

Consultation on north south tramline will be held later this year

Edinburgh residents will be consulted on a plan to extend the capital's tram line with a spur from Granton, through the city centre and towards the Royal Infirmary later this year, according to a report discussed by councillors last week.

Plans for the new line will be put to the public after the extension to Newhaven opens in the spring.

The council's transport convener said the next phase will open in 2035 "at the latest".

While the authority says building more tram routes is integral to cutting congestion and meeting ambitious climate targets, news of further disruption, roadworks and risk to the city's finances may not be universally welcomed. As one councillor warned "you cannot spend what you don't have".

Meanwhile councillors have called on officials to look into the options for a "relatively short western extension" to Newbridge and Ratho Station – areas currently under-served by public transport. Almond councillors Lang and Work are particularly keen that such an extension is looked at –

particularly as Cllr Lang said that the West Lothian Council is the fastest growing local authority in Scotland.

Transport Convener Cllr Scott Arthur said during a City Chambers meeting this week that a north-south route, estimated to cost £1.2 billion, is “at the absolute heart of everything we’re doing in the transport domain right now”.

He added its importance is “reflected” in The Scottish Government’s [STPR2](#) plans.

A report published by Transport Scotland last year [which sets out transport investment priorities](#) over the next 20 years included developing mass transit in Edinburgh and the south-east, which has given the council hope the Scottish Government will fund the Granton to Little France tram line.

A separate report which went before councillors on Thursday said a strategic business case (SBC) was “making good progress” with work ongoing to “finalise alignment options for the southern section of the line”.

It stated: “A three month public consultation is planned for later this year. This will present the primary findings from the work completed so far and the outcome of the consultation will be used to complete the SBC.”

Cllr Arthur said the north-south extension “will open in 2035 at the very latest”.

He said: “There is always tension between getting delivery right and filling the potholes and having the ambition to take our city forward. Let me be clear. If we focus all our attention on the day to day, we will be left behind, because we compete with other cities all the time for investment. A key part of that is around our climate ambitions and also our willingness and our desire to cut congestion.

“We are doing this not because building trams is an ideology,

we are doing this because we believe the economic case stacks up. We will build our case in the coming months and that will illustrate that the costs are exceeded by the benefits. If that is not the case then it won't happen, but I am confident the benefits will be there to make this investment worthwhile."

Cllr Danny Aston said there was "a strong case for an expansion westwards beyond the current start of the line at the airport serving the rapidly-growing communities of Newbridge and Ratho Station".

He noted that both are "areas currently very under-served by existing transport links".

Cllr Cammy Day the council leader also put in a plug for line 1b from Granton, which is one of the areas of the city with the lowest car ownership and highest levels of poverty. He reminded councillors it will also be an area where 3-4,000 homes will be built.

Councillors agreed to bring forward a report on the issues and options that would come with the "relatively short extension".

The Conservative councillor, Marie-Clair Munro, said that even if another tram extension is desired by residents "we simply don't have the money".

She said: "Edinburgh residents have made their views very clear to I think nearly every councillor sitting here today – they want good travel, yes they want active travel, but they want their city's roads and pavements repaired.

"You cannot spend what you don't have."

The Green group's Alex Staniforth hit back, saying: "£1.2 billion is a lot of money and honestly maybe we're not sure where we'll get it.

"And these projects can be quite disruptive – trams and active

travel – but do you know what would cost us more, would be more disruptive? Climate change and climate chaos.”

by Donald Turvill

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The Shore on Consitution Street is one of the stops on the extension from St Andrew Square and Newhaven which will open this spring after testing and commissioning are carried out – nine years after the original line from the airport opened .
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