

Council introduces the City Mobility Plan – a plan for the next decade

The City Mobility Plan which is published today in draft is nothing new. It has been a long time in the drafting and it includes all the usual kinds of transport that the council already has at the heart of its policies.

It includes policies to help the capital move towards net zero carbon transport, which might result in a healthier environment. And that is much needed as the report says that transport is the “single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon”. It seems clear that now is time to do something about one of the biggest household expenses that we all have. The only thing that households spend more on are mortgages and rent, and the “cost” does not take account of the unproductive time spent in traffic, or the added cost of transporting goods and services to our homes.

Alongside the health effects of poor air quality, it is clear, the council says, that the capital’s mobility systems must be changed.

The buzz words are carbon emission free, efficient, accessible and affordable. The transport systems must be even bolder than the steps we have already witnessed with the tramline and changes made during the pandemic to enable active travel to

take precedence.

The policy document is designed to shape the way the council will create a joined up transport network which is both sustainable and safe.

The city's policies will sit squarely within the government's national transport strategy and the regional plans such as the City Region Deal. However that deal has spending of multi millions set aside for improvements at the Sheriffhall roundabout. This does not immediately seem to align with the overarching active travel aims of the City Mobility Plan, and it is not yet clear that this will remain a priority in the face of reduced commuter traffic during the pandemic and perhaps beyond.

The council has been inspired by the same kind of challenges which affect cities the world over and has looked at the responses from some other towns and cities for ideas of how best to react. Edinburgh already has a plan to be zero carbon by 2030, and coupled with the goal of getting rid of poverty, the way everyone moves around the city also has to meet equality goals. This will mean simplified flexible public transport ticketing with affordable fares for those on low incomes.

The Poverty Commission set up by the council recommended in its final report that there is concessionary travel extended to under 25s and unpaid carers

The population of the capital will reach nearly 600,000 – a growth of 12% – by 2043. The implication of that alone means that the number of vehicles on our streets cannot be allowed to grow. The cost of congestion to the city is estimated at £177 million each year and each rush hour journey becomes 41% longer as a result. Congestion adds pollution and cost to delivery of goods.

It is intended that members of the public will be encouraged

to use public transport in the form of bus and tram, that mobility hubs will be developed and a city operations centre will be introduced to monitor traffic. Crucially, the plan includes the well-rehearsed mantra of making the city better for those walking, wheeling and cycling. Those proposals will also lead to the city being less dominated by vehicles and the council believes this will make the city more liveable.

If the 20 minute neighbourhood is developed then everything you need on a daily basis ought to be within a 20 minute walk of your home. Cars would no longer be necessary for everyone in what the council describe as a “compact walkable city”.

The result of the pandemic will undoubtedly be changes in commuter patterns, and more people who have worked from home now may choose to continue to do that in the future.

Transport and Environment Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said: “Edinburgh is a truly unique city in terms of its heritage, architecture and striking landscape, home to some of history’s greatest innovators. Now we want to push the boundaries as we look to the future of transport and mobility here.

“The finalised City Mobility Plan recognises the need to revolutionise the way we move around the Capital if we are to tackle the host of challenges we face, both locally and on a global scale. Transport is the biggest generator of carbon emissions in Edinburgh and our commitment to be net zero carbon by 2030 depends on a step-change in the way we travel, a change which would also significantly impact on air quality, congestion and road safety.

“More than that, our approach to transport addresses poverty and the cost of travel, the barriers facing those with mobility difficulties and the economic benefits of a better-connected, liveable environment. This is a bold, forward-looking strategy, befitting of this pioneering city, which

will transform our streets, neighbourhoods and connections with the rest of the world for generations to come.”

Transport and Environment Vice Convener Councillor Karen Doran said: “This comprehensive vision of transport and mobility in Edinburgh has been years in the making and takes into account the needs and views of lots of different members of society, from individuals to families, businesses to freight drivers.

“We want you to be able to make sustainable transport choices easily, whether that’s leaving the car at home and travelling to work by tram or spending more time in your local neighbourhood on foot, wheelchair or bike. By providing the options for clean, green and healthy travel, we’re helping the public to help us achieve an inclusive, accessible and net zero carbon future for Edinburgh.”

There have been many iterations of the plan which has been developed after talking to the public and other stakeholders. In 2020 the consultation attracted more than 1800 comments on the draft proposals and broad support for all policy measures.

The themes in the plan are People, Movement and Place. While there is recognition that the Covid-19 pandemic has meant a decrease in the use of public transport, there is also an expansion on the desire to have 20 minute neighbourhoods. These are used elsewhere and it means that people will live in area with public services will be located within a 20 minute walk of your front door. The concept also wants to meet people’s daily needs within a 10 minute walk or wheel from home.

The key dates are included in the council’s Path to 2030. This includes the following:

2023 – Delivering now, planning for the future:

Construction of tram route to Newhaven will be complete and operational; a comprehensive review of bus routes in the city

will have taken place; a Low Emission Zone will be in operation; we will have introduced a Workplace Parking Levy, subject to consultation and approval; Council-owned public transport companies will have been reformed to offer better integration and value for money.

2025 – Bolder actions:

A comprehensive mass rapid transit plan for the city and region will be completed, including new bus and tram systems; the business case for a north-south tram line will be agreed, linking Granton to the Bio Quarter and beyond; a new bus route network will be in place; iconic streets will become increasingly traffic free; George Street will be transformed; the development of a strategic network of walking/wheeling and cycle routes will open up active travel for all; the 20-minute neighbourhoods concept will be starting to deliver local benefits.

2030 – A city transformed:

The mass transit network, including tram, will have been extended west; the city's seven park and ride facilities will have been upgraded; some arterial routes will be used for mass commuting by bike; the city centre will be largely car-free; a comprehensive city freight and servicing operations system will be in place; the implementation of the Waverley Station Masterplan will be underway.




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