

Living Streets call for a rethink by council

Active travel campaigners, Living Streets Edinburgh, say The City of Edinburgh Council should rethink its controversial plan to narrow the pavement on a busy section of Princes Street

In its formal response to the Council's 'Tram Route Cycle Safety Consultation', the group says that narrowing one of the busiest pavements in Edinburgh – at the junction of Princes Street and South St Andrew Street – could compromise pedestrian safety and convenience.



Living

Streets' spokesman David Hunter commented: 'We understand the need to introduce an acceptable geometry for the cycle route crossing the tram tracks at this location, but we oppose the potential loss of pedestrian space on Edinburgh's principal pedestrian street, which is used by over a million people every week. Reducing the pavement width would increase the risk of pedestrians spilling into the carriageway/tram tracks. We're calling on the council to have a fresh think about how to improve safety for cyclists at this location.'

'The main victims of road vehicle collisions are pedestrians, and their needs should be at the forefront of thinking on improvements to the tram route, bearing in mind also that 99% of tram users access the tram on foot (or wheelchair). The motion to Council by Cllr Macinnes [Convenor of the Transport & Environment Committee] in June explicitly aimed to enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety and convenience (our emphasis); this initiative should therefore be named as 'Tram Route Pedestrian and Cycle Safety Consultation'.'

The group draws attention to a number of other problems for pedestrians on the tram route in its submission to the Council:

'...there is little in this proposal to address the specific needs of pedestrians and we want to see much more vigorous action to address a number of long-standing problems which pedestrians face on the tram route in the city centre.

'In particular, we have frequently drawn attention to the unacceptably long wait times that people walking along Princes Street face when trying to cross adjoining streets such as Frederick Street, Hanover Street and South St David Street.

'We strongly recommend that the pedestrian phases are reviewed at all signalled junctions along Princes Street (and indeed along the entire route, for example at Haymarket). The aim would be to reduce the wait times for pedestrians to cross and if necessary increase 'green man' times and the frequency of crossing opportunities.

'Making these improvements will in turn increase pedestrian safety, as it will reduce the incidence of 'red man' crossing, which is encouraged by the unacceptably long times that people have to wait.'