

# **Trams will cause disruption – but they will be worth it**

**When the tram line is extended down Leith Walk, it will mean closing the street to three lanes of traffic for a period of eighteen months.**

This will come hot on the heels of Leith Street having been closed for 10 months, with diversions which are already in place re-routing traffic along London Road and Montrose Terrace to permit the Edinburgh St James development to progress.

The tram stop at York Place will eventually be closed and moved to Picardy Place where a new roundabout will be formed, and the tram will then proceed down Leith Walk where traffic lights will be installed at London Road.



At a media briefing we were assured that any traffic diversions will be thoroughly modelled before being put in place. One of the ways it is hoped to improve the experience for road users is to create large work sites so that diversion routes will not be chopped and changed too often. The OBC also hopes that the approach will allow utilities to be moved in larger phases which will result in an overall programme saving.

Councillors will consult with SPOKES and other stakeholders in how to include segregated cycleways alongside the tram route.

## **LEITH WALK UTILITIES**

When The Edinburgh Reporter questioned why it would take as long as 18 months to lay the tram track on Leith Walk, the answer was that the utility works carried out there previously may need to be changed.

We were told that the utilities were moved during the first tram project before the final design for the tram line was decided, and that there may be as many as 1200 'conflicts'. This will mean that the utilities have to be resited in certain places, but the records which will now be kept will ensure that there are detailed surveys of utilities in the city in case of other projects.

## **OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE**

Councillors have now had the opportunity of examining the updated OBC for the tram extension which has been on display in a Data Room at the City Chambers for the last couple of weeks.

Although it is claimed that all SNP and Labour councillors have taken the opportunity to appraise themselves of the minute detail often £162.5 million scheme, it appears some from other political groups may not have done so.

***We recommend that you ask your councillor for their views ahead of the committee meeting next week, and whether they examined all 84 pages which will be available on the council website later today.***

The plans for the remaining 4.6km of tramline to extend from York Place to Newhaven have taken about 20 months to draw up. The construction phase will last for three years, and the coalition is determined that there will be a great deal of forward planning before any final decision is taken about building the extension at all.

This has included discussion of market consultation with potential contractors to ensure that any costings are realistic.

One of the key points is that the tram extension will be completed within the lifetime of the current council administration, ensuring the responsibility and accountability does not straddle two different councils as it did last time.

## **SUPPORT PACKAGES**

There are plans for a support package for the estimated 300 local businesses who might be affected, although there are as yet no specifics on any compensation. The council says it will ensure that there are logistics officers working throughout the day to ensure that local businesses can continue to receive deliveries. Pedestrian crossings on this main artery will be introduced at 150 to 200 metre gaps.

The council also hopes to be better at communicating the messages throughout the tram extension by having dedicated communications staff.

## **TRAM ENQUIRY**

All of these measures have been envisaged by learning from the mistakes made during the first part of the tramline which fell into so much chaos there were long periods when there was no building at all. This has resulted in an enquiry being ordered, and under the chairmanship of Lord Hardie it will begin to hear oral evidence from witnesses including former and serving councillors during next week.

The Council Leader was emphatic that there should be enough time in the planning part of the project to allow for the Tram Enquiry to complete and report any recommendations to the council for any future infrastructure projects. This will allow any such recommendations to be incorporated into the current project if they have not already been considered.

Councillor McVey said: “Edinburgh is growing faster than any other city in Scotland and our current road network and public transport provision simply aren’t sustainable given the number of new residents we’re expecting to welcome here over the next two decades.

“Rather than exacerbating traffic problems on our already congested roads, trams allow far greater numbers of people to travel, while creating employment during construction, boosting development along the route and connecting people to centres of employment, leisure and retail.”

The Transport Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes and Council Leader Adam McVey are both members of the council’s SNP group so it is perhaps little wonder that they speak with one voice.

They both take the view that since we now have the tram it will be worth completing Route 1A to Newhaven. But they are also very mindful of the legacy of the first tram project.

## **REASONS TO EXTEND THE TRAM ROUTE**

The population of the capital is estimated to grow by 47,000 people by 2024 and an additional 102,000 by 2039. Employment in Edinburgh is estimated to grow by 7% in the next five years. The tram is a mass transit option which will enable everyone to get about the city without adding to congestion or air pollution.

One of the real benefits of developing the tram route is that all the developers who might build houses at the Waterfront have said that the tram extension would make this a real possibility.

As well as housing the transport link would join up priority investment zones. It is seen as crucial to have high quality public transport for the growth and development of the city. The estimates show that passenger numbers should almost double in the first year alone.

The infrastructure project will in itself create jobs, but the OBC projects that it will also allow jobs and businesses to develop along the tram route.

The OBC claims that the building and development of housing at Western Harbour will accelerate and Ocean Terminal should benefit from increased footfall.

Transport Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said : “Given the experience of the last tram project, we’re acutely aware of the need to scrutinise this business case as rigorously as we possibly can – residents deserve nothing less. We won’t take any decision on completing the line to Newhaven until we are 100% confident that the project can be delivered, financed and managed effectively.

“Councillors from all parties have been taking up the opportunity to fully examine the business case over the past weeks and will use this special meeting of the Transport and Environment Committee to quiz officers further on the detail and make a recommendation on whether to progress to the next stage.”

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Outline Business Case will be debated at the Transport and Environment Committee on 4 September at 2pm and will require ratification by the Full Council on 21 September 2017.

The plans will then proceed to a procurement process and a further decision will be taken in October 2018 to evaluate the tenders and if necessary to update the Outline business case.

If the Full council approves that business case in November 2018 (by which time the council envisages that the Tram Inquiry will have issued its findings) then building will start in the second quarter of 2019 and will be completed by the second quarter of 2022.

