

Big transport ideas passed by Transport Committee

A major transport shake-up to cut car journeys and increase bike and bus usage across Edinburgh will be put to the city's residents, despite concerns over the potential cost and criticism that the plans lack detail.

Sweeping changes to active travel, public transport and parking set out in a 'suite' of reports would help to "change the future of transport" and create a "truly integrated transport system".

The new transport strategy will help meet the council's goal to become a net zero city by 2030 and make Edinburgh "fully accessible for everyone" according to the reports produced at Thursday's meeting.

Councillors on the Transport Committee approved moving on to a three-month consultation which will gather responses to help shape the next steps.

Councillors raised questions over how realistic or affordable the proposed decade-long transformation of the capital's streets is however, whilst the council's plans have also been criticised for lacking detail, with one councillor suggesting "we're rushing into a public consultation".

Key elements are to spend £1 billion on paths for walking and

cycling, remove parking spaces on streets “well served by public transport” and issue more tickets to motorists who park on pavements and bike lanes.

Restricting through traffic on city centre roads is also central to the plan with George Street, Market Street and Bank Street all set for traffic reductions.

Extending of the tram line out to Granton, the Royal Infirmary and possibly even Dalkeith is on the table – as is a hovercraft link between Leith and Kirkcaldy, according to the council’s transport convener.

Cllr Arthur said the “gamechanger” proposals would “transform Edinburgh for the better”.

“We’re a congested city and we’re a growing city and those two things together bring problems,” he said.

“We’ll cut congestion and make it easier for people to come here and spend time here.”

Integrated bus, tram and train ticketing and a workplace parking levy could be introduced, as well as a trial of bus priority signalled junctions on Dalkeith Road and Slateford Road.

The plan also aims to deliver 10,000 dropped kerbs at the rate of one a day, 500 benches, ‘up to 200 kilometres of cycle lanes’ and more widened pavements.

At the transport committee on Thursday Cllr Christopher Cowdy, asked officers why more detail hadn’t been provided despite a promise at an earlier meeting.

He said there was “too much here to cope with” in the plan, adding: “I think we’re rushing into a public consultation.”

Fellow Conservative councillor Marie Clair-Munro said the report contained “ideas and themes rather than specific

schemes" adding it would be difficult to get "clear, concise feedback" from the public engagement exercise.

"The city's residents need to know how much each scheme is going to cost, funding and delivery time," she said.

The Greens' Jule Bandel stressed it was important the council is "clear about what we're consulting on".

"We are asking the public to help us make the hard choices that comes with having a finite amount of street space."

She said past transport consultations had been "contentious".

"I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that people have very different expectations of what is on the table and how consultations work.

"We still have to do a bit of expectation management and be absolutely clear about which questions we are asking and then what we will do with the answers."

Cllr Kevin Lang said he was "all for ambition" but "worried about delivery".

"Have we got the officer capacity to deliver this?" the Lib Dem group leader asked.

He highlighted that there are 110 actions included in the plan and questioned further: "How do we choose what things to do and what things not to do?"

"What is the priority when you've got 110 different actions?"

The Transport Convener and senior council officers admitted the authority needs more staff and funding, but said turning the focus from road building towards public transport and active travel was a vital change for the future of the city.

Cllr Arthur added: "What we're bringing here is a vision and what's going to happen is we're going to collect feedback from

residents and that will be part of the evidence base being used. That feedback will help us shape these plans going forward.

“We’re saying these are the broad themes, these are the objectives, this is what we want to achieve.”

Active travel schemes included in the plan are: Maybury to Barnton, City Centre West East Link (CCWEL), Dundee Street, Straiton Junction and Burdiehouse, Glimerton Rd and Old Dalkeith Road to city centre via Cameron Toll/Craigmillar Park, Niddrie Mains Road and Portobello to Newhaven through Leith and the Kings Road junction. ”

Furthermore, ‘travel corridors’ being considered for active travel and public transport priority are the A8 Glasgow Road/Corstorphine Road; A70 Lanark Road/Slateford Road; A772 Gilmerton Road; Niddrie Mains Road; and A199 through Seafield and Portobello.

by Donald Turvill

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Work is progressing on Melville Street where the works forming CCWEL are taking shape