

Council to look at ways of prioritising public transport in the city

In an all encompassing report relating to buses, trams, coaches, taxis and all forms of road traffic, the council is to look at ways of improving the use of public transport in Edinburgh.

The council's Transport and Environment Committee will hear next week that officers are investigating ways of reducing congestion on the A90 and ensuring that bus lanes are observed. This will allow buses to access and use bus stops more easily and quickly.



The location of some bus stops across Edinburgh will be reviewed and the possibility of introducing a more uniform 400 metres between stops will be examined. The council says that

Edinburgh has more bus stops than other cities of the same size, and that more stops means longer journey times. 20% of the bus stops in Edinburgh are less than 200 metres apart. Officers studied the number 16 bus route and have concluded that moving bus stops might save five minutes on the journey time from one end of the route to the other.

Any changes to bus stops would only be made after public consultation.

They will also look at including taxis in the type of traffic which is allowed to use bus gates at Marshall Street, Candlemaker Row and The Shore.

The council aims to prioritise public transport over other forms of traffic on the city streets, but in recent times bus journeys have become longer owing to congestion. As a result of meetings with tram, bus and taxi operators they now want to introduce certain measures which will improve bus journey times.

In the last 12 years bus journeys in Edinburgh have increased by 12% which adds to the bus company's overheads. Fewer stops would cut these costs. Average speed on the network has decreased by 7.7% in the same period. Some of this relates to the fact that more people in Edinburgh use buses (which goes against the national trend) but the council believes most of it is due to congestion.

BUS LANES

Bus operators want changes to the hours during which bus lanes operate. This was changed only two years ago and now bus lanes are only in force at peak times, but it was agreed that this would be kept under review. It does not seem that there is an easy answer, as bus lanes lead to removal of loading bays which in turn is a problem for businesses. But the council will look at using cameras to enforce bus lanes in more areas of the city.

On the A90 the council will work with other authorities in the City Region Deal area to improve ways of getting into Edinburgh from neighbouring areas such as Fife. Officers say that a study of traffic including public transport on this route is required.

The council also plans what it calls 'major interventions' at Newbridge, Gogar Roundabout and Maybury Junction to deal with increased traffic using the A8 to come into the capital. Other areas which will come under scrutiny include Niddrie Mains Road and Drum Brae North, Blackhall and Barnton junctions.

TRAMS

In the five years since they started operating Edinburgh Trams have made changes to speeds on the off road sections of the line. This has resulted in reducing the end to end journey time by 7 minutes.

The council has rationalised traffic signals in the city centre and trams slot into these so that they do not impede other road users significantly.

But other road users have caused difficulties for the tram by travelling on tram only areas near tram stops, and Edinburgh Trams has asked for cameras to protect these areas.

The report suggests that while many people use Park and Ride facilities, there is little in the way of funding available to increase capacity at any of the sites. Ingliston's 1080 car parking spaces are often full. Unofficial park and ride locations just next to controlled parking areas will also come under some scrutiny, with the possibility of extending the parking restrictions to deal with the problem of commuters and holidaymakers leaving their cars near bus or tram routes.

One further area which officers are examining is Dalmeny Train Station where the growth in population in South Queensferry means an increase in commuter traffic. A possible bus link

from Kirkliston to Dalmeny is to be investigated along with more cycle racks and lockers.



Trams passing on St Andrew Square