventional train service may be the best option.

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).

Smaller-sized cities such as Graz and Linz (Austria), Bern and Lausanne (Switzerland) and Utrecht (Netherlands) all feature tram lines - yet have similar or lower population sizes than Aberdeen or Dundee. Even small towns may have corridors appropriate for a tramway. There are a number of small towns, especially in Germany, with populations as low as 50,000 with tram lines, while experience from Karlsruhe and Saarbrücken show the applicability of light rail for rural hinterlands.

4. About TRANSform Scotland

TRANSform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns.

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