

Tramline extension – are the stops in the right place?

The proposal to extend the tram line to Newhaven is on the agenda for discussion by the council on Monday 4 September 2017 at the Transport and Environment Committee, followed by consideration by all councillors at the meeting of the full council on 21 September.

When we published our earlier article about the plans to extend the line, one of our readers, Reggie Tricker, asked whether or not the proposed stops are perhaps too far apart.



The plans show eight stops beginning with the newly created stop at Picardy Place, McDonald Road, Balfour Street, Foot of the Walk, Bernard Street, Port of Leith, Ocean Terminal and finally Newhaven.

As part of the Edinburgh St James Development it is planned to remove the stop at York Place, and so the tram will run from St Andrew Square to Picardy Place with no stop in between.

The stops on the current line are at varying distances depending on the location. Some of these are out in the countryside near the airport, and some in the city are necessarily quite far apart due to the geography there.

Here is the information on the distance between current stops:

York Place	Saint Andrew Square	420
St Andrew Square	Princes Street	590

Princes Street	Shandwick Place	950
Shandwick Place	Haymarket	600
Haymarket	Murrayfield Stadium	1225
Murrayfield Stadium	Balgreen	1040
Balgreen	Saughton	1650
Saughton	Bankhead	1200
Bankhead	Edinburgh Park Station	850
Edinburgh Park Station	Edinburgh Park Central	790
Edinburgh Park Central	Gyle Centre	800
Gyle Centre	Edinburgh Gateway	375
Edinburgh Gateway	Gogarburn	725
Gogarburn	Ingliston Park & Ride	1600
Ingliston Park & Ride	Edinburgh Airport	980

When it comes to Leith Walk there seems to us to be nothing getting in the way of having even more stops than currently planned, except perhaps that the tram journey to Newhaven would then be slower.

Reggie describes himself as a 'sustainable travel guru', although he resisted when we suggested calling him an expert. But he does seem to know about the best ways of getting about

cities. He suggested that the international average distance between stops might be around 500 metres, so it is clear that some of the existing stops in Edinburgh exceed that. As for the proposed stops we think they might just be a little more than that too.

What do you think? Do you live in Leith? Where would you like the stops to be situated?

The whole circumstances around the extension of the tramline will receive due attention on Monday. Most councillors have visited the data room which the council set up to examine the business case and to question council officers about it.

MELBOURNE MODEL

In Melbourne they have had a tram system for many years. It is the largest operating tram network in the world with 250 km of double track and a quarter of the 1700 stops have level access.

Reggie pointed us in the direction of an article where distance between stops was specifically discussed. In Melbourne they are now considering taking out some of the 1700 stops and putting in bigger stops with shelters and raised platforms. The hope is that this would speed up the Yarra Trams by taking away what they consider to be unnecessary and unsafe stops along the track.

At present the Yarra Trams average speed is about 16km/h whereas in Edinburgh we are advised that the tram now has a top speed of 70km/h on the off street sections. In the city centre the top speed is 20km/h.

Now that Edinburgh Trams have introduced higher speeds and a new timetable, overall journey time from one end of the line to the other has reduced to 36 minutes. In a few weeks we have been told that there will be trams every three minutes on the

part of the line to the West End in an effort to reduce congestion on some of the trams.

The photos below from our Melbourne correspondent show some of the 450 Melbourne trams in action.

This is a much bigger operation, running 24 hours a day and covering 24 tram routes and transporting 203 million passengers. But it would seem to be well established and perhaps a set-up to learn from. In the Outline Business Case to be discussed by the council on Monday, there is a recommendation to learn from other tram systems.









In Melbourne they have Super Stops (photographed above) where you can transfer from one mode of transport to the other and there they have some or all of the following public amenities:

automatic public toilets, kiosks, payphones, real time passenger information, ticketing machines and vending machines. These are approximately 440 yards or 2 city grids apart from each other. The only stops where there are amenities like that in Edinburgh are at the Ingliston Park and Ride, Haymarket Station and at Edinburgh Airport, although we believe they all have CCTV. Whether there is any need for that on the extended line depends on the survival of the local businesses which are already there. There is to be a compensation scheme for those which might be affected by 18 months of roadworks on Leith Walk.

Public Transport Victoria offer a free tram ride in the city centre to residents and visitors alike, and they also have a free tourist bus dropping passengers at major tourist attractions across the city. This is certainly something to be emulated!



OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

Whether or not the capital does complete Route 1A to Newhaven, there is still some design work to do on the specifics including the location of the stops. The council proposes to award a design and build contract to whichever company gets the job, and this will incorporate tram infrastructure.

During Stage 2 (which will commence if the council approves the extension on 21 September 2017), there will be public consultation in relation to Traffic Regulation Orders, traffic management proposals and outline designs. So you may be able to have your say then on where the stops should be along the extended line.

The decision as to whether to extend the tramline or not will not finally be made until November 2018, by which time the procurement process will have identified a contractor, and it is hoped the Edinburgh Tram Inquiry which gets underway this

week will also have issued a final report.

On Monday the council will discuss the Outline Business Case which estimates that the cost of the remaining 4.6km will be £162.5m which includes a risk element and provision for inflation in it.

While we will not end up with as big a tram system as Melbourne, our population here in Edinburgh is estimated to grow by 20% in the next 20 years and the tram might be the mass transport provider that will be required.

The final word is from Council Leader Adam McVey who said earlier this week : “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.”

