

Government's transport review offers up more trams as mass transit solution

The Scottish Government has just published its second Strategic Transport Projects Review known as STPR2 – and it mentions using Mass Transit between different areas in the Edinburgh area.

The report explains that the diverse region has many different types of public transport some of which offer limited choice. The impact of congestion often detracts so much from the attraction of public transport that people resort to using cars. The answer proposed is a mass transit system for the region which would mean journey times could be lower.

But the report also excitingly refers to possible extensions to the tramline from Edinburgh as another answer.

The report provides: "The STPR2 recommends that Transport Scotland works with Regional partners to develop and enhance the cross-boundary public transport system for the Region, potentially comprising tram and bus-based transit modes including Bus Rapid Transit and bus priority measures. This would complement and integrate with the Region's current bus, tram and heavy rail networks, to provide improved connectivity between the City of Edinburgh and the surrounding communities in the Region, as well as more direct connections between communities outside Edinburgh."

Visually this is shown as a possible extension to the tram travelling as far out of the city as Dalkeith. Click on the image below to read the STPR2 report and you will read about the possible tram extension on Page 97.



Figure 19 – Indicative Extent of Edinburgh and South East Scotland Mass Transit

Meets key objectives:



Climate



Accessibility



Health



Economy



Safety

This recommendation aligns with:

- Recommendations 6, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23, 43 and 45;
- the Revised Draft NPF4 National Development 6: Urban Mass/Rapid Transit Networks and 9: Edinburgh Waterfront. This recommendation sits within the Revised Draft NPF4 Central priority area which proposes that priorities for the area include pioneering low carbon, resilient urban living, and improved low carbon transport. This recommendation contributes to these priorities and supporting actions;
- Regional Development plans – enabling integrated sustainable travel within the city-region and access to existing as well as new development sites;

Cllr Scott Arthur, Transport and Environment Convener, said: "The inclusion of the potential to extend the tram line to neighbouring authorities in the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) is welcome, and signifies the Scottish Government's willingness to support us to explore these opportunities.

"As part of the City Mobility Plan we have committed to the expansion of the mass rapid transit network to the north and south of the city, providing sustainable, high capacity transport options for people travelling to and around Edinburgh. This development is a vote of confidence and will allow us to move forward with planning for future plans for both tram and bus transit, and following the successful completion of the Trams to Newhaven line.

"We will continue to work closely with Transport Scotland, SESTRAN and neighbouring local authorities to deliver our shared outcomes. I look forward to agreeing funding allocations with Transport Scotland so we can move forward with programmes as soon as possible."

Trams to Newhaven is moving ahead and is due to be open to passenger in late spring 2023.

Scottish Labour Net Zero, Energy and Transport spokesperson Colin Smyth MSP said: "Given this Government's track record on transport, few communities will believe that the vague commitments made in a review that is already years late, will ever be delivered.

"The cost of commuting is through the roof and transport emissions remain one of the biggest threats to our climate targets – but the SNP-Green government have kicked all the big questions down the line yet again by failing to publish a delivery plan.

"We've had more than enough hot air from this government – we need a real plan to build a modern, affordable, and green

transport system.”



Historic remains were found under Constitution Street where the new tram line will run PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter