

# Trams Passenger Service up and running for May 2014 at the latest



Trams will be seen on the city centre streets from December and passengers will be able to use the service from May 2014 at the latest, two months sooner than the original summer target, it was announced today.

Councillors also set out plans for the handover of a section of the route between the Gogar depot and the Edinburgh Park Station for testing in early October and for full route testing to take place during December.

The city centre will be clear of tram civil engineering works by next month, with Haymarket now set to reopen for traffic around 12 October and Shandwick Place crescents a week later. This follows the recent reopening of York Place, St Andrew's Square in April and Princes Street at the end of last year.



Transport convenor Councillor Lesley Hinds said that she still hoped the launch date might be brought forward from May following the testing period.

She said: "Within weeks the city centre will be clear of tram works for the first time in six years – the end of the tram project and the beginning of a tram service are clearly in sight. I'm pleased that the end date for the project has been brought forward but I'm very keen for it to be finished even earlier if possible.

"I've asked that all of these timeframes are reassessed at the beginning of next year so that any further gains in progress

can be factored into our plans. Our target launch is now May 2014 but we'll bring this forward if we can and we'll announce a start date for the tram service when we're 100 per cent sure.

"There is major testing work to be done on tram stops work, a major testing, commissioning and driver training programme and, of course, a Scottish winter to get through.

"As we near the completion of the project, we are approaching a time of real opportunity for our city.

"There has been major investment in infrastructure and now we want to see transport options fully integrated as part of a system that will benefit residents and visitors while ensuring that Edinburgh is well positioned in the eyes of potential investors who can bring new jobs to the city."

After the meeting, when asked what her message to the people of Edinburgh was today, Councillor Hinds told the Edinburgh Reporter of her ambition that the go live date could be brought even further forward and her hopes that the people of Edinburgh would grow to love the trams. The interview can be heard here.

[listen to 'Transport Convener Lesley Hinds' on Audioboo](#)

Transport Minister Keith Brown said: "Today's announcement further underlines this Government's commitment to modernising transport systems across Scotland. Alongside the £500m the Government has committed to the trams, our massive investment programme at Haymarket, Waverley, the new Gateway Station, and the Borders and in electrification will revolutionise the rail network and public transport in central Scotland.

"The announcement that the infrastructure works will be completed and handed over to the council by next March will

ensure they are in a position to have trams running ahead of the revised July 2014 delivery date.

“We will continue to work with the council and the contractor to look at opportunities to bring the programme forward even further where at all possible.

“This is good news for people and business in Edinburgh and we are all looking forward to a city centre free of road works and major disruption ahead of the busy Christmas period.”

He added: “It puts an end to the misleading speculation over recent weeks about when the tram project would be finished and provides much needed clarity to businesses to plan ahead with confidence.

The testing phase between the Gogar depot and Edinburgh Park Station and subsequent full route testing will see in excess of 150 tram test journeys per day (five day week) travel along the line. The tram route to Edinburgh park crosses South Gyle Broadway and Lochside Avenue and the Council will be working with Edinburgh Trams to ensure that businesses, residents and commuters know what to expect.

Ahead of December a city-wide safety and awareness campaign will be launched as trams will be running through the city centre.

The completion of the track and road works between Haymarket and Shandwick Place will mean that that the vast majority of tram infrastructure is now in place in the city centre. However, localised planned works may occasionally impact on traffic flows until the beginning of the tram’s testing and commissioning phase.

The project remains in line with the revised budget (£776m) approved by the Council in September 2011, with work either ahead of schedule or in line with the revised timescale reported in December 2011.

Last month the Council set out plans to create a new organisation, Transport for Edinburgh, to integrate transport services in the Capital. Transport for Edinburgh will be set up initially to integrate the tram and bus services, with Lothian Buses and Edinburgh Trams confirmed as the operators.

The latest update was contained in a report to Council that will be considered on Thursday 26th September. A further progress report will be made to Council in January 2014 providing the completion target date for the Infraco and CAF contract and reporting on the Edinburgh Trams target for the start of revenue service.

Following today's news, John Donnelly, chief executive of Marketing Edinburgh said: "We welcome the good news that the city centre will be clear of tram disruption ahead of the busy festive period and launch of Edinburgh's Winter Festival celebrations in November. The trams will open up a lot of exciting benefits to Edinburgh in 2014, not only easing visitor journeys from Edinburgh Airport but for commuters and businesses operating at Edinburgh Park, which has already seen a dramatic increase in office space taken this year from high profile organisations such as Sainsbury's Bank ahead of the tram completion."