

City Mobility Plan 2030 – what will the city look like then?

The City of Edinburgh Council is planning for the future, in fact for the next decade, and specifically for 2030 by which time they intend that the city's transport system is carbon neutral.

[Today the papers are released](#) to help with that forward planning which could mean the tramline will eventually run to Granton and to the BioQuarter.

From 31 January residents can contribute to the council consultation on the draft City Mobility Plan.



Edinburgh City Chambers. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
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Edinburgh already has an Active Travel plan, but this one looks ahead to see what the city will look like and what the council believes it could and should have by then.

Our capital city is expanding and by 2041 the population will have grown by the same number of people who live in Stirling.

This new document sits firmly in the same sphere as the Low Emission Zone and City Centre Transformation Plans. They all have the same goal which is to get rid of traffic congestion and improve the air quality in Edinburgh, while improving accessibility and addressing social inclusion. Areas of what is known as public realm will be much improved if the plan works.

Separately, the City Plan 2030 is about to be considered by the Planning Committee on 22 January and the consultation on both documents will run simultaneously

The city has already recognised that there is a worldwide climate emergency and wants to move towards 2030 with achievable goals set out along the way.

More people in Edinburgh use public transport and active travel (walking and cycling) than in any other Scottish city. The council says that the public transport companies Edinburgh Trams and Lothian Buses are both 'popular and affordable'.

The ideas on the table for discussion include extending the tramline, introducing integrated ticketing, improving cycle routes and extending the city's bike hire scheme. Freight depots would be established in the city and would allow delivery of goods with smaller, cleaner vehicles. Large vehicles would be excluded from the city centre, the workplace parking levy would be introduced and the most polluting vehicles would be banned.

The amount of time that people sit in traffic adds not only to the time it takes them to get from A to B, but also to the levels of carbon dioxide emitted. Over one third of the CO2 emissions in the city come from traffic affecting the 19,000 or so people who live in the city centre.

The council has looked at other cities for inspiration and although they have no plans to implement a congestion charge any time soon they will leave this option in the plan so that people can have their say one way or the other. It is more likely that there will be more controlled parking zones and a workplace parking levy of some kind in the future to help fund changes. But the goal is to have world class infrastructure and to respond to the demand for change that residents have voiced.

We met with the Council Leader Adam McVey to find out about the proposals which will be published for public discussion at the end of the month, polished up by the council's Transport Manager and then brought back in the autumn 2020 for

consideration and possible approval by the Transport Committee.

We asked him how the city council is going to achieve all the goals it aspires to. He said : "I think we're going to do it by first of all, asking people what the appetite is for some of that change.

"So asking people what the appetite is for public transport – I think there's a huge amount of people in the city who currently drive who don't want to, who would rather have an accessible, easy, sustainable public transport option which was right for them.

"So it's about working with public transport providers, it's about enhancing the coordination between public transport operators. Integrated ticketing which we already have seen on the Lothian Buses services can be expanded on to other modes to enable people to make those choices.

"But it's also about investing in our public space in the city centre. It's about investing in cycle networks for where people live and where people want to go.

"It's about investing in high capacity public transport. And that's exactly what we're doing with the tram extension to Newhaven right now. And I would envisage the city taking further decisions on that. We have already safeguarded the line to Granton."

The Council Leader explained at the briefing that although the council had all necessary land and permissions in place to proceed with an extension of the tram to Granton, it would need approval of the council. For any further extensions it would be advantageous to have legislation passed by The Scottish Government. This would not be primary legislation as it was for the first part of the tram network in Edinburgh, but would be legislation made possible under the Transport Work Act.

Cllr McVey continued : “It’s also about working with our neighbours, because there is a lot of traffic generated from outwith the city that our residents have to deal with so it’s about working with our neighbours to try and find sustainable ways that people can travel into the city.

“It’s about cycling, it’s about bus, but it’s about also building the infrastructure that’s right for a region.

“That’s why we’ll also be working with partners on things like park and rides that would be serviced by bus companies. This would enable us to really build the infrastructure that enables people to make the right choices. I think on the absolute whole people want to make those choices because they’re quicker, they’re easier, and they’re more stress free.”

We asked when the first changes would be seen here in the city. Cllr McVey replied : “I think we’re already seeing change in the city that that mirrors very much what we’re putting forward in our strategy. We’re seeing direct cycle routes being built with the enhanced cycleways being taken forward along the tram route and Leith Walk.

“There’s the Roseburn link in the west of the city. So I think we’ve already seen an enormous amount of work in this space. What our strategy does is articulate work that’s been happening already projects it out for the next 10 years and ask people if they can come with us on this journey. We need buy in from people We need people to come along with us.

“When we consulted on the City Centre Transformation – one of the biggest boldest pieces of policy change that this council has put forward – 4,500 people responded to that consultation with 85% of them backing a bold vision for our city centre.

“This would be a people dominated city centre, rather than a traffic dominated city centre. So we know there’s appetite out there.

“This is about articulating the action points that we will need to get us to where we need to be in 2030 if we’re to be a net zero carbon city, and really asking people to come along with us on that journey and where people might have other ideas about how we could make that modal shift.”

And how would the city pay for all of this? Clearly some of it would come from the capital budget reserved for roads, streets and cycling infrastructure. But Cllr McVey pointed to the way that the tram extension is being paid for – with a special bonus of £20million paid by Lothian Bus which allows the council to leverage borrowing to be repaid from future revenues and dividends.

Cllr McVey explained what the cost to commuters is at present. He said : “Well, there’s a huge amount spent on public transport in the city already. About a billion pounds the city spends on transport – on different modes of transport. About a quarter of a billion a year is also spent on congestion and that’s lost productivity that’s a cost to companies. It’s a cost to motorists, it’s a cost to public transport operators, it’s a cost to everyone.

“So by looking at the opportunity cost of what we have right now, and looking at the investment streams that are there for people that want to take public transport as opposed to private car, for example, I think we can create revenue streams. We can deal with some of the costs that this city is currently facing, and really create the right level of investment across the city, just like we’ve done with the tram extension to Newhaven.

“That’s pretty much self-financing, not touching existing council budgets. I think we can make dramatic change and find the revenue to pay for it.

“When you look at this as a whole city approach, which I think we have to do, this is about the health of the city in terms

of air pollution. It's also about the health of the city in terms of activity and active travel being part of that solution as people live longer and healthier lives.

"It's about looking at this absolutely in the round and looking at the city as it will be in 10,20,30,50 years and taking the decisions now that can build a much more sustainable, inclusive city within that timescale.

"We're not going to get everything changed within a few years. And unfortunately, we won't get everything done in the next 10 years, meaning we never have to change again. Change will be the constant that Edinburgh has to deal with as we have a huge population growth and more people wanting to move to this fantastic city of ours.

"But by investing and taking the right decisions now, I think we can build a more financially sustainable, environmentally sustainable, and socially sustainable city in the years to come."