

Public transport – biggest expansion to be unveiled

Plans are to be unveiled before the end of the year for “the biggest expansion in public transport our capital has seen this century,” Edinburgh City Council’s transport convener announced on Thursday.

Councillor Scott Arthur said the council’s minority Labour administration plans to work with residents and The Scottish Government to “transform and de-carbonise” Edinburgh’s transport system and invest in active transport.



Professor Scott Arthur council candidate Launch of 2022 Edinburgh Labour Manifesto at Coffee Saints with Cllr Cammy Day and Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar MSP PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

But Cllr Arthur – who took up the role on an interim basis last month – gave scant detail on which forms of transport will benefit from the expansion – and would not confirm whether an extension to the city's tram line will form part of the proposals.

And he added lessons will be learnt from the Trams to Newhaven active travel scheme “which has been the subject of international media attention”. Sadly this was the wrong sort of media attention, with most commentators incredulous at the layout of what is supposed to be a segregated cycle lane.

The transport and environment convener was responding to a question from his SNP predecessor Cllr Lesley Macinnes, which was submitted ahead of a full council meeting.

Item no 10.42

QUESTION NO 42

**By Councillor Macinnes for answer
by the Convener of the Transport and
Environment Committee at a meeting
of the Council on 30 June 2022**

Question

The agreed City Mobility Plan has a number of key required actions in the drive towards a sustainable transport network for Edinburgh and our net zero carbon goals. One of the key actions regarding the further effective development of our tram facilities for mass transit is noted below.

'Policy Measure MOVEMENT 1 Mass Rapid Transit Expand the tram/mass rapid transport network to the north and south of the city as well as to Newhaven and explore the potential to develop or extend mass rapid transit routes into Fife, West, Mid and East Lothian.

The Edinburgh Strategic Sustainable Transport Study Phase 2 (ESSTS2) concludes that mass transit will contribute significantly to supporting wider policy outcomes including sustainable economic growth, reducing carbon, promoting equity and social inclusion and supporting healthier lifestyles. The ESSTS2 focusses on a potential tram extension from the north (Granton) to south east (BioQuarter and beyond), consisting of three route options. '

The development of a full business case and the legislative framework to allow this North-South tram line development will be complex, thorough and likely to take much of this administrative term to complete.

Will the Transport Convener commit to bringing this process in front of the Transport & Environment Committee at the earliest possible date to ensure that no time is wasted in taking the Council to an appropriate decision-making point?

Answer

Before the end of 2022 the administration will present plans for the biggest expansion in public transport our capital has seen this century. We will listen to residents on this issue, and work with them to transform and decarbonise the transportation system in our capital. This will also be an opportunity to invest in active transport, so we will learn any lessons from the Trams to Newhaven active travel scheme

which has been the subject of international media attention.

This investment in public transport is of national importance, so we hope to work in partnership with the Scottish Government to both develop the full business case, and fund the project. It is not our intention to deliver this scheme via PFI (as has been suggested for the Glasgow Metro), but to respect Edinburgh's culture of retaining public transport in public ownership.

In the question Cllr Macinnes noted the previously-agreed City Mobility Plan includes proposals for further development of the city's tram network to the north and south, (a key

manifesto commitment by the SNP) and that extensions to Granton and the Edinburgh bioQuarter were also backed in a recent sustainable transport study.

Cllr Macinnes said: "The development of a full business case and the legislative framework to allow this North-South tram line development will be complex, thorough and likely to take much of this administrative term to complete."

And she asked: "Will the Transport Convener commit to bringing this process in front of the Transport and Environment Committee at the earliest possible date to ensure that no time is wasted in taking the Council to an appropriate decision-making point?"

In response Councillor Arthur said: "Before the end of 2022 the administration will present plans for the biggest expansion in public transport our capital has seen this century. We will listen to residents on this issue, and work with them to transform and de-carbonise the transportation system in our capital.

"This will also be an opportunity to invest in active transport, so we will learn any lessons from the Trams to Newhaven active travel scheme which has been the subject of international media attention."

The transport chief was making reference to a recent article published by American gaming news site Kotaku, in which the "zig-zag" bike path constructed along Leith Walk as part of the Trams to Newhaven project was compared to the 1984 computer game 'Paperboy' as well as other international media who have commented on the layout.

All of the full council meetings are recorded and you may watch the recording in the web archive on the council website.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter