

First trams in Princes Street for over 50 years



Hundreds braved the dismal weather conditions to watch the first tram in more than half a century to travel along the city's Princes Street last night. The 45m vehicle moved off at walking speed from Haymarket just after 11pm accompanied by engineers on foot, as part of a testing process.



The event was a major landmark for the project, which has suffered huge problems since construction began in 2008. The frequency and speed of testing will increase over the coming weeks, although few runs are likely before New Year due to the capital's Christmas celebrations.

The tram driver, Billy Adams was chosen by ballot. He was initially trained at the Summerlee museum in Coatbridge where they have a heritage tram line.



Transport Convener Lesley Hinds said: "Getting a tram onto Princes Street is the culmination of an intensive period of hard work to get this project back on track. It is an important step forward but all eyes are now on the launch of passenger services in May.

"With the first successful test last night in the city centre, we're ready for more frequent testing along the length of the route in the New Year.

"Everyone needs to get used to the trams as they become part of daily life in the city and once the testing steps up a gear early next year we'll extend our ongoing safety campaign to

ensure all road users are aware of how to share the city safely with trams.

“It’s important to recognise the significance of this test phase. There is much to be done and we’re at a vital stage in project, ensuring that all the appropriate tests and checks are done.



Transport Minister Keith Brown said: “The successful test runs on Princes Street and at Haymarket over the past few days are welcome landmarks for the tram project.

“Seeing the trams operating in the city centre is a sign of real progress for the project, following the delays and frustration of the past.

“This is another major step toward next May when the trams will be up and running for passengers. Along with the redevelopment of Haymarket and Waverley stations, Edinburgh will very soon have the tram system it has long been promised.”

About 130 staff will work on the Edinburgh tram line once it goes live in May 2014. Earlier this year 1,336 people applied for 57 tram driver and controller positions.

Photographs by Thomas Haywood