

Council ready to ask for your views on completing the tram to Newhaven

In September 2017 the council took a decision to move on to Stage 2 of the proposal to extend the tramline from York Place to Newhaven in a £165 million project. While there is no final decision about the tram extension, the council is carefully moving forwards towards taking a final step later this year.

Procurement for the line has already begun, and now there will be a public consultation. Finally in autumn this year the final business case will be updated and presented to councillors for consideration.



From 19 March 2018 the council will consult residents and business owners, along with that unnamed, but important, group called 'stakeholders' about completing the tramline to Newhaven. They plan to send out 28,000 letters to residents asking for their feedback on traffic management and business support plans as well as the outline road layout for Leith Walk and the rest of the proposed tram route.

Some of the plans cannot be changed. For example there will be overhead lines as that equipment has already been purchased. There will be eight tram stops at locations already chosen, but whether there is a central platform or a side platform can still be swayed.

The tram stops are at Picardy Place, McDonald Road, Balfour Street, Foot of the Walk, Bernard Street, Port of Leith, Ocean Terminal and Newhaven.



Lesley Macinnes
Transport Convener

Transport Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said: “When the Outline Business Case was approved by Council in September we pledged to dedicate the following year or so (ahead of the final decision) to establishing mutually beneficial relationships with local residents and businesses who would be most affected by construction works. We’ve been working very closely with the local community and our partners ever since to model traffic management plans and look at options for supporting businesses as much as possible if the project goes ahead.

“These plans have been developed taking on board lessons learned from the first phase of tramworks and the current traffic management arrangements in place around Leith Street.

“The recent Leith survey showed that a majority of residents think trams will make a positive difference to Leith. However, there are clearly some very real concerns about disruption and congestion during construction. This consultation gives people the chance to help shape how we manage things if and when work gets under way. We hope as many people as possible will have their say, either at one of our four information events or via the Consultation Hub, which will host the consultation from 19 March.”

The consultation will include:

- 28,000 letters delivered to residential addresses in the

area surrounding the planned tram route

- 4 public information events
- 4 local business forums
- 4 community council briefings

SURVEY RESULTS

As a first step the council conducted a survey to gauge the views of the public and found that the majority of those asked were in favour of the tram.

A massive 91% of those asked were satisfied with the current transport arrangements but 38% also said that if any improvements could be made then it would be the introduction of a tram service. Around three quarters were aware of the council's plans to complete the line but a quarter wanted something done about cycling infrastructure.

There was an even split between those who would and would not use the tram if introduced.

If they said they would use the tram, an overwhelming 74% of respondents said they would use it for shopping, with a third saying they would use it all the way to the airport.

Those who said they would definitely not use it reasoned that the bus service was good enough as it is.

But there was a scepticism among those who took part in the survey about both the disruption that the tram works might cause and also the length of time the project would take. This is hardly a surprise given the history of the tramline which took much longer than planned, cost twice as much and only half the line was delivered.

CONSULTATION

Although the outline design for the tramline cannot be changed as it is legislated for in the Tram Act, there is scope for you to have your say on the specific design of any one of the

eight stops on the route.

There is also the chance to have your say on the proposal to include a public transport corridor on Leith Walk for tram and bus during commuting hours at either end of a weekday to ensure that buses and trams can keep to timetable as much as possible.

You can attend one or more of four public events when you can get more information about the proposals :

***Thursday 22 March: Leith Theatre,
11am – 6pm***

***Tuesday 3 April: McDonald Road
Library, 10am – 4pm***

***Thursday 12 April: Leith Community
Education Centre, 3pm – 9pm***

***Saturday 21 April: Ocean Terminal,
12 noon – 5pm***

The consultation will precede any decision by the council as to whether or not the tramline is extended, which will not be made until Autumn 2018. The consultation exercise will cost around £30,000, but has already been budgeted for.

If the go-ahead is given at that time then it is likely that construction will begin in late spring 2019.